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Metaphysical Underground: The Underground Press and the Transformation of  
Metaphysical Religion, 1964-1973

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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The following dissertation examines the effects that underground papers published between 1964 and 1973 had on metaphysical religion in the United States. Research was conducted by consulting the Underground Press Collection, a microfilm collection of underground and alternative periodicals from 1963-1985. The dissertation shows how metaphysical ads, articles, columns, and letters in underground newspapers transformed metaphysical religion and nurtured the development of New Age religion. The dissertation demonstrates three effects that underground papers had on metaphysical religions. It shows that metaphysicals used underground papers to express their political views; it shows how underground papers contributed to the democratization of metaphysical ideas, symbols and practices; and it shows how underground papers contributed to the perception that

metaphysical religions were hip. These effects facilitated the development of New Age religion in the early 1970s, and collectively make up one of the institutions by which the American counterculture transformed metaphysical religion in the United States.

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## INTRODUCTION

Interpreter and historian of the 1960s counterculture Theodore Roszak writes,

But now, if one scans any of the underground weeklies, one is apt to find their pages swarming with Christ and the prophets, Zen, Sufism, Hinduism, primitive shamanism, theosophy, [and] the Left-Handed Tantra...Satanists and Neo-Gnostics, dervishes and self-proclaimed swami[s], their number grows and the counter culture makes generous place for them...An underground weekly like The Berkeley Barb gives official Washington a good left-wing slamming on page one, but devotes the center spread to a crazy mandala for the local yogis...At the level of our youth, we begin to resemble nothing so much as the cultic hothouse of the Hellenistic period, where every manner of mystery and fakery, ritual and rite, [are] intermingled with marvelous indiscrimination.<sup>1</sup>

Roszak points to the “marvelous indiscrimination” of the counterculture’s religious hybridity and to its prevalence in underground weeklies. By the time Roszak was writing, virtually every major city in the United States, many smaller cities, and college campuses contained at least one underground paper. Underground periodicals were the veritable voice of the counterculture. In them, one could find articles condemning the war in Vietnam, challenging the status quo of American race relations, exposing unhealthy chemicals in food, explicitly and visually accosting sexual norms, and supporting to varying degrees: anarchism, socialism, peaceful protests, violent protests, and utopian visions of returning to the land. The earliest periodicals of this type began in the mid-1960s and soon became a critical part of the American counterculture. In 1966, publishers of these papers fashioned a nation-wide network that five years later boasted 271 underground papers.

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 140-141.

Among the political, social and cultural opposition expressed in them, these underground papers also voiced religious dissent. That religious dissent drew from religious perspectives understood to be alternatives to what many viewed as the Christian norm. These papers included columns, articles, letters to the editor, interviews and advertisements promoting a wide swath of religious practices and ideas from America's past: interest in mystical religious experiences, various forms of occultism, and adaptations of Asian religious traditions. What Roszak called "every manner of mystery and fakery" amounts to a collection of metaphysical religions.

Eventually, the underground press came to function as a metaphysical institution, capable of exposing metaphysical practices to new people, generating metaphysical religious authority, and engaging political, social and cultural issues. As a metaphysical institution, underground papers had lasting effects on the ways metaphysical religions have been practiced and reproduced in the United States. For many metaphysical groups, underground papers facilitated political expression, democratized their ideas, and made their practices hip in ways that they had not been previously in the United States. These transformations reshaped American religion from what it had been in the first half of the twentieth century, laying the groundwork for the development of New Age religion and eventually the development of many late-twentieth and twenty-first century attitudes toward spirituality.

As faith and participation in religious institutions continues to decline, religiosity in the United States looks increasingly metaphysical. Measures of religiosity like service attendance and membership in religious organizations fail to capture the complexity and

hybridity of religious life in the United States. Studying the ways that metaphysicals used the underground press demonstrates one of the ways that religious ideas and practices have proliferated outside of religious institutions and the effects this kind of institutional entanglement has had on religious practice.

### Metaphysical Religion

Historian Catherine L. Albanese uses the term “metaphysical” to label a wide range of ideas and practices that have been persistent, if not always prevalent, features of religion in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Although few Americans would self-identify as a metaphysical, Albanese demonstrates how diverse practices and ideas influenced one another and combined to form a unique kind of religious practice complete with a historical lineage and identifiable characteristics. Albanese adopts the term “metaphysical religion” from Charles S. Braden who, in the 1960s, used the word to describe a number of New Thought groups, although he intimated that the word “metaphysical” applied not only to New Thought groups, but to Asian religions, Mormonism, Christian Science, and Theosophy.<sup>3</sup> A few years later, J. Stillson Judah expanded the use of the word “metaphysical” to include popular movements like Transcendentalism and Spiritualism.<sup>4</sup> Writing much later, Albanese suggests that New Age religions and the broader category of “New Spirituality” ought to also be considered metaphysical.<sup>5</sup> For Braden, Judah, and eventually Albanese,

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<sup>2</sup> Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

the word “metaphysical” captures the ways in which these groups place spiritual importance on the mind of an individual, especially practices that imbue human minds with magical and healing powers.

Other scholars have acknowledged the similarities and historical presence of the religious traditions that Braden, Judah and Albanese have called “metaphysical.” Historian Jon Butler examines occult libraries, almanacs and other evidence to show how prevalent Hermetic and occult practices were in Colonial America and how these practices contributed to what he calls “The Antebellum Spiritual Hothouse” in which “religious syncretism and creativity permanently solidified the reality of religious pluralism in America.”<sup>6</sup> Historian Robert S. Ellwood extends his historical analysis into the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He includes Transcendentalists, Spiritualists, Mormons, Theosophists, New Thought and Christian Science practitioners, and Scientologists. He calls these “Alternative Reality Traditions.”<sup>7</sup> Historian Sydney Ahlstrom refers to many of the same traditions as part of a collection of “Harmonial” religious traditions present throughout America’s past.<sup>8</sup> Ahlstrom includes in his discussion of Harmonial traditions: New Thought, Christian Science, Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, and American interpretations of Asian Religions.<sup>9</sup> Scholar of religion

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<sup>6</sup> Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 256.

<sup>7</sup> Robert S. Ellwood, *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 87.

<sup>8</sup> Sydney Ahlstrom *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 1019.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1019-1047.

Eugene Taylor groups these and similar traditions under what he calls “shadow culture.”<sup>10</sup> Whether “occult,” “Alternative Reality Traditions,” “Harmonial,” or “Shadow Culture,” many scholars have understood these diverse traditions to be part of a historical lineage, influencing one another, and often developing out of one another. This kind of religious contact demonstrates that what Albanese calls metaphysical religion is not just a scholarly imposition of a category. The historical connections evidence that metaphysical religion constitutes a type of religiosity, complete with its own historical lineages and networks.

In addition to the historical connections that they share, Albanese argues that metaphysical religions share certain themes and characteristics that make them identifiably metaphysical. These themes include: 1. unusual powers of the mind, 2. a theory of cosmic correspondence, 3. energy flow, and 4. salvation understood as a form of solace.<sup>11</sup> For Albanese, groups are more or less metaphysical according to the degree to which they contain these four themes. Metaphysical religions are therefore identifiable both by their historical connections and influences and by how well they fit into these themes. For Albanese, “Unusual powers of the mind” involves things like telepathy, clairvoyance, trance states, and meditation. According to Albanese, “Mind, in short, is about consciousness and all that derives from and returns to it.”<sup>12</sup> Albanese argues that these traditions understand consciousness to be capable of more than most people would assume.

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<sup>10</sup> Eugene Taylor, *Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1999), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Albanese, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 13.

For Transcendentalists, the mind was something like Emerson's "Oversoul," something grand to which all human minds are connected. For mesmerists, it was an unusual kind of mind to mind connection that induced trance states, and for Spiritualists, human minds and consciousness extended beyond the grave. For metaphysicals, mind is not simply grey matter, it holds untapped creative and mystical potential.

The second and third themes identified by Albanese relate to one another. The third theme, "energy flow," is made possible especially by theories of the universe based on what Albanese calls "cosmic correspondence."<sup>13</sup> Theories of cosmic correspondence involve some way of envisioning the world of Heaven, Mind, Ideas, or Truth as larger worlds that are parallel to our own world or minds. The two worlds correspond in form and are made of the same material, thus one can be understood by understanding the other. The occult maxim "As above, so below" reflects cosmic correspondence. Because these two worlds correspond, movement in one world corresponds to movement in the other. Energy can flow from one to the other because they are made of the same material and because changes in one world are reflected by changes in another. Energy is encouraged to flow through various means, often by changing the way one thinks about a situation. As energy flows, obstacles like sin and sickness are overcome.

Albanese's fourth theme identifies the ultimate aim of metaphysical traditions. Instead of seeking a pleasant afterlife, these traditions tend to understand salvation as "solace, comfort, therapy, and healing."<sup>14</sup> She writes, "Metaphysics might be about what

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 15.

lay beyond the physical, but it was never totally abstract or theoretical. It always had a point and purpose on earth, always spent its attentiveness on salving wounds and making wounded people whole.”<sup>15</sup> Metaphysical traditions are primarily oriented towards changing contemporary situations. They may include metaphysical ideas about human minds and include theories of correspondence and energy flow, but these are all put in service of making this life better, of healing, of comforting, of therapy. Taken together, these four themes constitute a substantive definition of metaphysical religion in addition to the historical trajectory pointed out by Albanese and others. As will be demonstrated throughout the rest of the dissertation, the American counterculture drew much from America’s metaphysical past and reproduced the four themes identified by Albanese.

### Counterculture

Roszak coined the term “counter culture” in 1969. He writes, “What is special about the generational transition we are in is the scale on which it is taking place and the depth of antagonism it reveals. Indeed, it would hardly seem an exaggeration to call what we see arising among the young a ‘counter culture.’”<sup>16</sup> For Roszak, the “counter culture” was made up of differently inclined groups of people who together opposed the “Technocracy,” by which he refers to a set of values and behaviors that had emerged out of industrialization. He writes, “By the technocracy, I mean that social form in which an industrial society reaches the peak of its organizational integration. It is the ideal men usually have in mind

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Roszak, 42.

when they speak of modernizing, up-dating, rationalizing, planning.”<sup>17</sup> He argues that political radicals and religious explorers were unified by questioning things like “the demand for efficiency, for social security, for large-scale co-ordination of men and resources, for ever higher levels of affluence and ever more impressive manifestations of collective human power.”<sup>18</sup>

Later historians of the counterculture have echoed Roszak’s sentiment that the counterculture was made up of multiple, often loosely connected groups. Historian Douglas C. Rossinow writes, “[The counterculture] has been used to group together values, visual styles, social practices, and institutions that were widely disparate but considered by most to be unified in their rebellion against the dominant culture of advanced industrial capitalism.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, historian Todd Gitlin identifies two competing strands in the counterculture. He writes, “The counterculture of the young tried to combine two impulses at once – the libertarian and the spiritual.”<sup>20</sup> However, for Gitlin, political radicals only partially embraced the counterculture, and he distinguishes between the two groups at the same time that he documents the ways in which they worked together. Historian John McMillan takes a similar approach, often distinguishing between the broader counterculture and the more narrowly definable New Left. He writes, “When discussing

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas C. Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 67.

<sup>20</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 5.

the social rebellions of the 1960s, it is sometimes necessary to draw distinctions between the strategically oriented New Left, which was made up of ‘politicos’ who wanted to change society, and the counterculture, which consisted of lifestyle radicals, or ‘hippies,’ who self-segregated from society.”<sup>21</sup> Although made up of multiple groups, these authors demarcate the counterculture by its opposition to what participants perceived to be a majority culture. Among its participants they identify a spiritual movement seeking an alternative to the religious lifestyles of the majority of Americans.

For many, the 1960s counterculture is an important part of America’s religious history. Metaphysical practices informed many countercultural religious values and activities, including interest in alternative states of consciousness, the Astrological identification of the Aquarian Age, and engagement with Asian and Native American religious traditions. Explicitly linking the 1960s counterculture to metaphysical religious history, scholar of religion Sarah M. Pike calls the 1960s “watershed years for religious experimentation” but explains that many of the practices were nineteenth century beliefs “resurfaced” and that they had been in place prior to their explosion in the 1960s.<sup>22</sup> These practices include channeling, psychic phenomena, Theosophical beliefs and mental healing.<sup>23</sup> Neville Drury’s history of New Age religions demonstrates the extent to which the religious activity of the American counterculture was inspired by metaphysical thinkers

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<sup>21</sup> John McMillan, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>22</sup> Sarah M. Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 97-99.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

like Swedenborg, Mesmer, James, and Blavatsky and that it was foundational to the later New Age movement.<sup>24</sup> Ahlstrom also associates the religious activity of the American counterculture with metaphysical traditions. He writes, “During the 1960s, moreover, one could note a steady growth in the strength of this general [Harmonial] impulse.”<sup>25</sup> Like Pike, Ahlstrom calls the 1960s “watershed” years of religious change.<sup>26</sup> Leigh Schmidt objects to the idea that the 1960s were watershed years, arguing instead that they are an “epilogue” to a tradition of religious seeking that is made up of similar metaphysical groups including Transcendentalists, Spiritualists, New Thought practitioners, and Theosophists.<sup>27</sup> Whether watershed or not, Pike, Drury, Ahlstrom and Schmidt understand many countercultural religious practices to participate in the historical lineage of metaphysical religion.

#### Underground Press

Underground papers constituted an important means through which the counterculture engaged and reproduced metaphysical religion. What Roszak calls “underground weeklies” were usually small periodicals that were deeply embedded in their local countercultural communities. The majority of these papers printed less than 50,000 copies of an issue, and were published primarily by individuals with little experience in journalism. The periodicals circulated in newsstands, psychedelic shops, coffee shops,

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<sup>24</sup> Neville Drury, *Wisdom Seekers: The Rise of the New Spirituality* (Alresford, UK: O-books, 2011), 14, 103.

<sup>25</sup> Ahlstrom, 1020.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 1079.

<sup>27</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 19.

avant-garde book stores, and were peddled by street vendors. Many included articles, columns, editorials, letters from readers, classifieds, calendars of local events, and advertisements promoting metaphysical ideas and practices.

The earliest periodicals of this type began in the mid-1960s and soon formed a nation-wide network of hundreds of countercultural papers called the “Underground Press Syndicate” (UPS). Walter Bowart took credit for the name, remarking during an interview with *Time* that he had noticed a United Parcel Service truck just as he had been asked about the newly formed network. He replied, “We’re...ah...UPS – the Underground Press Syndicate.”<sup>28</sup> To the consternation of many, especially those who published underground papers, the name stuck. Tom Forcade, coordinator of the UPS, writes, “Underground is a sloppy word and a lot of us are sorry we got stuck with it. ‘Underground’ is meaningless, ambiguous, irrelevant, wildly imprecise, undefinitive, derivative, uncopyrighted, uncontrollable and used up.”<sup>29</sup> Art Kunkin, editor of the *Los Angeles Free Press*, expresses a similar opinion, “Instead of the inaccurate phrase ‘underground press’ it might be better to say ‘all around press’ because this recent journalistic phenomenon is truly all around...The people producing the Free Press do not feel ‘underground.’”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 39.

<sup>29</sup> Robert J. Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1970), 4.

<sup>30</sup> Art Kunkin, “Five Years of the Free Press: Do We Really Want to be Underground?,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, June 27, 1969, 10.

Part of the reason the term “underground” seemed inaccurate was that many of these authors were familiar with previous underground periodicals, periodicals that, in some times and places, simply possessing warranted arrest and prosecution. Kunkin preferred the term “all around press” because of how ubiquitous underground papers had become. He quotes two Russians who visited the United States, “Despite what you are called, the *Free Press* is not underground. You have news vendors and coin machines throughout the city selling your paper. Now, in our country if a paper is underground those producing and distributing it are subject to arrest.”<sup>31</sup>

Despite being frustratingly vague and deceptively suggestive, “underground” is not a complete misnomer for the papers. Publishing a countercultural underground paper was not without risks, and many underground papers became targets of the FBI, CIA and local police on account of their politically radical content.<sup>32</sup> As these papers banded together and formed a national network, they took the name “underground” for themselves, however impulsively invented and reluctantly embraced.

Chroniclers of the underground press describe how the papers oppose what participants in the counterculture understood to be the dominant religious, cultural, economic, and political structures of the time, what they refer to as “the Establishment.” Chronicler Robert J. Glessing writes, “It is perhaps its total distrust of American institutions that frees the underground press to attack anything and everything related to the American

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Peck, 40.

establishment.”<sup>33</sup> Chronicler Laurence Leamer explains that “In such cities [as Dallas, San Diego, and Jackson] the aboveground papers simply refuse to print legitimate radical or liberal or even vaguely anti-Establishment news.”<sup>34</sup> The papers are thus countercultural because of the degree to which they oppose whatever they imagine as the majority culture, whether it be Technocracy, capitalism, or the Establishment.

Although it is somewhat anachronistic to refer to many of these papers as “countercultural” because the term, even in a modified form, did not yet exist, the reality of the loosely connected groups and their attitudes toward “the Establishment” were being created and defined in underground papers. Before Roszak’s “counter culture” had caught on, John Wilcock of *Other Scenes* identified a similar group of people, calling them the “Underground.” He writes,

In its simplest sense, the Underground is the loosely organized collective of artists, writers, creative people whose work, while appreciated by each other, is not yet acceptable to the Establishment...It is my belief that nothing is holy; nothing is above challenge and examination; and that the most firmly entrenched ideas, institutions, and individuals are most in need of it. That is what the Underground is all about.<sup>35</sup>

Underground opposition to the Establishment included opposition to what people in the counterculture perceived to be the religions of the establishment. These papers were filled with language that was both suspicious of religious institutions and that promoted

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<sup>33</sup> Glessing, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Laurence Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 182.

<sup>35</sup> John Wilcock, “Under-ground,” in *The Underground Reader*, eds. Mel Howard and Thomas King Forcade (New York: New American Library, 1972), 47-48.

instead individualized belief and practice. An anonymously attributed article titled “Psychedelics and Religious Experience” published in an underground paper reads,

Religious dogmas and ceremony are only trap-pings for an experience that must remain deeply personal...What I’m saying is that the [truly] religious experience is more than regular church attendance or the mumblings of a few hurried prayers to some alien deity; rather it is the experience of growth, of death and re-birth, of the marriage of the conscious and the ‘unconscious,’ the plummeting of the ego up/down to the ground of being and in the most intense, the most meaningful, integral and beautiful experiences: illumination – satori – engulfment in the clear light of the void – the death of the ego and the birth of the self.<sup>36</sup>

This author, like many in the counterculture, disparages religion as it was being practiced in churches in comparison to a kind of religious practice that is more personal and, not coincidentally, much more metaphysical. For this underground author, and for many others, the counterculture offered a corrective to the religious practices of the Establishment.

Scholars of religion have documented the changing attitudes toward religious institutions prevalent in the 1960s counterculture. Sydney Ahlstrom writes,

The decade of the 1960s was a time, in short, when the old grounds of national confidence, patriotic idealism, moral traditionalism, and even of historic Judaeo-Christian theism, were awash. Presuppositions that had held firm for centuries - even millennia - were being widely questioned. Some sensational manifestations have come and gone (as fads and fashions will), but the existence of a basic shift of mood rooted in deep social and institutional dislocations was anything but ephemeral.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “Psychedelics and Religious Experience,” *The Alchemist: Oracle of the Midwest*, March 1969, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Ahlstrom, 1080.

Ahlstrom explains that part of this shift included the understanding that for many “the time honored structures of churchlife” seemed “irrelevant,” and that “churchgoing America” was actually an “obstacle to change.”<sup>38</sup> As Ahlstrom recounts, an increasingly large number of students, hippies and liberals grew suspicious of social institutions and began rebelling against authority, including religious authority. They challenged this religious authority by emphasizing the importance of unusual states of consciousness, by probing occult and esoteric beliefs and practices, and by engaging Asian and Native American religious traditions.

This religious experimentation and reluctance to participate in religious organizations was soon lamented by people concerned that it represented a lazy, uncritical form of religious practice. Sociologists of religion Robert N. Bellah *et al* speculate that individualized forms of religion where an individual acts as a *bricoleur*, selecting beliefs and practices from a variety of sources for herself, relegates religion to the private sphere of an individual’s life, thus preventing this type of religion from effectively engaging society.<sup>39</sup> Identifying the religious changes brought on in the 1960s as a transition from “dwelling” to “seeking,” Robert Wuthnow warns, “A spirituality of seeking...is invariably too fluid to provide individuals with the social support they need or to encourage the stability and dedication required to grow spiritually and to mature in character.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1093.

<sup>39</sup> Robert N. Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 248.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 16.

Sociologists Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge are also critical of individualized forms of religion in comparison to more stable religious communities.<sup>41</sup> Bellah *et al*, Wuthnow and Stark and Bainbridge view the religious changes of the 1960s as a problem. For them, fluid and self-directed kinds of religious practices lack the ability to engage society and to provide individuals with social support.

For others, the suspicion of institutional authority was not necessarily a problem, but did usher in a new kind of religiosity, one that preferred the language of “spirituality” to that of “religion.” For Ellwood, the 1960s brought in a kind of religion that reflected the intellectual climate of the time. He describes the transition as a shift from “modern” religion to “postmodern” spirituality.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in his study of Baby Boomers, sociologist Wade Clark Roof demonstrates that exposure to the counterculture of the 1960s positively correlates with the degree to which one differentiates between religion and spirituality. He writes, “A distinguishing feature is that these intense seekers prefer to think of themselves as ‘spiritual’ rather than as ‘religious.’ They feel most acutely the tension that exists between spiritual experience and its expression in conventional religious forms.”<sup>43</sup> The counterculture, in and through underground papers, popularized a critical view of religious institutions, associating them with the Establishment, and it promoted

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<sup>41</sup> Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, “Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 18 (1979): 117.

<sup>42</sup> Robert S. Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving from Modern to Postmodern* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 19.

<sup>43</sup> Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 79.

instead an individualized style of religiosity or spirituality that was often rooted in metaphysical traditions and that emphasized metaphysical themes.

### New Age and New Spirituality

Since the 1960s, the distinction between spirituality and religion has grown ubiquitous. Ethnographer Linda A. Mercadante calls the rise of those who identify as Spiritual but not Religious (SBNRs) “meteoric.”<sup>44</sup> Atheist Sam Harris remains critical of religion, but argues that insights into human consciousness can be made through meditation, a practice he calls spiritual rather than religious.<sup>45</sup> And, like Bellah, Reverend Lillian Daniel laments the ways in which the “Spiritual but not Religious” are often complacent and slow to engage their communities.<sup>46</sup>

Scientists have also adopted the distinction between religion and spirituality. Compiling a number of health-related studies, gerontologists Carolyn M. Aldwin *et al* have argued that religiosity, defined as participation in religious services and public prayer, provides behavior-based health benefits including smoking and drinking with less frequency.<sup>47</sup> Their study also finds that spirituality, defined as private prayer and

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<sup>44</sup> Linda A. Mercadante, “Good News About the ‘Spiritual but not Religious,’” *Belief Blog*. CNN, February 22, 2014, <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2014/02/22/good-news-about-the-spiritual-but-not-religious/> (accessed May 5, 2015).

<sup>45</sup> Sam Harris, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Lillian Daniel, “Spiritual but not Religious? Please Stop Boring Me,” *HuffPost: Religion*. Huffington Post, September 13, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lillian-daniel/spiritual-but-not-religio\\_b\\_959216.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lillian-daniel/spiritual-but-not-religio_b_959216.html) (accessed May 5, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> Carolyn M. Aldwin, “Differing Pathways Between Religiousness, Spirituality, and Health: A Self-Regulation Perspective,” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 6, no. 1 (2014): 13.

meditation, can have positive health outcomes in the form of lower blood-pressure.<sup>48</sup> Whether encouraging the distinction, lamenting it, or using it to conduct research, for many Americans in the twenty-first century, spirituality operates in contradistinction to religiosity, although there are many interpretations of what constitutes their differences.

Robert C. Fuller has interpreted the recent rise in SBNRs as a contemporary expression of the religious traditions that Albanese labels metaphysical. For Fuller, SBNRs are best understood as the latest inheritors of the religious legacy of Swedenborgianism, Transcendentalism, New Thought, and Christian Science. He writes, “What I have attempted to show is how these diverse spiritual interests are linked as part of a larger historical tradition. My goal is to illuminate the common themes that constitute a ‘tradition’ of unchurched spirituality in America.”<sup>49</sup> Fuller demonstrates similarities between America’s metaphysical past and contemporary SBNRs, including references to cosmic correspondence, energy flow, pragmatic results, and the importance of personal religious experience. Fuller refers to the traditions that Albanese calls metaphysical as “unchurched spirituality.” For Fuller, the distinction between religion and spirituality has to do with the difference between personal practices and participation in religious institutions.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>49</sup> Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>50</sup> Paul Heelas agrees with Fuller’s interpretation that opposition to institutions is a defining characteristic of metaphysicals. See Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

Spirituality refers to personal behaviors and beliefs whereas religiosity refers to participation in religious organizations and institutions.

For many, this interpretation implies that individuals, instead of religious organizations, assume the authority to select the religious practices and beliefs that suit them best. This model characterizes the spiritual practitioners as *bricoleurs*, choosing from a variety of religious practices and ideas, blending, adopting, co-opting and innovating them as they see fit. Understanding the distinction between religion and spirituality in this way mirrors countercultural rhetoric found in underground papers.

However, not everyone understands the difference between spirituality and religion in this way. Nancy Ammerman has shown that the distinction between religion and spirituality in the twenty-first century does not necessarily reflect an empirical difference related to participation in religious organizations. Different people use the distinction to varying ends; a conservative Christian is just as likely as a secularist to engage “spiritual but not religious” rhetoric.<sup>51</sup> She writes,

Spiritual-but-not-religious, then, is more a moral and political category than an empirical one...The ‘religion’ being rejected turns out to be quite unlike the religion being practiced and described by those affiliated with religious institutions. Likewise, the ‘spirituality’ being endorsed as an alternative is at least as widely practiced by those same religious people as it is by the people drawing a moral boundary against them. Paying attention to this discourse is an important part of understanding contemporary American religion, but researchers should not take the rhetoric as a guide for understanding either spirituality or religion *per se*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, “Spiritual but Not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52 no. 2 (2013): 274.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

Ammerman's research demonstrates that SBNRs are not actually an empirical group with similar beliefs, practices, or even values. For her, the prevalence of this language instead reflects a rhetorical strategy intended to make distinctions between oneself and others. Ammerman warns sociologists not to presume what she calls the "binary categories of organized v. individual, religious v. spiritual."<sup>53</sup> She suggests instead that "our categories of analysis need to be redrawn."<sup>54</sup>

Reproducing the categories of individualized spirituality v. organized religiosity has led scholars to also reproduce values latent in the distinction.<sup>55</sup> Scholars of religion Ann Taves and Michael Kinsella describe many of the characteristics that scholars ascribe to New Age Spiritualities. These characteristics reflect the way metaphysicals more broadly, and New Age practitioners in particular, distinguish between spirituality and religion. Taves and Kinsella write, "In this more general sense, scholars tend to characterize new age spirituality in terms of: 1. individualism, 2. shopping, spiritual supermarket, 3. seeking, and 4. in-built resistance to organization or at least to vertical (hierarchical) organization, as opposed to lateral-networked organization."<sup>56</sup> These

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith has shown the difficulty that historians of religion have had understanding what people mean when they self-identify as part of a particular group. Imposing scholarly understandings also runs the risk of reproducing wildly problematic notions as the racist idea of a "primitive haze" that came to explain the Bororo's insinuations that they were Red Parrots did for historians of religion. See Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 266.

<sup>56</sup> Ann Taves and Michael Kinsella, "Hiding in Plain Sight: The Organizational Forms of 'Unorganized Religion,'" in *New Age Spirituality: Rethinking Religion*, ed. Steven Sutcliffe and Ingvild S. Gilhus (Durham England: Acumen Publishing, 2013), 84.

characterizations imply that New Age practitioners are: 1. not members of religious organizations, 2. that as consumers they are responsible for their religious exploration, 3. that their beliefs and practices are an ongoing search, and 4. that all of this occurs in a religious milieu that lacks hierarchical organization. These characterizations reflect the beliefs and values of many metaphysicals and New Age practitioners who are quick to distinguish religion from spirituality, however the implications of such perspectives are dubious at best.

In the first place, empirical evidence suggests that the majority of people who distinguish spirituality from religion do actually participate in organized religions and that many who do not still find other ways to participate in faith-communities. This is true also of countercultural spirituality. In underground papers, metaphysical groups regularly promoted their numerous organizations and events, sometimes drawing thousands of people. Although distinct from churches or synagogues, underground papers reveal that metaphysical religion in the counterculture was often practiced in and through relationships with other metaphysicals.

Secondly, the idea that SBNRs or metaphysicals are *bricoleurs* selecting their beliefs and practices from a wide range of possibilities ignores the ways that spiritual practices and beliefs are reproduced in culturally specific contexts.<sup>57</sup> It is not so likely that an SBNR attempts to reproduce the Eleusinian mysteries as she is to consult a medium.

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<sup>57</sup> The perspective that metaphysicals practice religion as *bricoleurs* has been promoted by many scholars: Jeremy R. Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005); Kimberly J. Lau, *New Age Capitalism: Making Money East of Eden* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Steven M. Tipton, *Getting Saved from the Sixties: Moral Meaning in Conversion and Cultural Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982).

Mediumship is widely accessible and far more well-known than Greek esotericism. Beliefs and practices vary in availability. Sociologist Véronique Altglas has shown how the uneven availability of religious practices is specific to particular historical and social contexts, and also how and why “exotic” religious practices are attractive to people of certain genders and classes.<sup>58</sup>

Underground papers also reveal the limitations of the spiritual supermarket metaphor. The religions available had largely been determined by America’s metaphysical past, since most could only read and consume what had already been translated – most often by earlier Theosophists and metaphysicals. Moreover, the kinds of religions that, although readily available, were unlikely to support countercultural values, were largely ignored. Reading an underground paper, one will find numerous references to Zen Buddhism and philosophical Taoism, but Confucianism is entirely absent, as are Pureland and Theravadan Buddhism and Taoist temple practices. As underground papers reveal, the options in the spiritual supermarket are extraordinarily predetermined.

Thirdly, Mercadante’s qualitative research has shown that the majority of SBNRs are not seekers. She writes that, “assuming all [SBNRs] have been ‘hurt by religion’ or that all are ‘seekers’ are just two of the common misconceptions that we often have.”<sup>59</sup> Although the seeker mentality may mesh well with SBNR and metaphysical practice, it

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<sup>58</sup> Véronique Altglas, *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 15. Altglas critiques many scholarly understandings of practices of *bricolage* because they miss the point that *bricoleurs* do not operate in a vacuum.

<sup>59</sup> Linda A. Mercadante, *Belief Without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but not Religious* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 52.

does not characterize the majority of those who identify as such. Similarly, underground papers show that countercultural metaphysicals were not so much seeking one religious tradition after another, but information contained within them. They were seeking unusual states of consciousness, new forms of divination, new understandings of mind and the cosmos. To the degree that a tradition could offer these, and that it was compatible with countercultural values, participants in the counterculture were likely to embrace it.

And finally, although it may explicitly reflect the values of those who distinguish religion from spirituality to reject hierarchical organization, in practice, metaphysical religion has been reproduced in organizations that do contain hierarchies, even if they are not organizationally sanctioned. In underground papers, a few individuals became the arbiters of religious information. The extensive underground coverage of people like Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg, Alan Watts and Gary Snyder reveals that even if these underground papers fashioned themselves as opposed to institutions, they also contributed to the religious authority of particular individuals.

Adopting the categories of religion and spirituality can reveal a lot about SBNRs' and metaphysicals' values and their self-understanding, but assuming them comes at the cost of ignoring important elements regarding how spirituality and metaphysical religions are actually reproduced. Underground papers reveal that many of the assumptions that observers have brought to the individualized, seeker-oriented, metaphysical spirituality of the counterculture and later SBNRs are not the only ways to understand this type of religious practice.

One of the ways that a number of scholars have begun to redraw the lines of spirituality and religion is by focusing on what Ammerman calls “cultural sites” where spirituality is produced. For Taves and Kinsella, this involves understanding how the beliefs and practices that fed into New Age practice were organized alongside traditional forms of religious institutions. Taves and Kinsella write, “As Scholars, we have been unduly captivated by these traditions’ rhetorical critique of ‘organized religion’ and have failed to recognize the various alternative forms of organization they adopted in order to distinguish themselves from it.”<sup>60</sup> Instead of simply reproducing the categories of individualized spirituality v. organized religiosity, Taves and Kinsella suggest studying the kinds of organizational structures where people learn metaphysical practices and ideas.

Sociologist Courtney Bender’s work on metaphysicals in Cambridge takes this approach. Writing of marketplace models that imagine metaphysicals as spiritual *bricoleurs*, Bender writes, “In order to understand the shape and the structure of spirituality, we need to disabuse ourselves of the idea that these surface representations are adequate.”<sup>61</sup> She continues, “I discuss the settings where spirituality is learned and practiced in various groups and organizations, focusing on the institutional aspects of spirituality and the ways that groups and leaders understand and practically go about producing spirituality.”<sup>62</sup> Examining these institutional aspects of spirituality allows scholars to transcend the categories of religion and spirituality and to understand how

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<sup>60</sup> Taves and Kinsella, 87.

<sup>61</sup> Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 22.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

people anemic to religious organizations have promoted and reproduced their beliefs and practices.

Although few SBNRs in the twenty-first century have ever read an underground newspaper, for participants in the counterculture, underground papers constituted a kind of cultural site in which metaphysical religion was reproduced. Through them, metaphysicals published articles, columns and advertisements promoting their ideas, values, and practices, and in them, one finds all manner of metaphysical religions, from Theosophy and metaphysical interpretations of Asian religions to astrology and occultism. Like later SBNRs, underground papers produced rhetoric challenging institutionalized forms of religion and supported instead individualized spirituality. If the counterculture affected American religion by promoting an individualized, seeker-oriented, metaphysical kind of religiosity or spirituality, it did so in and through underground papers. This dissertation investigates underground papers as cultural sites where metaphysical religion and spirituality were reproduced. Research was conducted by consulting the Underground Press Collection, an archived collection of underground papers from 1963 – 1985. Special attention was paid to underground papers with large circulation and metaphysical content.

As metaphysical religions became entangled in the production and consumption of underground papers, underground papers also affected metaphysical practice. For many metaphysicals, underground papers opened up new avenues of political expression. They facilitated public discourse and practice, transforming the meaning and prevalence of metaphysical ideas, and they helped metaphysical religions shed social stigmas, and in many cases added to the perception that metaphysical traditions were hip. These

transformations laid the groundwork for the development of New Age religion and later contributed to the development of the distinction between spirituality and religion. The following chapters explore the social and historical developments that led to metaphysical uses of underground papers, as well as the effects that underground papers had on metaphysical practice in the United States.

Chapter one introduces readers to the religious context that contributed to the development of countercultural religion. Focusing especially on the religious effects of the Cold War, it shows how metaphysical religion was prevalent even during the high-water mark of Christian belief and participation. The chapter establishes the perception and effects of a veneer of tri-faith America in which Judaism and Christianity were made to seem like they constituted what sociologist Will Herberg called, “The American Way of Life.”<sup>63</sup>

Chapter two introduces the technological, economic, religious, and literary contexts of the underground press and also many of the ways that metaphysicals used the papers to promote their beliefs and practices. In doing so, it introduces readers to a few of the largest and most popular underground papers, the *San Francisco Oracle*, the *Los Angeles Free Press (Freep)*, and the *Berkeley Barb (Barb)*. It then describes four characteristics of underground papers, and shows how metaphysicals took advantage of those characteristics to promote their practices and ideas. The chapter concludes by describing the importance of underground papers for the history of metaphysical religion.

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<sup>63</sup> Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960), 3.

Chapter three shows how the underground press provided opportunities for metaphysical political expression. This chapter begins by describing the metaphysical roots of consciousness expansion. It traces the idea of consciousness expansion from the middle of the nineteenth century to its expression in underground papers through the publications and popularity of Timothy Leary. The chapter explores how underground papers provided new opportunities for metaphysically-themed political demonstrations like the Human Being and the Exorcism of the Pentagon as well as how underground papers facilitated Leary's political life, including his gubernatorial candidacy and political exile. The chapter demonstrates how underground papers contributed to the political importance of consciousness expansion.

Chapter four examines the democratizing effects that the underground papers had on metaphysical practices in the United States. Focusing on the papers' engagement with occultism, the chapter shows how underground papers not only publicized, but also created new opportunities for practicing and expressing occult traditions like witchcraft, astrology, and alchemy. The chapter traces the history of the idea of the Age of Aquarius from its roots in the French Revolution, and explores how the papers transformed and proliferated the idea of the Age of Aquarius by facilitating public discourse and practice.

Chapter five explores the ways in which underground papers contributed to the perception that Asian and Native American religious beliefs and practices were hip. The chapter begins with a description of the majority of Americans' hostile attitudes toward Asian and Native American traditions before the counterculture, and shows how underground papers contributed to the perception that these traditions were hip to

countercultural values like consciousness expansion, sexual liberation, and political revolution. As the counterculture came to define American tastes more generally, the chapter shows how countercultural attitudes toward Asian and Native American traditions contributed to the transformation of many Americans' hostility toward these traditions.

The dissertation concludes with a description of the decline of the counterculture and the underground press. The chapter includes a discussion of the legacies that the underground press had on how metaphysical religion has been practiced and reproduced. It shows how underground papers contributed to the development of New Age religion, and to a changed religious landscape, one in which religion and spirituality are understood differently.

In *Steal This Book*, countercultural leader Abbie Hoffman provides a manual for participants in the counterculture to live without any regular income. Among the methods for acquiring free food, transportation, land, housing, education, and medical care, Hoffman includes a section on starting an underground newspaper. Hoffman calls the underground press “the most important institution in our lives.”<sup>64</sup> He writes, “Values, myths, symbols and all the trappings of our culture are determined to a large extent by the underground press...if your scene doesn’t have a paper, you probably don’t have a scene together.”<sup>65</sup> This dissertation explores the ramifications of metaphysical embeddedness in these “most important” countercultural institutions.

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<sup>64</sup> Abbie Hoffman, *Steal This Book* (New York: Grove Press, 1971), 92.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 1 – THE VENEER OF TRI-FAITH AMERICA

A cursory glance at the postwar period in the United States reveals high levels of religious participation and identification. In 1955, ninety-five per cent of Americans polled identified as a Protestant, Catholic or Jew; service attendance was at an all-time high, and churches and synagogues were being built in suburbs all over the country.<sup>1</sup> According to Ahlstrom, “This popular resurgence of piety was a major subject of discussion in newspapers, popular magazines, and learned journals.”<sup>2</sup> He calls the increase in religious activity “post-war revival.”<sup>3</sup>

Ahlstrom provided various explanations for the postwar revival: increased economic affluence, suburbanization, and social and geographic mobility. For Ahlstrom, “Problems of adjustment and anxieties over status and acceptance were ever-present. Churches were obviously the sort of family institution that the social situation required.”<sup>4</sup> These social changes provided the context for much of the increase in religious participation. Like Ahlstrom, religious historian James Hudnut-Beumler argues that suburbanization was central to the postwar revival, adding that it provided the seedbed for “suburban jeremiads” that ultimately contributed to the changing religious landscape in the

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<sup>1</sup> Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960), 46.

<sup>2</sup> Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 952.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 951.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

sixties.<sup>5</sup> This new social landscape provided the context for renewed interest in Evangelical revivalism, liturgical changes, the publication of popular religious books, and pluralistic political changes.

Tensions and ideologies associated with the Cold War also added to the postwar revival. Historians William Inboden (2008) and Jonathan P. Herzog (2011) have shown how the federal government contributed to the postwar revival by promoting religion as a means for fighting communism.<sup>6</sup> Inboden and Herzog both demonstrate the degree to which Truman understood the Cold War in religious terms, and the measures taken by the Federal government to wage religious war, including sending religious leaders as American diplomats, implementing the Weil Committee (intended for “promoting the religious, moral and recreational welfare and character guidance of persons in the armed forces”), adding “under God” to the pledge of allegiance, and adopting “in God we trust” as the national motto. Religious faith and patriotism became so intertwined that Ahlstrom writes, “Being an active church member became a way to avoid suspicion of being a subversive influence.”<sup>7</sup>

With the assistance of social and political factors, the postwar revival saw religious participation become an essential part of the “American way of life,” a collection of

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<sup>5</sup> James Hudnut-Beumler, *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The Religion of the American Dream and its Critics, 1945-1965* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 207.

<sup>6</sup> William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Ahlstrom, 951.

practices and values that provided an “overarching sense of unity.”<sup>8</sup> That sense of unity was partially achieved by Christian and Jewish interfaith groups that had become prominent during World War II. The National Conference of Jews and Christians emphasized the connections between Protestants, Catholics and Jews. It organized interfaith speaking tours, hosted seminars and conferences, and published military pamphlets intended to unify Americans against fascists and communists.<sup>9</sup> By the 1950s, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews were being promoted as part of a “Judeo-Christian” heritage, a term coined only fifty years previously.<sup>10</sup> Judeo-Christian opposition to the moral threat of communism was published in universities, churches, advertising campaigns, and in film.

During the postwar period, migration from Asia and Africa had essentially halted, however minority religious groups including Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs had been in the United States for decades, and in some cases centuries. These faiths were left out of the interfaith dialogues and were neglected by organizations like the United Services Organization and the National Conference of Jews and Christians that promoted religious dialogue. Practicing Buddhism was seen as “foreign” rather than patriotic.<sup>11</sup> According to historian Kevin M. Schultz, the myth of a Judeo-Christian heritage had permeated so well by the 1950s that “[t]here seemed to be only three ‘culture groups’ in America – Protestant,

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<sup>8</sup> Herberg, 74.

<sup>9</sup> Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to its Protestant Promise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 16.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

Catholic, and Jew.”<sup>12</sup> The cultural emphasis on togetherness regarded Judaism as the only consequential religious minority.

Emphasizing this tri-faith understanding of the religious landscape of the United States and the high levels of religious participation paints the religious activity of the postwar period with one broad Judeo-Christian stroke. It not only misses the religious diversity in the forms of ethnically based practices of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism that all had establishments in the United States, but also many metaphysicals in the postwar period.

In the 1950s, metaphysicals published remarkably successful books exploring the power of positive thinking, the exploration of consciousness, and metaphysical interpretations of Zen Buddhism. The perception of religious conformity during the postwar period misses vibrant interest in metaphysical religion, a feature of American religion that would play an increasingly important role in the decades to come.

#### Pealeism – Metaphysical Christianity

Literary historian Erin A. Smith calls Norman Vincent Peale the “favorite whipping boy” of university professors, seminarians and theologians.<sup>13</sup> As a Protestant minister, Peale’s *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) blended metaphysical thinking with a transcendent understanding of God, one clothed in Methodist and Calvinist rhetoric. Critics however were not fooled by this “wolf within the sheepfold.” Reinhold Niebuhr explained,

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>13</sup> Erin A. Smith, *What Would Jesus Read?: Popular Religious Books and Everyday Life in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 139.

“The basic sin of this new cult [referring to the popularity of Peale] is its egocentricity. It puts ‘self’ instead of the cross at the center of the picture.”<sup>14</sup> Niebuhr and other critics believed that Peale had made the practice of Christianity into a method for attaining material objects and peace of mind rather than a method for worshipping God. Despite these criticisms, Peale’s message found a large audience. *The Power of Positive Thinking*, was on the *New York Times* best-seller list for 186 consecutive weeks, forty-eight in the number one position.<sup>15</sup> After the book was published, Peale’s magazine *Guideposts* more than doubled its subscriptions, then numbering more than 500,000.<sup>16</sup> He also hosted radio and television shows, always promoting the powers of the human mind. Peale was the favorite whipping boy because he was so successful.

Peale’s success marks significant metaphysical activity within the veneer of tri-faith America. Albanese calls Peale, “The purveyor par excellence of this brand of metaphysical spirituality.”<sup>17</sup> She traces Peale’s metaphysical influences to Emerson and James, and also many New Thought groups and thinkers. Peale’s spiritual perspectives were “emanating, among other places, from Unity, Religious Science, Science of Mind,

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, 139.

<sup>15</sup> George Vecsey, “Norman Vincent Peale, Preacher of Gospel Optimism, Dies at 95,” *The New York Times*, December 26, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/12/26/obituaries/norman-vincent-peale-preacher-of-gospel-optimism-dies-at-95.html> (accessed November 16, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 443.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

Christian Science, and a series of metaphysically inclined teachers.”<sup>18</sup> Influences like these made Peale’s professed Protestantism markedly metaphysical.

Peale’s message was pragmatically oriented toward improving this life. It emphasized the power of the mind to affect reality, and Peale even wrote about energy flowing through his hands. He writes of healing a man by simply touching his head, “I suddenly became aware of what seemed to be the passing of power through my hand which rested upon his head.”<sup>19</sup> All of these characteristics seemed, to Peale’s critics, different than what they thought Christianity should be. Peale’s biographer, Carol V.R. George argues that despite his critics’ views that Peale’s Christianity was some type of “shadow religion, a distorted and dangerous adaptation” Peale’s success belied a metaphysical presence within the sheepfold of tri-faith America.<sup>20</sup>

### Consciousness Expansion and Metaphysical Religion

Aldous Huxley arrived with Gerald Heard in the United States in 1937.<sup>21</sup> Huxley was already well-known for publishing *Brave New World* (1931), however his interest in mysticism and metaphysical religion had not yet been fully realized. He began his life in California as a screenwriter at the same time he began making metaphysical company. He spent time at the Vedanta Society of Southern California, an organization designed to

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 443.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 445.

<sup>20</sup> Carol V.R. George, *God’s Salesman: Norman Vincent Peale & The Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 145.

<sup>21</sup> Robert S. Ellwood, *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 211.

attract Americans to Swami Vivekananda's teachings of Neo-Vedanta, a nineteenth century reform sect of Hinduism. Vivekananda, the Vedanta Society's founder, promoted metaphysical practices like Christian Science, mesmerism, and spiritualism.<sup>22</sup> He intimated that these metaphysical practices were methods that Americans had developed to manipulate *prana*, a kind of energy. Huxley never joined the society, but published many articles in their periodicals and regularly visited their center.<sup>23</sup>

Huxley also befriended Jiddu Krishnamurti, an Indian philosopher who had migrated to the United States under the care of Theosophical leader Annie Besant.<sup>24</sup> Charles Leadbetter had come across Krishnamurti as a child in India. After psychic investigations of the boy, Leadbetter believed that Krishnamurti was the most likely candidate to be the vehicle of a great world teacher to come at the end of the Piscean Age. Besant gained legal custody of the boy, and after a time in England, Krishnamurti was living in southern California. Krishnamurti eventually disavowed the identity as the vessel of the great world teacher, which led to rifts within the Theosophical society. Leadbetter speculated that, "something had gone wrong" with the vehicle. Huxley, skeptical of religious devotion to individuals, admired Krishnamurti for rejecting this role, and the two men met regularly throughout the thirties and forties.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Carl T. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 51.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 187.

<sup>24</sup> June Deery, *Aldous Huxley and the Mysticism of Science* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 191.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

In 1945, Huxley published *The Perennial Philosophy*. The book is a collection of quotations from various religious texts. The quotes are organized according to philosophical and religious topics. For example, chapter one “That art Thou” extracts quotations from Meister Eckhart, Chuang Tzu, Shankara, the Upanishads, and others, arguing that these diverse thinkers had made similar statements identifying the Divine with humanity and had had similar religious experiences. In twenty-six more chapters, Huxley extracts quotations as they apply to topics like “Charity,” “Truth,” “Grace and Free Will,” “Faith,” and “Idolatry.”<sup>26</sup> The book extracts citations from a wide variety of religious texts, many of them written or translated by Theosophists and other metaphysicals. Although the book does not contain all of the features of metaphysical religion, it demonstrates interest in consciousness, suggesting that the Divine lives within each person and is accessible through their minds. It also takes characteristically metaphysical positions, equating religious insights from a variety of sources and criticizing religions that strongly emphasize a transcendent deity.

*The Perennial Philosophy* was tremendously successful. Reviewer Signe Toksvig wrote in the *New York Times*, “Perhaps Mr. Huxley, in *The Perennial Philosophy* has, at this time, written the most needed book in the world.”<sup>27</sup> Sufi scholar Charles le Gai Eaton suggests, “The publication of Huxley’s book, *The Perennial Philosophy*, must have doubled, in the course of a few weeks, the number of people in England and the United

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<sup>26</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945).

<sup>27</sup> Signe Toksvig, “Aldous Huxley’s Prescriptions for Spiritual Myopia,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1945, 117.

States who have some slight interest in the Oriental doctrines.”<sup>28</sup> *The Perennial Philosophy* was an expression of Huxley’s philosophical understanding of mysticism. However, Huxley yearned for more than a philosophical understanding of mysticism; he wanted the experience of it. In 1953, “one bright May morning, [he] swallowed four-tenths of a gram of mescaline.”<sup>29</sup>

Recounting the experience in *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley reiterated his philosophical understanding that the human mind was the key to mystical experiences. In the book he refers to the Divine within as “Mind at Large.” Huxley argues that human consciousness usually filters out the kinds of information and experiences that greater doses of Mind at Large make available to mystics and luminaries.

In addition to focusing on consciousness, Huxley writes of energy flowing through material objects, of cosmic correspondence, and demonstrates concern about the pragmatic value of his experience. Huxley describes the flowing breath of a tabletop vase of flowers, “I continued to look at the flowers, and in their living light I seemed to detect the qualitative equivalent of breathing – but of a breathing without returns to a starting point, with no recurrent ebbs but only a repeated flow.”<sup>30</sup>

He attributes the changes in his experience of the world to physiological changes associated with the ingestion of mescaline.<sup>31</sup> He thus endorses a theory of correspondence

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<sup>28</sup> Gai Eaton, *The Richest Vein: Eastern Tradition and Modern Thought* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), 167.

<sup>29</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception; and, Heaven and Hell* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

between his physical body and his experience of the world around him. He writes, “These better things may be experienced (as I experienced them) ‘out there,’ or ‘in here,’ or in both worlds, the inner and the outer, simultaneously or successively.”<sup>32</sup> Huxley even wraps his unusual experience in pragmatic concerns, “How was this cleansed perception to be reconciled with a proper concern with human relations, with the necessary chores and duties, to say nothing of charity and practical compassion?”<sup>33</sup>

Huxley’s essay articulates interest in human consciousness, ideas of cosmic correspondence and energy flow and pragmatic values. In addition to these metaphysical characteristics, Huxley adds to his recollection quotations from William Blake, Jacob Boehme, D.T. Suzuki, and Evans-Wentz’ translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, revealing the metaphysical thinkers and texts that shaped his interpretation of his mescaline experience.

*The Doors of Perception* was received with less enthusiasm than *The Perennial Philosophy*, but has had a lasting impact on American culture. The book’s publication has been called “arguably the most important single event in the unfolding of the psychedelic movement.”<sup>34</sup> In a few short years, a Harvard graduate student would introduce the text to Timothy Leary, who later contacted Huxley. Huxley provided Leary counsel concerning the use of LSD, and directed his attention to mystical interpretations of the experience.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>34</sup> Brian Wells, *Psychedelic Drugs* (New York: J. Aronson, 1973), 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> Deery, 192.

*The Perennial Philosophy* and *The Doors of Perception* were hardly in the vein of tri-faith America. They expanded religious interest beyond those three faiths and reflected metaphysical interests and values. Huxley's popularity reveals that many of the ninety-five per cent of Americans who identified as Protestant, Catholic, or Jew were open-minded enough to engage metaphysical ideas and practices. By the late 1960s, Huxley's metaphysical explorations of consciousness had influenced how many metaphysicals in the counterculture understood the significance of LSD, peyote, mysticism, and religion more generally. As will be shown in chapter three, underground newspapers' obsession with Timothy Leary was colored by Huxley's experiments more than a decade earlier, experiments that occurred within the veneer of tri-faith America.

### Metaphysical Zen

In 1958, an article in *Time* magazine read, "Zen Buddhism is growing more chic by the minute."<sup>36</sup> Zen had become popular in bohemian enclaves in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York throughout the postwar period. However, the Zen of these bohemian centers had been dislodged from its Japanese context, and had become increasingly metaphysical.

The Asian Exclusion act of 1924 had "effectively cut off immigration from Asia."<sup>37</sup> The numbers of Asian Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs stagnated under the racist legislation. With the advent of World War II and Japanese internment, identifying as Buddhist became

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<sup>36</sup> "Zen: Beat & Square," *Time*, July 21, 1958, 49.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas A. Tweed and Stephen R. Prothero, *Asian Religions in America: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 159.

risky for Asians. Scholars of religion Thomas A. Tweed and Stephen R. Prothero argue that Buddhism “refused to fade away” under the tyranny of exclusion “because of the efforts of a handful of Asian-born teachers, on the one hand, and a small but influential group of their non-Asian converts and sympathizers on the other.”<sup>38</sup> In its Zen form, Buddhism not only “refused to fade away,” it “prospered.”<sup>39</sup>

Philosopher and entertainer Alan Watts (1915-1973) was one of the “non-Asian converts” who popularized metaphysical Zen in postwar America. Watts was born in England and exhibited an interest in Buddhism from a young age. In 1931, he became the secretary of the London Buddhist Lodge, an offshoot of a Theosophical Lodge created in 1924. In 1938, he moved to New York where he served as an Episcopal minister and chaplain, although he blended this profession with his interests in Buddhism and Taoism. After a few years, Watts left the ministry and began an academic career in California, lecturing at the American Academy of Asian Studies (what would later become the California Institute of Integral Studies). A few years later he began hosting a local radio program, which he used to introduce Buddhism and Taoism to many Americans. By the time he published *The Way of Zen* in 1957, he had spent more than two decades popularizing Zen in America. He writes, “During the past twenty years there has been an extraordinary growth of interest in Zen Buddhism. Since the Second World War this

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

interest has increased so much that it seems to be becoming a considerable force in the intellectual and artistic world of the West.”<sup>40</sup>

According to historian Robert S. Ellwood, *The Way of Zen* was the most accessible introduction to Zen Buddhism available in English.<sup>41</sup> However, Watts was not necessarily interested in introducing Japanese Zen to American audiences. Instead, he explains how Zen can be practiced in the United States, the different location demanding changes in the way Zen is practiced. Watts writes, “I am not in favor of ‘importing’ Zen from the Far East, for it has become deeply involved with cultural institutions which are quite foreign to us. But there is no doubt that there are things which we can learn, or unlearn, from it and apply in our own way.”<sup>42</sup> In many ways, Watts’ adaptation provided readers metaphysical interpretations of Zen.

Watts intentionally blended Zen with Taoism, Hinduism, and psychology. In contrast to the strict proscriptions for sitting and the master-student relationship that was practiced in Japan, Watts describes for readers the subjective experience of Zen, arguing that it has primarily to do with a change in consciousness, abandoning ego as center of the human personality. Suggesting that Chuang Tzu and Lao Tzu had insights comparable to those of Zen enlightenment and had identified the human unconscious, only recently discovered by psychology, he writes, “[Lao-tzu’s, Chuang-tzu’s, and Lieh-tzu’s] ‘unconsciousness’ is not coma, but what the exponents of Zen later signified by *wu-hsin*,

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<sup>40</sup> Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Pantheon, 1957), 7.

<sup>41</sup> Robert S. Ellwood, *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 53.

<sup>42</sup> Watts, 8.

literally ‘no-mind,’ which is to say un-self-consciousness. It is a state of wholeness in which the mind functions freely and easily, without the sensation of a second mind or ego standing over it with a club.”<sup>43</sup> Here, Watts equates the teachings of Taoist sages with Zen teachings and dresses them in the language of psychoanalysis, including words like “ego” and “unconscious.” At the same time, Watts’ presentation of Zen emphasizes an interest in consciousness to the exclusion of nearly anything else. For Watts, Zen is a kind of awareness or way of being in the world made available by a change in consciousness.

Characteristically of metaphysical religions, Watts associates this Zen-inspired change in consciousness with unusual powers of the mind, energy flow, and an understanding of salvation as a form of solace in this life. Watts argues that the changes to consciousness manifested through the practice of Zen are part of what he calls the “peripheral mind.” Akin to intuition, he likens the peripheral mind to “getting the feel” for the steps of a dance or of learning music by ear.<sup>44</sup> He argues that people in the West use it, but are largely unaware of it, and thus have not put this ability to its best uses. He writes, “Being human, we use it all the time, and every artist, every workman, every athlete calls into play some special development of its powers. But it is not academically and philosophically respectable. We have hardly begun to realize its possibilities.”<sup>45</sup> This power may not be as unusual as mediumship, but it is an untapped psychic power made available through the practice of Zen.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 28.

Arguing that Taoism had much historical influence on the development of Zen, Watts provides readers with an interpretation of the Tao that offers a cosmology of flowing energy, a world that is not created, but that grows out of its own energetic reserves. Watts writes, “The important difference between the Tao and the usual idea of God is that whereas God produces the world by making, the Tao produces it by ‘not-making’ – which is approximately what we mean by ‘growing.’”<sup>46</sup> Watts specifically attributes this growth of the material world to scientific understandings of energy in *The Joyous Cosmology* (1962). He writes, “‘Inert’ matter seems to require an external and intelligent energy to give it form. But now we know that matter is not inert. Whether it is organic or inorganic, we are learning to see matter as patterns of energy – not of energy as if energy were a stuff, but as energetic pattern, moving order, active intelligence.”<sup>47</sup>

For Watts, the philosophy of Zen had been increasing in popularity throughout the postwar period because it offered Americans a philosophy that could relax some of the cultural dissonance that he argues characterized the forties and fifties. He writes,

Western thought has changed so rapidly in this century that we are in a state of considerable confusion...the course of our thinking and of our very history has seriously undermined the common-sense assumptions which lie at the roots of our social conventions and institutions. Familiar concepts of space, time, and motion, of nature and natural law, of history and social change, and of human personality itself have dissolved and we find ourselves adrift without landmarks in a universe which more and more resembles the Buddhist principle of the ‘Great Void.’ The various wisdoms of the West, religious, philosophical, and scientific, do not offer much

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>47</sup> Alan Watts, *The Joyous Cosmology: Adventures in the Chemistry of Consciousness* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), 7.

guidance to the art of living in such a universe, and we find the prospects of making our way in so trackless an ocean of relativity rather frightening.<sup>48</sup>

For Watts, Zen's popularity was evidence that many Americans were suffering psychologically. Much of the disconnect, he argued, was the result of Christianity and an increasingly technological world. He argues, "our Hebrew-Christian spiritual tradition identifies the Absolute-God...with the moral and logical order of convention. This might almost be called a major cultural catastrophe, because it weights the social order with excessive authority, inviting just those revolutions against religion and tradition which have been so characteristic of Western History."<sup>49</sup> According to Watts, Zen philosophy could relax much of the social disconnect of the postwar period, of which Christianity was a part. In short, Zen makes us "much more at home in the world, floating much more easily upon the ocean of transience and insecurity."<sup>50</sup> The benefits of Zen are not supernatural, they are simply a better, more pleasurable life; they are solace.

Watts was not the only reason that Zen had become so chic during the postwar period. Watts' success was part of a larger cultural shift that included artists, choreographers, composers, poets, and novelists. Influenced by Zen, John Cage composed, "4'33" in 1952, a performance in which musicians sit silently for four minutes and thirty-three seconds. For Cage, the performance was intended to "still the mind and open it to 'divine influences.'"<sup>51</sup> According to Tweed and Prothero, the painter Robert Rauschenberg

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>49</sup> Watts, 1957, 28.

<sup>50</sup> Alan Watts, "Beat Zen, Square Sen, and Zen," *Chicago Review*, Summer 1958, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Tweed and Prothero, 218.

and choreographer Merce Cunningham had also incorporated Zen ideas into their art forms.<sup>52</sup> However, few Zen-influenced artists became as well-known as the Beat writers of the 1950s and early 1960s.

### Metaphysical Beats

Watts distanced himself from what he called “Beat Zen.” For him, the best interpretation and application of Zen to life in America would transcend the culture, rather than rebel against it, as he claimed was the orientation of Beat Zen. He writes,

But the Westerner who is attracted by Zen and who would understand it deeply must have one indispensable qualification: he must understand his own culture so thoroughly that he is no longer swayed by its premises unconsciously. He must really have come to terms with the Lord God Jehovah and with his Hebrew-Christian conscience so that he can take it or leave it without fear or rebellion. He must be free of the itch to justify himself. Lacking this, his Zen will be either ‘beat’ or ‘square.’<sup>53</sup>

Despite these criticisms, his metaphysically-inclined Buddhism provided inspiration for many Beat writers including Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Jack Kerouac. In *The Dharma Bums* (1958), Kerouac provides an autobiographical tale in which he and other Beat writers travel America. Like Watts’, Kerouac’s Zen is consciousness-centered. He writes,

[Japhy (an alias for Gary Snyder)] knew all the details of Tibetan, Chinese, Mahayana, Hinayana [Theravada], Japanese and even Burmese Buddhism but I warned him at once I didn’t give a goddamn about the mythology and all the names and national flavors of Buddhism, but was just interested in the first of Sakyamuni’s four noble truths, *All life is suffering*. And to an extent interested in the third, *The suppression of suffering can be achieved*, which I didn’t quite believe was possible then. (I hadn’t yet digested the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>53</sup> Watts, 1958, 5.

Lankavatara Scripture which eventually shows you that there's nothing in the world but the mind itself, and therefore all's possible including the suppression of suffering).<sup>54</sup>

Kerouac's Zen is metaphysical in part because of the way he focuses so heavily on consciousness – to the exclusion of the particular mythologies, practices and ethnic differences of Buddhism. His Zen is also metaphysical because one of the ways to practice Zen for Kerouac is to follow one's intuition. According to historian John Lardas Modern, "Kerouac retained belief in mystical intuition."<sup>55</sup> In *The Dharma Bums*, this metaphysical Zen intuition led Kerouac's alias Ray Smith into sexual indulgence, drug use, and violence, hardly the precepts of the fourth noble truth. However, the Beats were not only metaphysical in the sense that they were adapting consciousness-centered interpretations of Zen to life as American artists and writers. The Beats looked to literary metaphysical influences like William Blake, Walt Whitman, and Henry David Thoreau. Kerouac was first introduced to Zen not by Watts, or Suzuki, but by Thoreau's *Walden* (1854).<sup>56</sup> Ginsberg's literary inspiration originally came not from silent meditation or the chanting of a mantra, but from William Blake's disembodied voice, which he heard recite poetry in Harlem in 1945. It constituted a life-changing mystical experience.

Nearly about to graduate from Columbia, Ginsberg's lover, Neal Cassady, had just ended their relationship. His friends, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs had moved away. Ginsberg was feeling lonely and solitary. He compared his emotional health to that

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<sup>54</sup> Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (New York: Penguin, 1976), 8.

<sup>55</sup> John Lardas Modern, *The Bop Apocalypse: The Religious Visions of Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 246.

<sup>56</sup> Tweed and Prothero, 196.

of a “dark night of the soul.”<sup>57</sup> One night, he finished masturbating while reading Blake’s poem “Ah, Sun-flower” – a poem with which he was very familiar, when he heard a “deep earthen grave voice in the room.”<sup>58</sup> He intuited that the voice was Blake’s, and it was accompanied by a mystical experience. He describes a feeling of lightness, of waking up to “[t]he total consciousness then, of the complete universe. Which is what Blake was talking about. In other words a breakthrough from ordinary habitual quotidian consciousness into consciousness that was really seeing all of heaven in a flower.”<sup>59</sup>

Mystical feelings remained available to Ginsberg shortly thereafter, and marked a turning point in the poet’s life. He writes, “So I think this experience is characteristic of all high poetry. I mean that’s the way I began seeing poetry as the communication of the particular experience – not just any experience but *this* experience.”<sup>60</sup> Ginsberg vowed never to forget the experience, “now that I have seen this heaven on earth, I will never forget it, and I will never stop referring all things to it, I will never stop considering it the center of my human existence and the center of my life which is now changed...and from now on I’m chosen, blessed, sacred, poet, and this is my sunflower, or this is my new world.”<sup>61</sup> Ginsberg alluded to Blake in his most famous poem “Howl,” in which he writes,

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<sup>57</sup> Allen Ginsberg and Lewis Hyde, *On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 121.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

“who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and / Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war.”<sup>62</sup>

Ginsberg introduced “Howl” to the world at the Six Gallery reading at the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco in 1955.<sup>63</sup> The reading was attended by roughly one hundred people and included readings from other poets interested in Zen Buddhism including Philip Whalen and Gary Snyder. Michael McClure, another Beat who had found inspiration in Blake read as well. The reading was memorialized in Kerouac’s *The Dharma Bums*, and became the subject of obscenity charges for the poem’s sexual explicitness.<sup>64</sup> Eventually cleared of the charges, Ginsberg’s obscenity trial only added notoriety to the Beat movement and the Beat cultures that were developing in San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York.

Ginsberg wasn’t the only Beat to have a metaphysical encounter with a disembodied spirit. When Diane Di Prima was in high school, she was part of a group of poets who called themselves, “The Branded.”<sup>65</sup> The group included women who would become well-known poets, including Di Prima and Audre Lorde. Before classes they met together and wrote poetry. They also dabbled in metaphysical religious practices, experimenting with “magic, mental telepathy, and various occult arts with each other,

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<sup>62</sup> Allen Ginsberg, *Howl, and Other Poems* (San Francisco: City Lights Bookshop, 1956), 3.

<sup>63</sup> Jonah Raskin, *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg’s Howl and the Making of the Beat Generation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 154.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>65</sup> Alexis De Veaux, *Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 26.

testing their curiosity about mysticism and other non-conventional spiritual practices.”<sup>66</sup> Audre Lorde recalls performing séances in which they “raised the ghosts of Byron and Keats.”<sup>67</sup> In the early 1960s, Di Prima turned to Zen Buddhism, but she would later come back to her wider range of metaphysical roots, investigating esoteric traditions like Hermeticism, penning poems like “Paracelsus:” and authoring the preface to a 1975 translation of John Dee’s “The Hieroglyphic Monad.”<sup>68</sup> After returning to a wider swath of metaphysical practice, Di Prima asked Suzuki Roshi, her Zen teacher, if Zen and Hermeticism were at odds with one another. In a characteristically metaphysical way, she reports that he replied that Hermeticism and Zen are “two sides of the same coin.”<sup>69</sup>

However, the most metaphysical of the writers associated with the Beat generation was William S. Burroughs. “Uncle Bill” as he came to be known, never practiced Buddhism, and even distanced himself from the Beat movement, responding in an interview, “I don’t associate myself with [the Beat movement] at all, and never have, either with their objectives or their literary style.”<sup>70</sup> Despite his reluctance to consider himself a Beat, Burroughs maintained close ties with many of the Beats, especially Ginsberg, with whom he exchanged many letters. Whether a Beat or not, Ted Morgan, one of Burroughs’ biographers writes, “To Burroughs, behind everyday reality there was a reality of the spirit

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>67</sup> Audre Lorde, *Zami, A New Spelling of My Name* (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1982), 85.

<sup>68</sup> John Dee, *The Hieroglyphic Monad* (New York: S. Weiser, 1975).

<sup>69</sup> David Meltzer, *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2001), 17.

<sup>70</sup> Arthur Versluis, *American Gurus: From American Transcendentalism to New Age Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 101.

world, of psychic visitations, of curses, of possession and phantom beings. This was the single most important element of his life.”<sup>71</sup>

Burroughs’ life as a metaphysical began at an early age. Growing up in an upper-middle class home, he was raised with a cook and nanny, both of whom introduced him to occult practices, teaching him curses to use against people, causing them to fall down stairs and go blind.<sup>72</sup> He also described his mother as a psychic who was interested in magic.”<sup>73</sup> Still, his occult practices went beyond a few curses muttered as a child and a psychic mother.

In 1951, Burroughs played a game of William Tell with his wife. Joan Vollmer stood with a glass of alcohol over her head. Burroughs pointed a handgun at the glass and fired. Burroughs missed the glass but shot and killed his wife.<sup>74</sup> Although there are various explanations for the incident, Burroughs attributed it to being possessed by an entity that he would come to call, “The Ugly Spirit.”<sup>75</sup> He writes, “I live with the constant threat of possession, and a constant need to escape from possession, from Control. So the death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the Ugly Spirit, and manoeuvred me into a lifelong struggle, in which I have had no choice except to write my way out.”<sup>76</sup> For

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<sup>71</sup> Ted Morgan, *Literary Outlaw: The Life and Times of William S. Burroughs* (New York: H. Holt, 1988), 251.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>73</sup> William S. Burroughs, *The Place of Dead Roads* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1983), 167.

<sup>74</sup> Morgan, 208.

<sup>75</sup> William S. Burroughs, *Queer* (New York: Viking, 1985), xxi.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Burroughs, writing was the only way to appease the Ugly Spirit; he had to “write his way out.”

Burroughs’ writing was more than one half of a Faustian exchange; it had its own magical effects. Burroughs is well-known for developing the “cut-up” method of writing, a process whereby the author takes other pieces of work, cuts them into individual words and phrases, and rearranges them. Burroughs wrote his most famous novel, *Naked Lunch* (1958) in this way. The method of writing was innovative, however for Burroughs it was more than just a method for producing stories; the newly created narratives altered (or at least predicted) the future. In 1962, Burroughs was invited to a panel on “The Future of the Novel.” His talk provoked many in the audience when he suggested the metaphysical powers of the cut-up method. Khushwant Singh asked “Are you *serious*?” after hearing Burroughs’ claims. Uncle Bill replied “Perfectly.”<sup>77</sup>

Burroughs and the Beats were an important part of metaphysical religion in the postwar period. Rebelling against tri-faith America, they popularized metaphysical interpretations of Zen Buddhism. At the same time, their literary inspiration came from a wide range of metaphysicals, from William Blake and Walt Whitman, and from séance spiritualism and occultism. They are metaphysical not only because of their interest in consciousness-centered interpretations of Zen, but also because of their metaphysical literary antecedents. In the case of Burroughs, metaphysical religion never took the form of Buddhism, but instead followed occult traditions. He even innovated a kind of divination, cousin to the metaphysical practice of automatic writing.

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<sup>77</sup> Morgan, 361.

## Metaphysical Gurus

In addition to the metaphysical practices of Mind-cure Christians, consciousness expanders, Zen Buddhists, and Beats, Indian and American gurus promoted various forms of yoga and what scholar of religion Lola Williamson calls “Hindu-inspired meditation movements” (HIMMs).<sup>78</sup> In 1920, Paramahansa Yogananda began the *Self-Realization Fellowship* to promote his teachings on *kriya yoga* that he called “Yogoda.”<sup>79</sup> Yogananda was one of the most influential yogis in American history. Williamson writes that, “It would be difficult to say whether Vivekananda or Yogananda had a greater impact on America.”<sup>80</sup> She describes thousands of people being turned away from a lecture he was to deliver in Los Angeles in the 1930s.<sup>81</sup>

After twenty-six years in America, and having already attracted widespread attention, Yogananda published *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946). In the text, Yogananda describes the supernatural powers of his guru, Sri Yukteswar, whom he allegedly recognized from a previous life and who possessed clairvoyant knowledge of Yogananda’s past and future. Yogananda used the autobiography to introduce Americans to his teachings on yoga, but he did so in a characteristically metaphysical way. The text included allusions to unusual powers of the mind, emphasizing the psychic capabilities of his guru, as well as describing yoga as a “scientific method” that would lead to a special

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<sup>78</sup> Lola Williamson, *Transcendent in America: Hindu-Inspired Meditation Movements as New Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

<sup>79</sup> Jackson, 131.

<sup>80</sup> Williamson, 56.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

type of consciousness. Yogananda's teachings described also the cultivation of energy in the form of "kundalini power."<sup>82</sup> Albanese points to the way Yogananda compares the human body to a battery, describing Yogoda as the means to manipulate the energy contained within it.<sup>83</sup>

Yogananda's metaphysical message meshed well with other metaphysicals of tri-faith America. Like Peale's Christianized form of Mind-cure, Yogananda blended his metaphysical practice with Christianity, often speaking of the "Christ within," and including a "barrage of footnotes" with "Christian gospel references and theological points regarding Christ" and adding as well a "copious supply of quotations from Emerson."<sup>84</sup> Also like Peale, Yogananda suggested that practicing Yogoda would "surely bring success."<sup>85</sup>

Yogananda died in 1952, and the Self-Realization Fellowship that had at one point boasted over 150,000 initiates and 150 centers splintered into factional groups.<sup>86</sup> The book *Autobiography of a Yogi* became a "religious literature classic," influencing many Americans who would later look to India for religious inspiration.<sup>87</sup> Like many others in the 1940s and 1950s, Yogananda emphasized his form of yoga's compatibility with

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<sup>82</sup> Albanese, 369.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 370.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 369.

<sup>85</sup> Jackson, 132.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Williamson, 138.

Christianity even as he simultaneously popularized a metaphysical religion within the veneer of tri-faith America.

After World War II, more Americans than ever before identified as either Protestant, Catholic or Jew. More Americans attended religious services than ever before. Belief in God was as common as it has ever been. However high these statistical indicators, religion in postwar America was not uniform. Metaphysicals published some of the most popular texts of the time, introducing readers to the Mind-cure movement, to explorations of consciousness and mystical experiences, and to metaphysical interpretations of Asian religions. The high-watermark statistics of postwar America are not incorrect, but they can be misleading. In the United States, metaphysicals have adapted their beliefs and practices to a variety of historical and cultural contexts, and postwar America is no different. Metaphysical religion prospered within the veneer of tri-faith America. However, as the 1950s gave way to the 1960s, the counterculture was about to strip away the illusion of religious unity. With the help of the underground press, metaphysical religion was about to emerge from beneath the veneer of tri-faith America.

## CHAPTER 2 – THE METAPHYSICAL UNDERGROUND

In the Spring of 1966, Allen Cohen dreamed that he was flying around the world and that wherever he looked, he saw newspapers filled with colorful rainbows.<sup>1</sup> Cohen shared the dream with his partner, who in turn shared the dream with their neighbors in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco. By the time Cohen made it to work at Ron and Jay Thelin's Psychedelic Shop, Ron Thelin was ready to offer start-up money for the rainbow newspaper. Within a year, Cohen was the editor of the *San Francisco Oracle*, a pioneering underground newspaper, known especially for vibrant colors, psychedelic art, and metaphysical content.

At its peak, nearly 125,000 people purchased the underground newspaper. Issues found their way to New Zealand, India, Vietnam, Prague and Moscow.<sup>2</sup> Cohen reports decades later that, "To this day, I meet people who tell me how they had seen an *Oracle* in some small town in West Virginia, or thereabouts. They attribute to that sighting of the *Oracle* their recognition that they were not alone on a dark planet in an empty universe. From that moment on they date the beginning of their journey toward self-realization."<sup>3</sup> According to Abbie Hoffman, the *San Francisco Oracle* was "Our version of the

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<sup>1</sup> Allen Cohen, "The San Francisco Oracle: A Brief History," *San Francisco Oracle, Facsimile Edition: The Psychedelic Newspaper of the Haight-Ashbury, 1966-1968* (Berkeley, CA: Regent, 1991), xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., xxxi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages.”<sup>4</sup> He suggests, “Old copies of *The Oracles* should be dug up and studied. They were the real McCoy.”<sup>5</sup>

#### Technological and Economic Context

It was relatively novel for Cohen and the Thelin brothers to be able to start a newspaper for only five hundred dollars. Until the middle of the 1950s, virtually all books and newspapers were letterpress printed. Before the development of photo offset printing, publishing a letterpressed periodical required thousands of dollars.<sup>6</sup> With photo offset printing, a publisher could “print thousands of copies of a periodical for hundreds of dollars.”<sup>7</sup>

Photo offset printing not only made printing a periodical financially accessible, it also enabled greater artistic expression than letterpress printing. Publishers could print anything they could draw or design, and they could experiment with colored inks. Countercultural communities and many individuals took advantage of the newly available medium and published hundreds of periodicals.

The majority of these periodicals were relatively small, serving fewer than ten thousand subscribers. They also were short-lived and unlikely to turn a profit. According to chronicler of underground papers Robert J. Glessing, “most underground newspapers

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., xv.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Robert J. Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1970), 43.

<sup>7</sup> John McMillan, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7.

have a lifespan of approximately twelve to eighteen months.<sup>8</sup>” Contributing to the short lifespan of the papers was the difficulty of turning a profit with an Underground newspaper. Many publishers relied on outside income, sometimes selling marijuana and LSD, to pay for life’s daily expenses. A 1969 survey published in *Rolling Stone* suggests that only 28 per cent of papers involved in the Underground Press Syndicate reported profits.<sup>9</sup> Glessing calls starting an Underground newspaper financially “precarious.”<sup>10</sup>

However, in Countercultural enclaves like Los Angeles, Berkeley, San Francisco, and New York, underground papers grew to be quite large. In 1969, the *Los Angeles Free Press* printed nearly 100,000 copies per issue; the *Berkeley Barb* printed eighty-five thousand copies; the *East Village Other* printed sixty-five thousand.<sup>11</sup> Allen Cohen and the staff of the *San Francisco Oracle* printed 125,000 copies of their seventh issue which featured the complete transcript of a meeting between Allen Ginsberg, Alan Watts, Gary Snyder and Tim Leary.<sup>12</sup> The cover of the issue featured images of the four metaphysicals beneath a rainbow-colored temple that resembled Angkor Wat. Cohen’s vision had come true.

Despite being financially precarious, all over North America people like Allen Cohen started their own underground newspapers. They were printed in virtually every

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<sup>8</sup> Glessing, 96.

<sup>9</sup> McMillan, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Glessing, 96.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, xxxviii.

major city and in many college towns. The majority of these people were not interested in journalism as an end, but as a means for communication. As Thorne Dreyer and Victoria Smith put it, people involved with underground newspapers “generally see themselves as activists or organizers first, and journalists second.”<sup>13</sup> Without the intent to make money, many publishers of underground newspapers ran their papers differently than if they had been interested in profit. Glessing reports that he found two uncashed checks when investigating the UPS’s files.<sup>14</sup> When he called it to the attention of the organization, he was instructed, “Oh forget ‘em; God provides money whe[n] we need it.”<sup>15</sup> In the cases of Art Kunkin, editor of the *Los Angeles Free Press*, and Max Scherr, editor of the *Berkeley Barb*, making too much profit became a problem.

Kunkin founded the *Los Angeles Free Press* in 1964. The first issue was sold at the Renaissance Pleasure Faire financed by the local radio station KPFK. Entitled the *Faire Free Press*, the first issue faked the news of citizens protesting the use of crossbows and that William Shakespeare had been “busted for obscenity.”<sup>16</sup> Inside the issue was a report of a police raid at the showing of Kenneth Anger’s *Scorpio Rising*, and a story about “Joan Baez’s refusal to pay any Vietnam-bound taxes.”<sup>17</sup> After the Faire, Kunkin turned the papers inside out and continued selling them – twelve hundred copies of the first issue.

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<sup>13</sup> Thorne Dreyer and Victoria Smith, “The Movement and the New Media,” Liberation News Service packet 144, March 1, 1969, 21. As quoted in McMillan, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Glessing, 95.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Kunkin began the paper after working for the *East L.A. Almanac*, a paper published by Mexican-American political radicals that covered issues local to Los Angeles.<sup>18</sup> After criticizing Lyndon Johnson for “ignoring minority issues during a visit to Los Angeles, both [Kunkin] and his bosses at the plant had been visited by FBI agents.”<sup>19</sup> Kunkin lost his job in January of 1964 as a result of the FBI visit, and he was angry enough to start his own paper. Modeled after the *Village Voice*, Kunkin started the *Los Angeles Free Press* with the intention of publishing a community-based paper that would provide countercultural perspectives of both politics and art. He commented, “I wanted a paper that would draw together all the diverse elements in the community, and that would be not only political, but cultural as well. I had been hanging around the coffee houses and the poetry groups, the small theaters and so forth, so I knew there was a whole life there.”<sup>20</sup>

The *Free Press*’s coverage of the Watts riots in 1965 increased the paper’s sales and visibility. On August 11, 1965 a white police officer brutalized a black man for driving under the influence. A week of violence ensued, including the deployment of thousands of police officers and military personnel, arson, and 34 deaths. Daily papers like the *Los Angeles Times* condemned the violence, suggesting in the August 17 issue that “none should condone the criminal terrorism, or dismiss it as the inevitable result of economic and sociological pressures.”<sup>21</sup> The *Free Press*, however, interpreted the violence as exactly that,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 26.

suggesting that the violence was not rioting but “demonstrations in the streets.”<sup>22</sup> The August 20 issue of the *Free Press* proclaimed in bold letters, “The Negroes Have Voted!”<sup>23</sup> In that issue, and in many that followed, the *Free Press* interpreted the riots as the result of racial injustice. The paper found an audience, and “in subsequent years Kunkin’s paper was the place to turn for coverage of ghetto unrest, black nationalism, and the multicultural Left.”<sup>24</sup> It also provided information about visiting gurus, news coverage of Timothy Leary, reviews of metaphysical books, and advertisements for local metaphysical goods and services.

The *Free Press* prospered. By 1970, Kunkin had expanded the paper to a circulation of nine-thousand and had opened three bookstores and a printing plant all of which grossed more than \$1 million a year.<sup>25</sup> Kunkin’s publishing ventures may have been financially successful, however making a comfortable living as the publisher of an underground newspaper was controversial. Kunkin’s economic success cast him in a capitalist light, and many people criticized him for driving around Los Angeles in a Pontiac convertible fitted with a mobile telephone.<sup>26</sup> As researcher Robert Glessing puts it, “Among the politically radical underground papers there is an unspoken principle that a paper cannot be politically effective and fiscally secure at the same time.”<sup>27</sup> Glessing

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<sup>22</sup> McMillan, 42.

<sup>23</sup> Art Kunkin, “The Negroes Have Voted!,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, August 20, 1965, 1.

<sup>24</sup> McMillan, 43.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

argues that because the *Freep* was profitable, radical editors derided it as “relatively harmless to the establishment.”<sup>28</sup> Financial success cost Kunkin countercultural credibility. The same was true for Max Scherr of the *Berkeley Barb*.

Scherr founded the *Berkeley Barb* in 1965. Previously, Scherr had owned the “dark, atmosphere-ridden” Steppenwolf, a bar frequented by radical, new-left politicians.<sup>29</sup> There, he participated in politically-charged, left-wing conversations. Despite not being affiliated with the University of California, Scherr became an active participant in local politics and on the UC Berkeley campus, even organizing a picketing of the Atomic Energy Commission.<sup>30</sup> According to Scherr, it was his activity in the political life of Berkeley that highlighted the need for a paper providing perspectives not contained in daily newspapers or on television. Scherr recalls, “we all sensed a need for a real community paper.”<sup>31</sup> By 1969, Scherr was printing eighty-five thousand copies of his weekly periodical, the *Berkeley Barb*. Papers were sold in psychedelic shops, occult book stores, coffee shops and local countercultural businesses. Scores of countercultural street-vendors and merchants peddled the papers on street corners every Friday when the paper came out.<sup>32</sup>

In June 1969, the *Berkeley Fascist*, a small satirical paper published by anthropology professor Allan Coult, suggested that Scherr was netting \$2,500 per week

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<sup>28</sup> Glessing, 84.

<sup>29</sup> Laurence Leamer, *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 30.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Glessing, 90.

from the newspaper.<sup>33</sup> The staff at the *Barb*, feeling that they were being underpaid and that Scherr's profits should have been returned to the countercultural community, went on strike. Steve Haines wrote in the *Barb on Strike* issue "We felt that it is sheer hypocrisy for the Barb to mouth the words of revolution while lining Max's pockets with the people's cash. We felt that Barb profits should go for bail funds, legal-defense funds, medical clinics."<sup>34</sup>

Scherr began negotiations to sell the paper to its staff, collectively named the Red Mountain Tribe after a cheap wine.<sup>35</sup> Scherr offered to sell the paper for \$140,000 plus interest, but required that the one-thousand dollar per week payments continue to be paid if Berkeley's police were to shut down the paper. The possibility of the paper being shut down was a real threat, and the Red Mountain Tribe refused. Scherr "heisted his own subscription lists, typewriters and supplies."<sup>36</sup> Former staff members picketed the offices of the *Barb*, "Stew Albert marched in front of the Barb's storefront with a sign saying 'Max Miser.' 'Max is a pig' another placard proclaimed."<sup>37</sup> The strike and subsequent boycott took a toll on Scherr's health, and he soon sold the paper to Allan Coult. The Red Mountain Tribe founded their own underground newspaper the *Berkeley Tribe*. They elected editors and fixed salaries at thirty dollars a week for all staff. The tribe's logo was a yin-yang

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<sup>33</sup> Peck, 188.

<sup>34</sup> Leamer, 58.

<sup>35</sup> Peck, 188.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

symbol encapsulated by an ouroboros.<sup>38</sup> The *Berkeley Tribe* became the hip new underground paper; Max Scherr was not publishing, and Allan Coult, accused of working for the CIA, published the *Berkeley Barb*.<sup>39</sup> The *Barb*'s sales declined.

Under Scherr, the *Berkeley Barb* contained advertisements for local metaphysical groups, however during Coult's tenure, the *Barb* became remarkably metaphysical, featuring many articles on Asian religions and a heightened interest in consciousness. On September 5, 1969, Coult published a lengthy article entitled "Yoga and Orgasm" which synthesized Willhelm Reich's psychoanalytic theories with Yoga and Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>40</sup> The article was extended into the following issue, and Coult subsequently published instructions for the construction of an "Orgone energy accumulator," a device created by Reich intended to funnel orgone energy into the user of the device.<sup>41</sup> Under Coult's editorship, the staff of the *Barb* listed the names "Krishna, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva," although no specific articles were attributed to the people (or deities).<sup>42</sup> Columnist SM Wesley authored a regular column called the "Berkeley Bulb," which explored meditation, dreams, and mind-body connection. Impacted by the strike and accused of working for the CIA, the increase in metaphysical content did not reverse the paper's waning sales. Coult, delinquent on payments, ceded the paper back to Scherr in January of 1970.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> "Published by The Red Mountain Tribe," *Berkeley Barb*, July 11, 1969, 2.

<sup>39</sup> "CIA Buys Barb," *Berkeley Barb*, August 1, 1969, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Allan Coult, "Yoga and Orgasm," *Berkeley Barb*, September 5, 1969, 7.

<sup>41</sup> "Dharma Dodgers' Device:," *Berkeley Barb*, September 19, 1969, 4.

<sup>42</sup> "Berkeley Barb," *Berkeley Barb*, September 12, 1969, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Peck, 188.

Kunkin's and Scherr's financial success met opposition from the countercultural communities in which they were embedded. For many who opposed American capitalism and government, these papers were hypocritical, winning profit while serving communities opposed to the idea of capitalism. The controversies over Kunkin's and Scherr's income reveal the degree to which underground papers were understood to be participants in a political and cultural revolution. Success was not measured by income or longevity, but by how effectively a paper challenged the status quo.<sup>44</sup> For many of these publishers, one's prospects for change were limited if one was actively engaged in a capitalist venture.

Although a few papers like the *Freep* and *Berkeley Barb* were successful, the majority of Underground publishers never had to worry about turning too high of a profit. Small publications operated on total budgets of less than one thousand dollars.<sup>45</sup> Publishers often did whatever they needed to save money. The papers' offices were usually in "low-rent, depressed urban areas," and some were published from editors' homes.<sup>46</sup> The *Rag* in Austin, Texas operated out of a room in the YMCA.<sup>47</sup> Glessing reports that some publishers of underground papers regularly shoplifted supplies.<sup>48</sup>

Income came primarily from advertisers, including classified sex ads. Advertisements made up about thirty percent of an underground papers' printed content.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Glessing, 84.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> McMillan, 56.

<sup>48</sup> Glessing, 94.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 91.

The cost of purchasing an ad in an Underground newspaper ran anywhere from forty dollars for a full page ad to hundreds of dollars for a page in large publications like the *Freep*, *Barb*, and *San Francisco Oracle*. Music producers especially relied on underground papers, believing that they were able to get a wide circulation for a small amount of money. Local occult book stores, sex shops, massage parlors, psychedelic shops, and food co-ops also regularly purchased ads in underground papers.

Classified sex ads were sold for up to six dollars per inch in the most well-circulated papers.<sup>50</sup> The ads were usually grouped together towards the backs of the papers, sometimes sharing the page with advertisements for metaphysical services like astrology, meditation groups and mediums. They often featured images of nude women and became the basis of obscenity charges brought against Underground newspapers. Many within the counterculture bemoaned the ads as evidence of sexism within the papers.<sup>51</sup> Even after a national conference of underground papers resolved to eliminate the ads, they were so profitable that most papers could not do without them.<sup>52</sup> *The East Village Other* featured weekly half-page personal ads called “Slum Goddesses” advertising the company of young women in the area, often with partially-nude photos. Allan Katzman, editor of the *East Village Other*, defended the sex ads, “They perform an important service for the sexually frustrated and lonely New York readers who have no other advertising medium.”<sup>53</sup> The ads

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>51</sup> McMillan, 121. John McMillan describes a number of feminists who complained at a national underground conference about the sexism of the papers ads.

<sup>52</sup> Glessing, 92.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

may not have bothered some metaphysicals whose images and messages were advertised alongside them, however one can only wonder how relatively conservative groups and gurus felt about sharing the page with people seeking partners for orgies and sexual fetishes.

In addition to advertisements, the majority of Underground papers made income from street vendors and the sale of individual copies. Subscriptions only accounted for around ten per cent of a paper's income. The *San Francisco Oracle* advertised subscriptions of 24 issues for five dollars, however only twelve issues were ever published. Perhaps because they published inconsistently and shut-down often, underground papers could not rely on paid subscriptions to the same degree that well-established daily papers could. Instead, Underground papers relied on street vendors, avant-garde book stores, and psychedelic shops to peddle individual issues.

Because the papers challenged governmental authority, printed four-letter words, and images of nude bodies, vendors risked harassment and criminal charges for selling the papers. On October 10, 1966, George Vizard was peddling the first issue of the *Rag* at the University of Texas at Austin: "Commie propoganda – get it while it's hot!...Page six is soaked in LSD," he bellowed.<sup>54</sup> According to McMillan, "Vizard was approached by the chief of campus security, who threatened to arrest him. When Vizard blew him off ('Hell man, I've been busted before. That doesn't scare me. I'm here to sell papers, not to bull it with you'), a crowd of onlookers cheered him on."<sup>55</sup> Glessing reports that distributors of

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<sup>54</sup> McMillan, 59.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

underground papers were arrested in Berkeley, San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York.<sup>56</sup> Glessing writes, “One arrest for possession of obscene material can cost a distributor a week’s profits.”<sup>57</sup> However risky they were to sell, underground papers were publicly available.

Available in countercultural book stores, psychedelic shops, coffee shops, on street corners and by subscription, underground papers were not very hard to obtain. In fact, they were highly visible periodicals, drawing much attention and criticism. They were often freely available at public festivals, protests, and rock concerts. The papers provided topics of conversation for those participating in countercultural events and at coffee shops and book stores. Papers were visible enough to draw the criticism of those opposed to their perspectives and content. Eugene Lyons of *Dateline* called Underground papers “a dunghill on which no flowers grow.”<sup>58</sup> In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the underground press was a topic of television shows and magazine articles.

As early as 1965, television personality Joe Pyne, a conservative and combative talk show host interviewed Art Kunkin about the *Los Angeles Free Press*.<sup>59</sup> Knowing that Pyne had an audience of one million viewers, Kunkin thought that the show might provide some free advertising. Kunkin describes Pyne’s show by quoting a reader, “intense hostility

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<sup>56</sup> Glessing, 88.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>58</sup> Leamer, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Art Kunkin, “Free Press Editor Nervously Takes on Joe Pyne,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, September 3, 1965, 10.

and frequent savage rudeness; the kind of interruption and over-talking that does not allow opposing opinion to get full play...The dissenting guest is heckled intermittently before he has a chance to develop his arguments.”<sup>60</sup> When Kunkin appeared, Pyne derided the *Los Angeles Free Press*, arguing that it was “filthy” for defending “homosexuality, free love, the legalization of abortion, the legalization of marijuana,” and the actions of “looters and rioters”; he concluded, “this is a paper that stinks.”<sup>61</sup> Kunkin defended his paper calmly, gloating in an article that by the end of the interview the audience had turned against Pyne. The producer of the show remarked, “You know, so far this has been the Art Kunkin show!”<sup>62</sup> Kunkin returned to life as an editor of a then small underground newspaper, and one million people had heard about the paper’s topics and perspectives. Underground papers may have been small and short-lived, but they drew much attention and provided important services for the burgeoning counterculture.

Papers like the *San Francisco Oracle*, the *Los Angeles Free Press* and the *Berkeley Barb* took advantage of the new printing technology, and in less than a year, each of these papers played an important role for the countercultural communities that read them. Despite the majority of papers being small, unprofitable and short-lived, collectively they became emblematic of a countercultural explosion of civil unrest and revolutionary intentions. They are some of the best records we have of the counterculture that emerged in the late 1960s, and like the counterculture that produced them, many underground papers

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

promoted metaphysical practices and ideas. Although it might have seemed unlikely in the 1950s, metaphysical religion exploded in the late 1960s, and underground newspapers were part of the reason. However, the metaphysical communities that produced and consumed underground newspapers had been steadily growing in the years leading up to Cohen's illuminated manuscripts. The metaphysical activity that was occurring within the veneer of tri-faith America included literary precursors to the underground press.

#### Literary Precursors to the Underground Press

Beat poets in San Francisco began publishing their own poetry-centered periodical, *Beatitude*, in 1959. The magazine featured many unpublished poets, and characteristic of Beat interest, the magazine included poems and images inspired by metaphysical religion. It published the poetry of metaphysicals like Ginsberg, Philip Whalen, and Allen Cohen. In 1962, Ed Sanders published a mimeographed magazine, *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, with the clear intention of flouting social norms. It depicted ejaculating penises, drug use, and sexually explicit poetry. It provoked American government and law officials. Like *Beatitude*, Sanders' magazine showed signs of metaphysical inspiration. One cover depicts an ouroboros encircling a peace sign.<sup>63</sup> Many issues contain images and religious symbols taken from ancient Egypt. The magazine also supported drug use, at least partly intended as religious inspiration. A 1964 issue reads in large print, "God Thru Cannabis."<sup>64</sup> Sanders also printed the poetry of metaphysicals like Ginsberg, Di Prima, and Burroughs.

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<sup>63</sup> Ed Sanders, *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, August, 1962, 1.

<sup>64</sup> "A Call to Action: Stomp out the Marijuana Laws Forever," *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, April/May, 1964, 3.

Periodicals like *Beatitude* and *Fuck You* were avenues for young rebellious and often metaphysically-inclined poets to express themselves and to challenge many of America's sexual and political norms. They were printed using inexpensive materials and had small, local readerships. In many ways they were precursors of a much more robust print culture of the underground press.

Metaphysical groups also published periodicals during the post-war period. Institutionalized groups like the Vedanta Society, the Theosophical Society, Christian Scientists and the I AM activity printed their own periodicals. By the 1950s and early 1960s, many of them had been circulating for decades. As the organs of metaphysical groups, these periodicals were distinct from the metaphysical religion that appeared tangentially in the mimeographed poetry magazines like *Beatitude*, and they were not so revolutionary as the underground press that emerged in the 1960s. Although there were periodicals promoting and alluding to metaphysical religion in postwar America, the most widely recognized literary precursors to the underground press shared more than an interest in metaphysical religion.

For the majority of authors chronicling the underground press, the *Village Voice* and the *Realist* presaged an ironic, political and cultural style that blossomed in the underground press.<sup>65</sup> Both periodicals began in New York in the 1950s. However different their styles, both would inspire important features of the underground press.

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<sup>65</sup> See Leamer, 22; Glessing, 12; Peck, 10; McMillan, 33.

Ed Fancher, Dan Wolf, John Wilcock, and Norman Mailer began printing the *Village Voice* in 1955.<sup>66</sup> The weekly paper included issues local to Greenwich Village, and focused especially on the burgeoning art scene. The *Voice* included theatre, film and book reviews, as well as a “letters” section in which editors printed letters received from readers. Because of how embedded the paper was in its location in Greenwich Village, publishing these letters turned the paper into something of a local forum where people could voice their (often dissenting) opinions. One reverend’s letter printed in an early issue voices more than distaste for the new periodical,

In the fifty years of my life I have had at least twenty visions; ergo, when I say that last night I visioned *The Village Voice* to become *the* most provoking journal of balderdash in this city of young hoodlums and [l]esbians, all you editors had better mend your ways and, if you’re wise, abandon all, and flee. The white of your paper is the white flesh of Satan, the black of your ink is the black blood of Satan.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to serving (and provoking) its local community, the *Voice* was remarkable for Wolf’s light editorial hand. The *Voice* regularly printed words and opinions from which the majority of periodicals would have shied away. Glessing writes, “The *Voice* was also the first newspaper in the history of modern American journalism to consistently report news with no restriction on language.”<sup>68</sup> Wolf was reportedly so flexible as an editor that one of his friends recalls that he “was a brilliant editor because he didn’t edit...Every writer was crazy about him.”<sup>69</sup> Covering local issues, reviewing the arts, and light editing

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<sup>66</sup> Glessing, 13.

<sup>67</sup> Mose M. Jackson, “A Warning,” *The Village Voice*, November 9, 1955, 4.

<sup>68</sup> Glessing, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Judy Feiffer, as quoted in McMillan, 33.

were features of the *Voice* that would become important parts of the later underground press. Art Kunkin modeled the *Freep* after the *Voice*'s blend of local and cultural interests, "I liked the investigative articles, their length, the mixture of culture and community. The *Voice* in a certain sense was the model for the *Free Press*."<sup>70</sup>

In addition to the *Voice*, Krassner's the *Realist* also presaged the underground press. Krassner started the *Realist* at the age of 26 while working as a freelance writer for *Mad* magazine and living at his parents' home in New York City.<sup>71</sup> Krassner felt the need for a periodical in the satirical style of *Mad*, but geared toward adults. He recalls, "I founded the *Realist* as a *Mad* for adults."<sup>72</sup> Krassner had studied comedy as Lenny Bruce's apprentice, and felt that through satirical humor, he would be able to say something about current events, and especially about religion. The *Realist* became the medium through which he expressed himself.

If the *Voice* pushed the envelope by publishing four-letter words and dissenting political opinions, the *Realist* burned the proverbial envelope and inhaled the smoke. Leamer writes, "Even the first (June-July) issue displayed the sense of irreverence, iconoclasm and (for that era) just plain bad taste, for which Krassner and the *Realist* would soon be notorious."<sup>73</sup> Leamer describes some of the *Realist*'s early headlines, including "Sodomy in Kilts" which covered recent Scottish laws against homosexuality. Krassner

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<sup>70</sup> Peck, 23.

<sup>71</sup> McMillan, 35.

<sup>72</sup> Peck, 11.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

offended many by printing a cartoon image titled “The Disneyland Memorial Orgy” and a poster and bumper sticker that read, “Fuck Communism” in patriotic red, white, and blue. Peck writes that Krassner, “giggled while smoke poured out of the ears of both right-wing prudes and rigid Leftists.”<sup>74</sup>

In addition to prodding at moral sensibilities, the *Realist* also presaged the underground press by including strongly-worded opinions and fabricated material, both of which would become characteristic of the underground press. Henry Morgan described the periodical, “I am enamored of the *Realist*, because even if I throw up at some of its opinions, I am so delighted that it *has* any I’m anxious to keep it around.”<sup>75</sup> Sometimes those strongly held opinions were expressed through fabrication. In one article, Krassner described a weekend spent at Millbrook, Timothy Leary’s psychedelic commune. At the estate, Leary had designated a certain room as the meditation room, where people were to use LSD under the observation of a guide. Krassner writes, “Upstairs, I described how there was a bulletin board with a list of all the guides with stars pasted next to their names according to how far they had transcended their ego.”<sup>76</sup> This, he admits, he had made up, however it helped convey some of his perspective of the experience he had had there. For Krassner, embellishing and fabricating stories was part of satire, but that a satire was possible, “[said] something about the way things [were].”<sup>77</sup> Fabricating stories also served

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Leamer, 24.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

Krassner's intention of provoking people, "I wanted to blow peoples' minds, and it's really a mind blower if you can't tell if something is real or not."<sup>78</sup> In addition to printing intentionally provoking material, the *Realist* foreshadowed the subjective and sometimes fabricated information in the Underground press.

Being embedded in the hip culture that was developing in New York, the *Voice* covered and published metaphysical artists and poets, especially the Beats. As metaphysicals became an increasingly visible part of the counterculture, the *Voice* sold ads to metaphysical businesses like psychedelic shops, book stores and yoga studios. Metaphysical groups used the *Voice* to inform readers of weekly meetings, where they would discuss their various philosophies. The *Voice* came to be a kind of metaphysical institution, helping metaphysicals form networks and establish groups. Metaphysicals would come to use the underground press that came later in similar ways.

The *Realist* never sold ad space, and did not regularly cover metaphysical artists, however it did share an important perspective with many metaphysicals. From the beginning, the *Realist* took a critical stance toward what it called "organized religion." Krassner writes, "[The *Realist*] is devoted to the reporting and analysis of timely and significant conflicts that are ignored or treated only superficially by the general press. Much of the material, therefore, will be critical of specific social and political activities of organized religion."<sup>79</sup> The same issue includes an article titled, "What Makes Wyatt Urp?"

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Krassner, "An Angry Young Magazine," *The Realist*, June-July, 1958, 1.

in which Krassner documents the ways that faith-healer Thomas Wyatt was petitioning his listeners for money.

Krassner's attacks on organized religion were sometimes levied at metaphysical practitioners. In an article titled, "Norman Vincent Pollyanna," Krassner reports that Norman Vincent Peale had given a sermon in which he mentioned that a maintenance worker at his church had discovered a bust of Shakespeare. When Peale found out that the bust was valuable, he removed it from the maintenance worker's office and placed it in his own, where it then provided him inspiration as he composed sermons.<sup>80</sup> Krassner sarcastically asks if the maintenance worker was a positive thinker.

As much as Krassner was ready to take shots at Timothy Leary and Norman Vincent Peale, he also provided space for other metaphysicals to express their opinions. Robert Anton Wilson published a regular column in early issues of the *Realist*. In his articles, he covers philosophical and religious questions, often combining the insights of Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism in his discussions. In the December 1959 issue, Krassner printed an interview that he had conducted with Alan Watts.<sup>81</sup> In the interview, Watts refuses to identify with "any system of thought" and criticizes Christians for believing that some of their myths are literally true. Later in the interview, Watts distinguishes Buddhism from religion, arguing that Buddhism is a "way of liberation" rather than "an aid to social solidarity...a revealed rule of life which one hears and obeys."<sup>82</sup> Like many metaphysicals

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<sup>80</sup> Paul Krassner, "Inside Norman Vincent Pollyanna," *The Realist*, August, 1959, 9.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Krassner, "An Impolite Interview with Alan Watts," *The Realist*, December, 1959, 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

that would follow, in the interview Watts argues that the goal of religion is salvation, and that the goal of Buddhism “and other Eastern traditions” is liberation.

Metaphysical religion was prevalent enough in post-war America that it found its way into many periodicals. Sometimes metaphysicals used periodicals to advertise their goods and services, sometimes they used them to express themselves, either in art or in articles, and in the case of the *Realist*, sometimes they became the targets of criticism. Even though the *Voice* and the *Realist* published during the late 1960s, neither of them ever joined the Underground Press Syndicate, and they were always seen as something different, but related. Norman Mailer, one of the founders of the *Village Voice* left after only four months, in part because the paper was not as revolutionary as he had wanted. Mailer writes, “[The other editors of the *Voice*] wanted it to be successful, I wanted it to be outrageous. I had the feeling of an underground revolution on its way.”<sup>83</sup> Krassner became an active participant in the counterculture of the 1960s, traveling around as one of Ken Kesey’s Merry Pranksters, and he published a column called “Rumpleforeskin” that was syndicated in many underground papers. However, Krassner perceived important differences between the *Realist* and the underground press that emerged later. McMillan writes that “when *People* magazine ran a profile describing Krassner as the ‘father of the underground press,’ he replied, ‘I demand a blood test.’”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Glessing, 15.

<sup>84</sup> McMillan, 36.

#### Four Characteristics of Underground Papers

According to Thomas King Forcade, the one-time coordinator of the Underground Press Syndicate, “Some people say the underground press began with the socialist papers of the early 1900s, while others trace it either to the beatnik little magazines of the fifties or to the *Village Voice*. While it is certainly true that there are some similarities between these early efforts and the current underground press, the latter is a separate and unique phenomenon with a history of its own. That history began with the founding of the Los Angeles *Free Press* in 1964.”<sup>85</sup> Even if earlier periodicals had influenced the underground press, papers like the *Freep*, the *Berkeley Barb*, the *East Village Other*, and the *San Francisco Oracle* were significantly different. These periodicals constituted a new kind of medium that was different than any that had come before it. They came to be called Underground papers, and they were: 1. intensely local, 2. embedded in countercultural communities, 3. democratic, and 4. facilitated a national youth movement.

In the first place, underground papers were intensely local, regularly covering local culture and politics, much like the *Voice*, although in a more engaged way. In addition to printing material advertising and reviewing local events and arts, underground papers often became actively engaged in local politics. They promoted certain candidates and helped organize demonstrations. Whereas the *Voice* was embedded in the cultural life of Greenwich Village, it never gained the political reputation of underground papers.

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<sup>85</sup> Peck, 22.

Additionally, underground papers were thoroughly embedded in countercultural communities. They published countercultural opinions, often those that were being ignored by daily newspapers, including opposition to the Vietnam war and challenges to cultural norms relating to sex and drugs. Underground papers also printed images and poetry that reflected countercultural aesthetics and values, often containing controversial images and words that flouted many people's moral sensibilities.

Because of their countercultural values, publishers of underground papers operated with a democratic ethos. They were committed to printing without a heavy editorial hand and to providing space for readers to express their opinions. Although the papers were often published by and for the American counterculture, they often printed letters from dissenting readers. Their commitment to democracy was also expressed by the ways in which the papers operated as businesses. Many were printed by intentional communities and with editorial boards rather than with a single owner or editor.

Over time, underground publishers developed a nation-wide network that facilitated connections between countercultural groups and enclaves all over the United States. Connections made by the underground press expanded the number of people connected to the counterculture and helped people organize demonstrations of national importance.

In the context of these four characteristics, metaphysicals published articles, columns, interviews, advertisements and artwork promoting, defending and explaining their practices and ideas. Through such material, metaphysicals took advantage of new opportunities that underground papers had made available.

### Metaphysical use of Local Embeddedness

Metaphysical businesses and services were an important part of the ways in which underground papers were embedded in local culture and politics. In addition to underground papers being sold in metaphysical businesses like psychedelic shops and avant-garde book stores, those same businesses often purchased advertisements in the papers. Perusing the papers, readers were exposed to advertisements for local occult supply stores, book stores advertising metaphysical tomes, and upcoming events like lectures by visiting metaphysicals and solstice celebrations. Even businesses without an obvious connection to metaphysical religion used symbols that would have been recognizable to metaphysicals, incorporating psychedelic art, I-Ching hexagrams, yin-yang symbols, and astrological symbols in their advertisements. Metaphysicals promoted their businesses and events in underground papers because of the papers' embeddedness in their local countercultural communities.

Underground papers like the *Berkeley Barb*, the *San Jose Red Eye*, and the *Washington DC Free Press* also supported their local communities by publishing course listings for free universities. Free universities were educational programs offering classes designed by local artists and educators. Many of these classes mirrored countercultural values. Because metaphysical religion was a significant part of the counterculture, these free universities offered classes in yoga, magic, witchcraft, Taoism, meditation and other metaphysical topics. Metaphysicals were spreading their ideas and practices through free universities and Underground papers got the word out.

Underground papers were embedded not only locally, but particularly in local countercultures. As such, they reflect the interests of the counterculture, including rock music, sexual liberation, metaphysical religion, anti-war protest, and other politically left causes. Leamer argues that there were essentially two types of underground papers that represented two differently oriented groups of people who together formed the larger counterculture.<sup>86</sup> One group was culturally oriented and included countercultural interest in metaphysical religions along with interest in rock and roll, sexual liberation, and drug use; the other group was primarily devoted to political change (often revolution). Leamer distinguishes the two groups by referring to them as “the heads” and “the fists.”<sup>87</sup> John Wilcock’s description of the first meeting of the Underground Press Syndicate demonstrates just such a division. He writes, “On one side are the two *Oracles* [S.F. and L.A.], *EVO* and a couple of others; on the other, the *Barb*, the L.A. *Free Press*, *Fifth Estate*, etc.”<sup>88</sup> However, even fist-oriented papers like the *Freep* and the *Berkeley Barb* published metaphysical advertisements, articles, columns, and special issues.

When Art Kunkin started the *Los Angeles Free Press*, he had spent years supporting leftist politics. He had worked as business manager of the *Militant*, a socialist paper, as well as on *Correspondence* and *News and Letters*, both leftist periodicals.<sup>89</sup> In the 1960s, he had a socialist radio program on KPFK, the local *Pacifica* radio station, and began

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<sup>86</sup> Leamer, 43.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Peck, 58.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 22.

working for the *East LA Almanac*, a newspaper published by “a group of Mexican-American radicals.”<sup>90</sup> When Kunkin launched the *Los Angeles Free Press*, the vision included material on local arts and culture, however his primary agenda was to publish a “reader-written paper where, when people expressed their opinions, there would be a dialogue with them, and finally the emergence of a program (and party) from what students and so forth were talking about.”<sup>91</sup> As time progressed, the paper included much metaphysical material. In January 1973, Kunkin began a serialization of *The Science of Breath: A Complete Manual of The Oriental Breathing Philosophy* by Yogi Ramacharaka.<sup>92</sup> Ramacharaka’s given name was William Walker Atkinson, and in addition to being a yogi, his published books on the powers of the mind combined ideas from Theosophy, New Thought, and Mesmerism. Albanese describes him as “[a] master of combinative discourse, Atkinson in his agency-oriented titles and their contents straddled lines between new thought, Theosophy, magical practice, metaphysical Asia...and what would later merge as positive thinking.”<sup>93</sup> When introducing the article, Kunkin provides metaphysical context, comparing Ramacharaka’s text with mystical traditions and quoting Aleister Crowley.

Later that same year, Kunkin published a special issue comparing and contrasting the teachings of a variety of metaphysical teachers. Titled, “The Great Guru Hunt,” Kunkin

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>92</sup> Yogi Ramacharaka, “The Science of Breath,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, January 5, 1973, 5.

<sup>93</sup> Albanese, 437.

provides an autobiographical narrative of his encounter with the teachings of Spinoza and GI Gurdjieff in a local reading group, and offers readers information about local metaphysical groups, including Thane Walker's Prosperos group and Oscar Ichazo's Arica.<sup>94</sup> The issue also includes a list of more than fifty "consciousness books" as well as which local book stores carried them. On the reverse page is a map, detailing where in the Los Angeles area those book stores were located. The *Freep* may have been intended as a means for developing a political platform and party, but it quickly evolved into a medium by which metaphysicals spread ideas and information.

Max Scherr was never as involved in left organizations as Kunin, however his preferences as editor leaned toward political issues. When he attended the "Human Be-in," a public demonstration intended to bring together the heads and the fists, Scherr felt as though the political aspects had been neglected. He recalled, "It was badly organized. The organizers implied that they were against the war, but that they didn't want to bother people on this occasion."<sup>95</sup> Leamer calls Scherr, "a middle-aged radical" who had been active in protests and who "geared his newspaper toward" a community of "radical youths."<sup>96</sup> Even still, much of the *Barb* was devoted to metaphysical thinkers and topics.

Frank Tedesco published in the *Barb* a weekly column called "Open Mind" (abbreviated OM) which begins, "In this column I would like to report on all the groups and activities in the Bay area that are striving to manifest a higher spiritual consciousness

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<sup>94</sup> Art Kunin, "The Great Guru Hunt," *Los Angeles Free Press*, July 8, 1973, s-1.

<sup>95</sup> Peck, 44.

<sup>96</sup> Leamer, 30.

and union of compassionate brotherhood. Allen Ginsberg, great mentor of this revolutionary age, suggested the idea of the column to BARB's editor; and, behold, it has come to pass."<sup>97</sup> The column promoted consciousness-expanding drugs and a variety of religious traditions, especially metaphysical interpretations of Asian religions, as well as esotericism and mysticism. In a pointedly metaphysical moment, Tedesco asks, "Haven't there been great 'saints' outside the hallowed halls of religion? Is institutionalized religion really where it's at? Why can't one be a traveler, a wander, a wanderer and refuse to be bound to the comfort of a monastery or ashram?"<sup>98</sup> He then describes an encounter with a psychically-gifted "wino" who "blew his mind" with "Taoist discourse" and who somehow had divined astrological information about Tedesco. For months, until Tedesco traveled to Europe, the column was published weekly, providing metaphysical narratives and information for those in the Bay Area.

Politically-oriented papers like the *Freep* and the *Barb* also included metaphysical art. Long before he would gain notoriety for his work on *Star Wars* (1977), cartoonist Ron Cobb published cartoons in the *Los Angeles Free Press*. Many of these cartoons reflect countercultural skepticism of the future of humanity, a kind of apocalypticism directed against the Technocracy. Cobb's apocalypticism was often directed against Christianity. The January 20, 1968 edition of the *Freep* contains an interview with Cobb, as well as a cartoon that depicts dolphins observing a nuclear blast from the water. The cartoon reads,

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<sup>97</sup> Frank Tedesco, "Open Mind," *Berkeley Barb*, June 11, 1971, 2.

<sup>98</sup> Frank Tedesco, "Open Mind," *Berkeley Barb*, July 16, 1971, 9.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”<sup>99</sup> A few months earlier, Cobb published a cartoon in the *Washington DC Free Press*.<sup>100</sup> The image depicts two men facing one another, one man smokes a cigarette, the other a marijuana cigarette. The man smoking the marijuana cigarette is illuminated with a halo and intricate designs appear in his body, including religious symbols like the ankh cross and yin-yang, as do architectural achievements like an Egyptian pyramid. The man smoking a tobacco cigarette is mostly covered in shadow, there is no halo, and the word “Cancer” appears in his body. The image is labelled “Competition,” implying that one, through the use of marijuana, has expanded his consciousness, and the other has not. Cobb’s skepticism of tobacco smoking is contrasted by his enthusiasm for marijuana expressed partially through religious symbolism. Cobb’s cartoons often reflected an optimism concerning countercultural values like ecological sensitivity, romanticism, and consciousness expansion.

Cobb’s most metaphysical work is a “Philosophical Mandala” which was published in the same issue of the *Freep* as the infamous “Narc List” that identified local undercover agents.<sup>101</sup> The mandala includes a series of concentric circles, contained by one larger circle, whose perimeter is marked by a comparison of unusual states of consciousness including “The Void – Nirvana – Undifferentiated Unity – Pure nothingness – Ultimate Reality – It – Pure Nothingness – Union with Godhead – The Eternal Now – One without

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<sup>99</sup> R. Cobb, “Blessed are the Meek,” *The Los Angeles Free Press*, January 20, 1968, 2.

<sup>100</sup> R. Cobb, “Competition,” *Washington DC Free Press*, October 31, 1967, 12.

<sup>101</sup> R. Cobb, “Philosophical Mandala,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, August 8, 1969, 6.

a Second – Time/Space Continuum.”<sup>102</sup> In a chart contained in the upper left corner of the image labeled “ego-psyche,” Cobb contrasts the “European Tradition” with the “Asian Tradition.”<sup>103</sup> The image’s design indicates a kind of correspondence between how one experiences reality, her psychological disposition, and her philosophical positions. The mandala is also filled with arrows, suggesting movement or flow between the various states of consciousness, psyches and philosophies. By the time Cobb published the mandala, he was a well-known cartoonist, and because of the Underground Press Syndicate, the image was published in underground papers all over the country.

Even the underground papers that were not *as* metaphysical as some of the others provided space for metaphysicals to express and promote themselves through articles, special issues, columns and even cartoons. As McMillan writes, “just as most of those who contributed to the 1960s youth rebellion didn’t operate exclusively at one or the other end of this spectrum, most of the era’s underground newspapers presented an intermingling of aesthetic and tactical radicalism.”<sup>104</sup> However, the differences between fist papers and head papers is not necessarily that some are more or less metaphysical – they all are metaphysical – but in *how* they are metaphysical. The *Barb* and the *Freep* were metaphysical only incidentally. That is, because of the Underground papers’ embeddedness in the counterculture, and the counterculture’s metaphysical inclinations, metaphysicals

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> McMillan, 11.

used the papers to promote their practices and ideas. Papers like the *San Francisco Oracle* and the *Los Angeles Oracle* were devoted specifically to metaphysical causes.

Allen Cohen recalls his intentions for the *San Francisco Oracle*, “I wanted the content of the *Oracle* to cover two aspects of our new culture: to provide guidance and archetypes for the journey through the states of mind that the LSD experience had opened up; and to invent and examine the new social and cultural forms and institutions that we needed to align the world with our vision.”<sup>105</sup> The *Los Angeles Oracle* was modeled after the *San Francisco Oracle*. It’s “Statement of Purpose” reads, “The Oracle is representative of the Spirit within us...The Oracle wishes to report on the positive aspects of our existence. We are not aligned to any political ideologies or religious dogmas...We feel that our own American Indian can show us a great deal by way of alternatives to our present way of life.”<sup>106</sup> Being devoted to the metaphysical cause of guiding one’s consciousness, the *Oracles* are best understood not just as a news sources, but as aides to metaphysical practice. The *Oracles* were metaphysical not only because of their content, but because of the intentions with which they were published.

Because both *Oracles* were printed with metaphysical intent, both papers experimented with the kinds of things a medium like a periodical could do. The *Oracles* shared many types of metaphysical material with fist-oriented papers including metaphysical articles, columns, special issues and artwork, however they looked significantly different. Robert Glessing compares the different rates at which papers like

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<sup>105</sup> Cohen, xxvii.

<sup>106</sup> “Statement of Purpose,” *Los Angeles Oracle*, nd., np.

the *Oracles* include advertising, art, features and news.<sup>107</sup> Operating in the same city, the *Los Angeles Oracle* dedicated twice as much space to art and feature articles as the *Freep*, and less than half of the space that the *Freep* dedicated to advertising and news.<sup>108</sup> Those stylistic differences were accentuated to an even greater degree by the ways in which head papers innovated design, often with metaphysical ends in mind.

The *San Francisco Oracle* was an important periodical not only because of its relationship to the counterculture, its popularity, and its metaphysical intentions, but also because of the way in which the editors experimented with the design of the paper. The new style of offset-printing allowed for experimentation beyond printing in color – which was novel at the time. The process also allowed the editors and artists at the *Oracle* to experiment with the papers’ layout. Because the paper was published with metaphysical intentions, that experimentation was imbued with metaphysical significance. Reviewing the *San Francisco Oracle*, Ethel Romm writes, “Each Oracle page is designed as a composition first. The decorative area is given to an artist while the prose, or poetry, goes to the typist to set patiently on Varitype inside the pattern drawn. The text floats up the page in bubbles. Or it pours out in fountains. Colors blush over the page...if only city hall news looked like this, I might read it.”<sup>109</sup> Cohen’s description of the process of designing the *Oracle* and its effects are worth quoting in length:

The *Oracle* would go from hand to hand and mind to mind in the evocative states unveiled by marijuana and LSD. It was a centering instrument for that

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<sup>107</sup> Glessing, 101.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 40.

intense, aesthetic, and expanded perceptual universe...Most of the artists would conceive and manifest their designs in a state of expanded awareness. Thus, the *Oracle* pages correspond to the methodology of the Thangka art of Tibet and Byzantine art in which artists established a visionary state of mind, through meditation, chanting, abstinence and/or prayer, and tried to convey that vision in their painting.<sup>110</sup>

Cohen adds,

The perceivers of the art then could mount to that same elevation, and experience within their mind the same visionary state. So, looking at an *Oracle* could be a sort of occult trance experience communicated across the dimensions of space and time, through the tabloid medium, from one explorer of inner worlds to another.<sup>111</sup>

The artistic innovations of the *Oracle* were not just attempts at innovating the medium of tabloid papers, although they were also that. For Cohen, the *San Francisco Oracle* was a metaphysical medium, capable of reproducing expanded awareness in its readers through its design.

The sixth issue of the *Oracle* features the transcript of a taped recording with astrologer Gavin Arthur titled “The Aquarian Age.”<sup>112</sup> The text is divided into four equally-sized blocks, in the middle of which is the image of a pentagram superimposed over a nude woman, positioned comparably to Da Vinci’s “Vitruvian Man,” both of which are superimposed over an image of the earth. Surrounding the blocks of text are astrological symbols of the zodiac and other religious symbols. At the center of the bottom is an “eye

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<sup>110</sup> Cohen, xxxi.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Gavin Arthur, “The Aquarian Age,” *San Francisco Oracle* no.6, 4.

of providence.” Rainbow-colored lines radiate out from all of these symbols and appear to flow into (or out from) the globe and pentagram in the center.

In the interview, Arthur metaphysically argues for the fusion of religion and science by quoting Claude Bernard, “Until religion and science and philosophy are one and the same thing, Man will not have reached his coming of age, his maturity.”<sup>113</sup> He goes on to critique the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches and then argues that drugs like LSD are breaking down “barriers between the worlds that are caused by different wave lengths.”<sup>114</sup> He recalls an encounter with quantum physicist and pioneer of the atomic bomb, J. Robert Oppenheimer,

‘With your great knowledge of the nature of the atom...we know now that we can have cowboys and Indians on the same flat surfaces of the TV and then by changing the wave length of frequency we can have socialites in Paris; and we go back to the cowboys and they’re still there...and isn’t it a question of frequency which could be carried into a three-dimensional world? And couldn’t there be other people walking through us and unbeknownst to us, whose molecular structures are on a different wave length from ours?’

And he grinned from ear to ear and said to me, ‘That’s not only possible, but very probable.’<sup>115</sup>

The artwork that surrounds the image depicts Arthur’s metaphysical theory of waves of energy invisibly moving in and through us. The lines emanating from the astrological symbols flow into the central image of the earth. The images and the text of the manuscript work together to convey metaphysical ideas about consciousness, cosmic correspondence,

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

energy, science, and religious institutions. Taken together, the printed page validates Hoffman's proclamation that the *Oracle* was an illuminated manuscript.

The *Los Angeles Oracle* (later the *Oracle of Southern California*) was modeled after the *San Francisco Oracle* and also innovated the ways in which a tabloid sheet could facilitate metaphysical practice. The December 1967 issue includes on pages eight and twenty-five (the same piece of paper) a full page mandala which readers were instructed to meditate on while it was lit by black light.<sup>116</sup> The by-line reads "Fantastic cosmic brain turn-on – and it's legal!," and the opposite page contains specific instructions for how to perform the meditation.<sup>117</sup> The instructions repeat metaphysical emphasis on consciousness, energy, cosmic correspondence and salvation as solace. The instructions read:

You are going to center yourself and return to pure consciousness, a blissful state...

Focus your energy in the space between your eyes, the ajna chakra or Third Eye. Feel the brain-power flowing through that space to the mandala and feel it flowing back to you into your eye receivers...

Then feel that energy flowing throughout your body, Temple of the Universe...

Do it every day and almost instantly you will notice profound changes in yourself and your life.<sup>118</sup>

Here the paper published what was intended as a religious artifact, an image that people could incorporate into their own metaphysical practice.

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<sup>116</sup> "Incredible Black-Lite Mandala on Opposite Page," *Oracle of Southern California*, December 1967, 8.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

Head and fist papers both contained metaphysical material, however they differed in the amount of metaphysical content, and also in the ways that they were designed and used. Fist papers depicted metaphysical symbols, communicated metaphysical ideas and values, and indirectly aided metaphysical practice, however head papers like the *Oracles* did all of this in addition to being metaphysical objects, intended for the use and reproduction of metaphysical ideas and practice. Both types of papers were embedded in the counterculture and the majority of papers reflect both head and fist mentalities. Metaphysicals used both types of papers to promote their practices and ideas, although whether a paper was published with metaphysical intentions affected the final product as well as how it was used by readers. Their embeddedness in the counterculture, and the counterculture's interest in metaphysical types of religion made underground papers a receptive and attractive medium for metaphysical publishing.

#### Metaphysical use of Democratic Ethos

McMillan argues that alongside the *Realist* and the *Village Voice*, the *SDS Bulletin* was an important precursor to the underground press.<sup>119</sup> He argues that Students for a Democratic Society “set the template for underground newspapers that functioned as open forums, to which virtually anyone could contribute.”<sup>120</sup> Many underground papers published material sourced by readers in lengthy sections in which they printed received letters and included sections for artists to submit poetry and images. Art Kunkin writes, “Everyone who wanted had, and has, a chance to present his viewpoint on any important

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<sup>119</sup> McMillan, 14.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

community development, as long as there was a fair presentation of facts and an adequate literary style.”<sup>121</sup> Metaphysicals took advantage of the democratically-oriented publishing policy by submitting letters expressing their opinions about recent events and articles, and by submitting metaphysical poetry and images. Printing reader-submitted material further embedded underground newspapers in their local communities. The extent to which letters and artwork reflected metaphysically-minded perspectives reveals the degree to which metaphysicals were active participants in the counterculture and their local communities.

The November 15, 1967 issue of the *East Village Other* published seven reader-submitted letters, three of them expressing metaphysical perspectives.<sup>122</sup> Under the alias “Blade,” Frederick F. Caruso’s letter is published with the title “New Species.” In it, he argues that some humans are evolving by realizing their connection to a collective mind. He writes, “But minds are sensing something – a Giant bigger than us all! This giant has the mind of all of us and one heart. All you have to do is plug in.”<sup>123</sup> An unsigned letter explains how to grow psychedelic mushrooms, and another letter by Catherine of Washington, DC titled “Mother of us All” explains that pentagons are “sacred to the five-fold great goddess and mother of us all, known variously as the magna mater, the white goddess, kali, mary, the three fates, and eve – she is the mother of mankind and the dark

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<sup>121</sup> Art Kunkin, “Five Years of the Free Press: Do We Really Want to be Underground?,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, June 27, 1969, 10.

<sup>122</sup> “Dear EVO,” *East Village Other*, November 15, 1967, 2.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

womb that will receive us again at death.”<sup>124</sup> Virtually every underground paper included a section of user-submitted letters, many of them metaphysical.

In addition to publishing material submitted by readers, underground papers were often democratically organized, operating with editorial boards rather than a single editor. Because underground papers were so embedded in the counterculture, editors searched for ways to operate differently than daily newspapers. In the case of the *Rag* in Austin and the *San Francisco Oracle*, anyone who meandered into the office on a given day was allowed to participate in the decision making process. Allen Cohen recalls, “Actually the editorial meetings included everyone – editorial and art staff, secretaries, circulation and business people, invited guests and anyone who happened in the door. We felt that if the flow brought a person there, they were meant to be there.”<sup>125</sup>

Metaphysicals took advantage of underground papers’ democratic ethos by publishing images and poetry. Sometimes underground papers published the works of famous metaphysicals like Allen Ginsberg and Alan Watts, however more often the poetry and images were submitted by local readers. The eleventh edition of the *San Francisco Oracle* contains a mandala drawn by a young woman who had wandered into the offices of the *Oracle* and asked if she could do a drawing for them. Cohen described her as “glowing and vibrating” and describes the image as “herself in the midst of a mandallic universe.”<sup>126</sup> Although the majority of underground papers were unable to pay for artists

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Cohen, xxxv.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., li.

or articles, many people who were committed to the counterculture contributed their efforts and talents. Many times those who contributed had metaphysical ideas and practices that they wanted to promote. Underground papers' policies of publishing with a light editorial hand and of providing space for reader-submitted material opened the door for metaphysical expression. The papers' embeddedness in their local countercultures coupled with their intention to print reader-submitted material meant that a lot of content was metaphysical.

#### Metaphysical use of National Scope

In June 1966, a small group of fledgling, countercultural papers banded together and formed the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS). The idea was printed in the *East Village Other* in an editorial by Alan Katzman suggesting an organization that would: facilitate communication between countercultural newspapers across the United States (and in Europe), allow members to reprint material published in other members' periodicals, and fund an advertising representative that could sell nation-wide advertising.

UPS facilitated communication between countercultural communities that were geographically remote from one another and made it possible (through advertising and free content) for small papers to stay in business. Before UPS, there were only a few countercultural papers, mostly published in places with vibrant countercultural communities. Within less than a year of the formation of the UPS, that number quadrupled, and within three years, the UPS included more than 200 newspapers. Eventually, the UPS constituted a countercultural network. Editor Ken Wachsberger writes that through its membership in the UPS, East Lansing's the *Paper* was able to "plug the East Lansing

radical community into radical communities around the country.”<sup>127</sup> Because the papers shared content, news of riots or protests in Berkeley or New York was not limited to what daily newspapers printed. Underground papers could share their perspectives with interested people all over the country. This gave underground papers a national significance. However, long before it would garner as many participants, the UPS started off humbly, with only a few papers and a readership of around twenty-five thousand. From its first conference, metaphysically-minded editors infused the UPS with metaphysical significance. Later, metaphysical thinkers would leverage the national scope of the UPS to spread their ideas and practices to national audiences.

The first UPS conference convened in Stinson Beach, California at the request of Ron Thelin of the *San Francisco Oracle*. His letter requested “a pow-wow of ‘journalistic tribesmen’ who’d ‘come together for spiritual guidance and fun.’”<sup>128</sup> By the time of the conference, the UPS had twenty-five members, however only a small portion sent representatives. Those attending included Art Kunkin, Ron Thelin, Walter Bowart (of the *East Village Other*), and Max Scherr.<sup>129</sup> There were also representatives from the *Los Angeles Provo*, the *Rag*, the *Washington Independent*, and Chicago’s *Seed*.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ken Wachsberger, *Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 234.

<sup>128</sup> Peck, 43.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>130</sup> Glessing, 70.

Peck called that first meeting a “freak-dominated affair,” noting that they served brown rice and made apocalyptic pronouncements about the future of American society. According to Glessing, not much was accomplished, although it was decided that the UPS would operate out of the offices of the *East Village Other*.<sup>131</sup> Leamer echoes both Peck’s and Glessing’s sentiments, “The *Oracle*’s apocalyptic anarchy set the tone for the meeting...and the two-day meeting created little but good vibes.”<sup>132</sup> However what Peck calls “brown-rice millennialism” provided a banner under which both the politically-oriented and culturally-oriented papers could operate. The *Fifth Estate* published an editorial drafted and endorsed not only by head-minded editors of the *San Francisco Oracle* and the *East Village Other*, but also by fist-oriented editors like Art Kunkin of the *Freep* and Max Scherr of the *Barb*. The editorial describes the purpose of the UPS in apocalyptic terms:

1. To warn the ‘Civilized World’ of its impending collapse.
  - a. To set up communications among aware communities outside the establishment.
  - b. To reinstate reality-responsibility to mass media.
2. To note and chronicle events leading to the collapse.
  - a. To observe facts which reflect, and unveil in advance, the undercurrents dangerous to freedom.
  - b. To provide an accurate history of the rapid changes coming about thru technological acceleration.
3. To advise intelligently to prevent rapid collapse and make transition possible.
  - a. To offer as many possible alternatives to current problems as the mind can bear.
  - b. To consciously lay the foundation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
4. To prepare the American people for the wilderness.
  - a. To instruct in survival techniques.

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<sup>131</sup> Peck, 70.

<sup>132</sup> Leamer, 44.

- b. To seek out others of like thoughts and to recognize each tribe.
  - c. To prepare ways of living should the machine stop.
- 5. To fight a holding action in the dying cities.
  - a. Advise how to reinstate balance to the ecology.
  - b. Public programs for conservation and reclamation.<sup>133</sup>

This brown-rice millennialism may have had different implications for head papers than it did for fist papers, but for the purposes of the Underground Press Syndicate, that millennialism was something in which both groups participated. Still, because this meeting was convened and dominated by the heads, that millennialism took on a metaphysical significance.

The guest speaker at the event was Shoshone emissary Rolling Thunder. Dressed in a black suit and wearing a broad brimmed black hat, he addressed the conference attendees. He described Hopi prophecies “written in cave petroglyphs and confirmed by many visions” which foretold that “after the gourd of ashes fell from the sky...man would enter a time of great trial.”<sup>134</sup> He described how “long-haired gypsies” (hippies) were reincarnated Native Americans who were taking part in a process of “retribalization.” Believing themselves to be reincarnated Native Americans, representatives of the *Oracle* suggested that they rename the UPS the “Tribal Messenger Service.”<sup>135</sup> Rolling Thunder concluded by suggesting that “[a]n evil spirit could be contained...by circling it; perhaps, it might work with the Pentagon.”<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Walter Bowart, “Underground Press has Tribal Meeting,” *The Fifth Estate*, May 15, 1967, 5.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Leamer, 41.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 44.

Whether or not one viewed membership in the UPS as the manifestation of Hopi prophecy, by the time the UPS had connected a nation-wide network of underground papers, metaphysical columns and articles were reaching millions of readers all over the country. Ron Cobb's philosophical Mandala was published in underground papers in Los Angeles, New York, and Washington DC. Thad and Rita Ashby published an article in the *San Francisco Oracle* titled, "Yoga, Sex, and the Magic Mushroom" that begins with a quote by Aldous Huxley, and suggests that tantric yoga and entheogens have been used in various societies to achieve similar states of consciousness.<sup>137</sup> That article appears also in the *Oracle of Southern California*, Seattle's underground paper *Helix*, and in Kansas's the *Alchemist: Oracle of the Midwest*. The UPS made it possible for metaphysical materials like these to spread quickly. Some metaphysical leaders like Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg took advantage of the UPS's national scope by giving underground papers interviews and publishing open letters with the intention of reaching millions of readers.

Even before Katzman published the idea for an Underground Press Syndicate in June 1966, Timothy Leary had experimented with the idea of a column syndicated in underground papers. In May, 1966, Leary published the first of what he had intended to be a column titled "Turn On / Tune In / Drop Out."<sup>138</sup> The column first ran in the *East Village Other* and then was to be syndicated with the *Freep*, the *Barb*, the *Fifth Estate*, and the

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<sup>137</sup> Thad and Rita Ashby, "Yoga, Sex, and the Magic Mushroom," in *The Underground Reader*, eds. Mel Howard and Thomas King Forcade (New York: New American Library, 1972), 40.

<sup>138</sup> Timothy Leary, "Turn On / Tune In / Drop Out," *Berkeley Barb*, May 20, 1966, 5.

*Paper*.<sup>139</sup> It begins with a discourse concerned with pragmatically improving one's life and consciousness and presents theories of energy and correspondence. He writes,

This is the first of a series of columns by Timothy Leary, Ph.D. spelling out a theory and method of becoming a conscious person. The blue-print for a new religion...The subsequent columns will present detailed practical, day-by-day, step-by-step instructions, for rearranging your life, for establishing a harmony with your nervous system, your cells, your molecules and the multiple energy networks around you. The lessons are designed to be decoded at several levels of consciousness. *Tune in* to the natural energy that covers this planet.<sup>140</sup>

Leary concludes by instructing readers to enter a serene environment with “an unopened tin can, a candle, [and] a piece of fruit (sliced open so the seed is visible). Have one shoe on and the other foot bare.”<sup>141</sup> Leary then instructs readers to observe the three objects and to “meditate on the fact that your body is two billion years old.”<sup>142</sup> That column ran in papers in New York, Los Angeles, Berkeley, Detroit, and Michigan. One can only wonder if, on some spring afternoon in 1966, regular citizens in disparate cities noticed a peculiarly dressed metaphysical meditating in a park with a sliced apple, a candle, a tin can, and one shoe.

Once the Underground Press Syndicate was more firmly established, whenever people like Leary or Ginsberg gave an interview to popular underground papers like the *Free Press*, the *Barb*, or the *East Village Other*, other papers were sure to copy the interview

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

and publish it for their readers the following week. Such interviews often included discussions of Leary's or Ginsberg's perspective on the war, free speech, sexual norms, ecology, and other countercultural issues. In 1971, after the Weather Underground had helped Leary escape prison, he communicated with people in the United States through the underground papers. He gave interviews, wrote public letters, and the Weather Underground provided updates on his whereabouts. Leary's legal troubles were a popular topic and any news directly from him was picked up by many underground papers. The national scope of the UPS added to Leary's reputation in the counterculture.

As a countercultural institution, underground papers provided new opportunities for metaphysicals. In them, metaphysicals reached out to their local communities. Because of the underground papers' countercultural contexts, underground publishers dedicated much space to metaphysical topics and thinkers, and some underground papers were published with metaphysical intentions. Local metaphysicals took advantage of underground papers' democratic ethos by submitting letters and artwork, and metaphysical leaders like Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg used the underground papers' national scope to spread ideas and communicate with large audiences.

Metaphysicals used underground papers in ways they had not used any medium before, and underground papers introduced opportunities and changes to metaphysical religion that would have dramatic and lasting effects. By the time underground papers faded in the early 1970s, metaphysical religion had evolved into something different than it had been in tri-faith America. With the help of the underground papers, metaphysical religion had become a highly visible feature of American religion, especially insofar as it

had given rise to the burgeoning New Age movement. The following chapters investigate how underground papers affected particular strands of metaphysical traditions.

### CHAPTER 3 – “THE POLITICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS EXPANSION PART 1

In 1963, before lecturer Timothy Leary had gone AWOL from his position in the psychology department at Harvard, he and fellow researcher Richard Alpert (later Ram Dass) published an article in the *Harvard Review* entitled “The Politics of Consciousness Expansion” (1963). The article begins with a stream-of-consciousness style of writing in which Leary and Alpert describe “expansion-contraction” processes that occur naturally at various levels.<sup>1</sup> They describe expansion-contraction as the tension between flowing processes and fixed structures. The tension occurs inorganically in the formation of clouds, organically in the formation of cells, and socially in “the free expansion vision [being] molded into the institutional.”<sup>2</sup> After their introduction to thinking in terms of cosmic correspondence and flow, Leary and Alpert provide a vision of the social and political ramifications of consciousness expanding drugs. They write,

Where, then, will the next evolutionary step occur? Within the human cortex. We *know*, yes we *know*, that science has produced methods for dramatically altering and expanding human awareness and potentialities. The uncharted realm lies behind your own forehead. Internal geography. Internal politics. Internal control. Internal freedom...LSD is more dangerous than the bomb!...The danger is not physical or psychological, but social-political. Make no mistake: the effect of consciousness-expanding drugs will be to transform our concepts of human nature, of human potentialities, of existence. The game is about to be changed, ladies and gentlemen. Man is about to make use of that fabulous electrical network he carries around in his skull.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, “The Politics of Consciousness Expansion,” *The Harvard Review* 1 no. 4 (1963): 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 36.

Long before Leary called the counterculture to arms, he and Alpert predicted political and social upheaval, which amounted not just to revolution, but to evolution. By expanding consciousness, humans were taking an evolutionary step forward and society was about to change. In the article, Leary and Alpert advise, “Head for the hills, or prepare your intellectual craft to flow with the current.”<sup>4</sup> Although they never mention taking up arms, the article draws out the social and political implications of consciousness expansion. Although they may have overstated their case, Leary and Alpert were right that consciousness expansion was about to become political in ways that it never had before. Leary played a central role in that politicization, and his centrality was made possible because of the counterculture’s one unifying institution, the underground press.

#### Metaphysical Legacy of Consciousness Expansion

In 1860, poet, philosopher, and political commentator, Benjamin Paul Blood, was recovering from dental surgery and set in motion a course of ideas and events that would have dramatic effects on the history of metaphysical religion in the United States.

Born in Amsterdam, New York in 1832, Blood came to what he called the “Anaesthetic Revelation” at the age of twenty-eight. A pioneering dentist had been using nitrous oxide as an anesthetic when performing surgery. As Blood was recovering, he had an experience that changed his consciousness to such an extent that it revealed for him the futility of philosophy. It was of such importance that he suggested that in the future, inhaling nitrous oxide would constitute a rite of passage.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 35.

Nitrous oxide's psychoactive properties had been discovered sixty years earlier in 1800 by Sir Humphrey Davy.<sup>5</sup> After performing experiments on himself, Davy writes, "My emotions were enthusiastic and sublime;...and with the most intense belief and prophetic manner, I exclaimed to Dr. Kinglake, 'Nothing exists but thoughts! – the universe is composed of impressions, ideas, pleasures and pains!'"<sup>6</sup> Davy's enthusiastic and sublime feelings led him to market the gas as a recreational intoxicant. Well-to-do families in England and the United States were known to have "Laughing Gas Parties."<sup>7</sup> Historians Eliakim Little and Robert S. Little reported in 1848 that inhaling a similar gas had been popular "for a long time" among Harvard students. They write, "[T]he students at Cambridge [Harvard] used to inhale sulphuric ether from their handkerchiefs, and...it intoxicated them, making them reel and stagger."<sup>8</sup>

The anesthetic properties of nitrous oxide had been known since its discovery, but it was not used as an anesthetic until 1844 when two men independently of one another began experiments with the gas for pain relief during surgery.<sup>9</sup> After encountering the gas in 1860, Blood conducted his own philosophically-oriented experiments for fourteen years,

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<sup>5</sup> Sir Humphrey Davy, *The Collected Works of Sir Humphry Davy* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1839), 53.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Humphry Davy, *Researches, Chemical and Philosophical: Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide: Or Dephlogisticated Nitrous Air, and Its Respiration* (London: Biggs and Cottle, 1800), 488-489.

<sup>7</sup> Dimitri Tymozcko, "The Nitrous Oxide Philosopher," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1996, 93.

<sup>8</sup> Eliakim Littell and Robert S. Littell, *The Living Age*, vol. 16 (New York: Littell, Son and Col, 1848), 567.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Huntington Williams and Henry Smith Williams, *A History of Science* vol. 4 (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2007), 132.

and in 1874 published a short pamphlet: *The Anaesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy*.

*The Anaesthetic Revelation* is a thirty-seven-page pamphlet encouraging the use of nitrous oxide to resolve philosophical problems. The pamphlet begins with a brief description of epistemological and ontological problems, enters into a discussion of Hegel, and then describes the empirical and universally available solution to the ontological problems it describes: inhaling nitrous oxide. For Blood, Hegel had achieved the highest form of philosophy, however even Hegel's "heavenly" dialectic failed to satisfy the tension created by the philosophical problems he describes.<sup>10</sup> Dissatisfied with philosophy, Blood turned to anesthetics.

Blood claims that mystical experiences capable of resolving fundamental philosophical problems would soon be available to all through nitrous oxide. He writes, "After experiments ranging over nearly fourteen years I affirm...that there is an invariable and reliable condition...ensuing about the instant of recall from anesthetic stupor to sensible observation, or 'coming to,' in which the genius of being is revealed."<sup>11</sup> Although impossible to communicate through language, Blood believed that all people could be initiated into the anesthetic revelation by inhaling nitrous oxide. He writes, "[N]o poetry, no emotion known to the normal sanity of man can furnish a hint of its primeval prestige."<sup>12</sup> In the face of such an experience, Blood understandably struggles for clarity. However

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<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Paul Blood, *The Anaesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy* (Amsterdam, NY: no publ., 1874), 29.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

ineffable the experience, Blood believed that inhaling nitrous oxide would become a rite of passage. He writes, “Nor can it be long until all...will date from its experience their initiation into the Secret of Life.”<sup>13</sup> Blood believed that this profound and universally available experience would be so common and was of such a nature that it would effectively end philosophy.

Blood sent his self-published pamphlet *The Anæsthetic Revelation* to be reviewed by *The Atlantic*. Psychologist William James anonymously published that review later in the same year, urging “real students of philosophy to write for the pamphlet to its author.”<sup>14</sup> Eight years later James published his own account of inhaling the gas in, “The subjective Effects of Nitrous Oxide.”<sup>15</sup> From this early publication to his very last publication, *The Pluralistic Universe*, which pays homage to Blood, James’ encounter with nitrous oxide helped shape his metaphysical perspectives. By the time of his death, James writes of his encounter with nitrous oxide, “I am conscious of its having been one of the stepping-stones of my thinking ever since.”<sup>16</sup>

#### William James

Few scholars of religion have earned the popular and academic success enjoyed by James. Wayne Proudfoot writes that James “shaped conceptions of religious experience and mysticism that inform the beliefs and practices of a broad reading public as well as

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> William James, “Review of *The Anæsthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy*,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1874, 627.

<sup>15</sup> William James, “Subjective Effects of Nitrous Oxide,” *Mind* 7 (1882): 186.

<sup>16</sup> William James, *Memories and Studies* (New York: Longmans, Green, and col., 1911), 373.

those engaged in the academic study of religion.”<sup>17</sup> James is a foundational figure in the field of psychology, one of the few widely-read American philosophers, and a seminal thinker in the study of religion, especially mysticism. One would be hard pressed to overstate James’ influence, and that influence certainly could not be limited to the effects his thinking had on metaphysical religious practice. However, his thinking was influenced by earlier metaphysicals, and it would come to affect future metaphysicals. In this light, the following section investigates the importance of James’ experimentation with nitrous oxide, his metaphysical proclivities, and the effects they had on future metaphysicals. As Albanese writes, “[James’] spirit philosophy, like the spirit philosophy of body mechanics, bore the mark of encounter with American metaphysical religion and suggested tellingly its diffusion in national culture and society.”<sup>18</sup>

James was born into a metaphysical context. Two years after James’ birth, his father, Henry James, Sr., converted to Swedenborgianism. James’ father was friends with Ralph Waldo Emerson, knew Ellery Channing, Henry David Thoreau, and “could match words with Amos Bronson Alcott.”<sup>19</sup> James’ father also had “read his share of Charles Fourier” who likely had influenced some of his thinking.<sup>20</sup> James would carve out his own metaphysical legacy, largely apart from the Swedenborgian and Transcendentalist leanings

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<sup>17</sup> Wayne Proudfoot, “Introduction,” in William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Spark Educational Publishing, 2004), xiii.

<sup>18</sup> Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 423.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

of his father, but, according to Albanese, “[William James] spent his life re-answering the questions his father’s seeking raised,” even if the “contrary answers to his father’s world ended by affirming what they denied.”<sup>21</sup>

In his adulthood, James demonstrated remarkable familiarity with American metaphysical traditions. According to Albanese, James was “almost a quiet fellow traveler in [the world of metaphysical religionists].”<sup>22</sup> Historian Ann Taves writes that James “shared much with...Spiritualism, Theosophy, and, especially New Thought” and that he added “a new legitimacy and prestige to these popular movements.”<sup>23</sup> James read Paul Carus’ journal the *Monist* and was familiar with Phineas Quimby. He had “made his way through Ralph Waldo Trine’s *In Tune with the Infinite*, and he liked it enough to give the book to his son Henry as a birthday present. James even testified to a court in the state of Massachusetts on behalf of mental healers who were facing a bill that would penalize their practices. James “argu[ed] that the bill would quash the acquisition of a new kind of medical experience.”<sup>24</sup>

For James, these types of traditions were popular “healthy-minded” approaches to religion because of the extent to which they had practical effects. James, however, more closely identified with “sick-souled” individuals who, he argues, feel more intensely the evils of the world. However much James supported metaphysical practices on account of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 414.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 272, 289 as quoted in Albanese, 415.

<sup>24</sup> Albanese, 415.

their practical results, James is at his most metaphysical when articulating his theory of consciousness, a theory that was bolstered by his experimentation with nitrous oxide.

The first of the four characteristics of metaphysical religion, as they are identified by Albanese, is an interest in consciousness. James' interest in consciousness permeates his work as a psychologist and a scholar of religion. *Principles of Psychology* (1890) suggests that human consciousness developed as a function of the brain, a kind of adaptation for survival. In the volume, he is the first to articulate the metaphor of a "stream of consciousness." James' interest in consciousness, as well as the mind-body connection for which he argues, are characteristic attitudes of many metaphysicals, as was his interpretation of such exploration in the name of science. Even with these metaphysical inclinations, James' interest in consciousness is most metaphysical in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).

Delivered as Gifford lectures in 1902, James approaches religion in *Varieties* pragmatically, that is, he asks what religion does for the believer. In doing so, he skirts questions of ultimate truth and focuses on what differences religious perspectives and experiences have on practitioners' lives. James suggests that religion fills psychological needs in different ways for the healthy-minded and the sick-souls. He considers conversion experiences and mystical states to be religious experiences that, more clearly than less enthusiastic forms, reveal the functions that religions can play in people's lives. To study these phenomena, James compares and contrasts written descriptions of such experiences.

James uses this comparative method in his chapter on mysticism. Proudfoot considers this chapter among the most important parts of *Varieties*. He writes, "The chapter

on mysticism is more widely read than any other.”<sup>25</sup> James expresses a similar sentiment, “One may say truly...that personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness...such states of consciousness ought to form the vital chapter from which the other chapters get their light.”<sup>26</sup>

In the center of this central chapter, James mentions his experience with nitrous oxide. He considers his own experience evidence in support of his conclusion that there are multiple kinds of consciousness that are available to us through the subconscious. That James treats his nitrous oxide experience in such an important chapter reflects the importance it played in his thinking. Christopher Nelson goes so far as to argue that James’ nitrous oxide experience occurs at the pivotal point in the mysticism chapter. He writes, “Within the pivotal lectures on mysticism, the sub-section concerned with what James (following Benjamin Paul Blood) refers to as the ‘anesthetic revelation’ constitutes the pivotal moment around which this ‘vital chapter’, and hence the *Varieties* as a whole revolves.”<sup>27</sup>

Although James footnotes the inspiration for his experimentation, Blood’s pamphlet, he describes his own encounter with nitrous oxide within the text. He compares the encounter with mystical forms of consciousness. He writes, “The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness...Some years ago I myself made some

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<sup>25</sup> Proudfoot, xxv.

<sup>26</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 328.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher A.P. Nelson, “The Artificial Mystic State of Mind: WJ, Benjamin Paul Blood, and the Nitrous Oxide Variety of Religious Experience,” *Streams of William James* 4 no. 3 (2002): 24.

observations on this aspect of nitrous oxide intoxication, and reported them in print.”<sup>28</sup> James considered the experience similar to religious mysticism, although always less-than fully mystical. He writes, “to me the living sense of [the anesthetic revelation’s] reality only comes in the artificial mystic state of mind.”<sup>29</sup> However similar the revelation may appear to mysticism, it is only artificial, “one bit of the mystic consciousness.”<sup>30</sup>

For James, the experience is important not necessarily because of what the experience itself contained, but because as an experience, it proved that there are multiple modes of consciousness, none of which should be assumed as primarily true, and which may, in some circumstances come into contact with one another. He writes,

One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it...there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different.<sup>31</sup>

Nitrous oxide showed James evidence of a dramatically different form of consciousness, a form of consciousness that appeared accessible to others not only through nitrous oxide, but also through meditation, asceticism, and spontaneously in nature. Although we might not be able to identify which form of consciousness is most accurate, the plurality of modes of consciousness was a discovery in itself, a discovery that his comparative work on mysticism, as well as his own experience with nitrous oxide, supported. James writes,

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<sup>28</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 335.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

“Even the least mystical of you must by this time be convinced of the existence of mystical moments as states of consciousness of an entirely specific quality.”<sup>32</sup>

The importance of James’ nitrous oxide experiences for his understanding of multiple kinds of consciousness is supported by letters that he wrote between 1880 and 1907. James discusses the “anaesthetic revelation” with at least two colleagues, and corresponds with Blood from 1880 until 1907.<sup>33</sup> These correspondences demonstrate the frequency and manner in which he discussed Blood’s revelation and show that this encounter was more than marginally important for him.

For James, the unusual forms of consciousness that nitrous oxide revealed were filtered through one’s subconscious. Albanese writes, “James’s subconscious...was the gateway to a vaster, larger realm.”<sup>34</sup> Later, James calls this larger realm “cosmic consciousness” and suggests that our individual consciousnesses are, metaphorically speaking, fenced-in in relation to this larger kind of awareness. Albanese writes,

He had, he wrote, arrived at ‘one fixed conclusion’ from his experience with psychic phenomena. Humans were like ‘islands in the sea, or like trees in the forest.’ Whatever their surface connections, the trees joined roots ‘in the darkness underground,’ and so did the islands ‘through the ocean’s bottom.’ ‘Just so’ there existed ‘a continuum of cosmic consciousness, against which our individuality builds but accidental fences, and into which our several minds plunge as into a mother-sea or reservoir.’<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>33</sup> Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James: II Philosophy and Psychology* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1935), 225-235.

<sup>34</sup> Albanese, 416.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 421.

Such a metaphysical view of consciousness was supported by James' comparisons of mystical and psychic phenomena, and it was buttressed by his experimentation with nitrous oxide that made such experiences available to him, even if in "artificial" form.

James' experiments with nitrous oxide were not idle entertainment. They were means for understanding consciousness. In essence they were metaphysical practices, providing James access to states of consciousness with mystical and philosophical importance. Fifty years later, in the *Doors of Perception*, for similar reasons as James, Aldous Huxley ingested peyote and was led to similar conclusions.

#### Aldous Huxley

Aware of James' experimentation and familiar with *Varieties*, Huxley's investigation of consciousness took similar forms as James'. Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* could be viewed as an extension of James' chapter on mysticism in *Varieties*, and in the *Doors of Perception*, Huxley adopts James' method of ingesting a psychedelic substance to explore consciousness. In the latter, he also adopts a similar view of consciousness as James, suggesting that quotidian consciousness suffers from a kind of limitation. Adopting Blake's metaphor of doors that limit human perception, Huxley believed that mescaline, and later LSD, opened the doors that kept out most of reality.

The *Perennial Philosophy* begins with James' conclusions about mysticism and consciousness. For James, the comparison of a variety of mystical experiences confirmed for him the existence of a certain kind of mystical experience. That experience consisted of feeling one's self being identified with an immanent understanding of God. James writes, "We pass into mystical states from out of ordinary consciousness as from a less into

a more, as from a smallness into a vastness, and at the same time as from an unrest to a rest. We feel them as reconciling, unifying states...In them the unlimited absorbs the limits and peacefully closes the account.”<sup>36</sup> Huxley begins the *Perennial Philosophy* by assuming what James had concluded, that there is an empirically identifiable mystical consciousness that religious people in many times and places had cultivated. Huxley writes,

*Philosophia Perennis*...the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being – the thing is immemorial and universal. Rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions.<sup>37</sup>

Building on James’ conclusions even further, Huxley argues that human knowledge is a function of the human body. Albanese writes of James, “When his *Principles of Psychology* appeared in 1890, its central concept of a nonseparable link between body and mind, with the mind functioning (pragmatically) as the body’s tool, enabled him to achieve his academic reputation.”<sup>38</sup> Following this insight, Huxley writes, “Knowledge is a function of being. When there is a change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing.”<sup>39</sup> Huxley cites James in support of this argument.

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<sup>36</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 360.

<sup>37</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 1.

<sup>38</sup> Albanese, 414.

<sup>39</sup> Huxley, 1.

Like James' comparison of the accounts of mystical experiences, Huxley takes excerpts from a number of mystics, although instead of suggesting that a particular type of experience exists, Huxley assumes this and categorizes his excerpts according to particular topics, topics like "Charity," "Truth," and, "Faith." Huxley does this to investigate the ways in which these mystical experiences correspond with certain theological perspectives. He writes, "If one is not oneself a sage or saint, the best thing one can do, in the field of metaphysics, is to study the works of those who were, and who, because they had modified their merely human mode of being, were capable of a more than merely human kind and amount of knowledge."<sup>40</sup> He likens the project of the book to theology with the aid of enhanced technology. He quips, "Natural science is empirical; but it does not confine itself to the experience of human beings in their merely human and unmodified condition. Why empirical theologians should feel themselves obliged to submit to this handicap, goodness only knows."<sup>41</sup>

*The Perennial Philosophy* mirrors James' metaphysical interest in mystical states of consciousness and presumes insights that James' had made in *Principles*. As importantly, Huxley's comparative method also mirrors James'. *The Perennial Philosophy*'s success mentioned in chapter one also mirrors James' success with *Varieties*. However, with regard to metaphysical religion as it was practiced in the counterculture, *The Doors of Perception* (1954) was more influential than either *The Perennial Philosophy* or *Varieties*.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 5.

The *Doors of Perception* is an ethnographic account of Huxley's experiences under the influence of mescaline, the hallucinogenic material contained in peyote. Like James' experimentation with nitrous oxide recounted specifically in his own essay ("The Subjective Effects of Nitrous Oxide"), Huxley describes in *Doors* his subjective experience with mescaline and confirms an idea that James had come to earlier - that consciousness could be expanded.

Huxley initially describes his expectations for the experience, which amount to a certain degree of eagerness at the expectation that "the drug would admit [him], at least for a few hours, into the kind of inner world described by [William] Blake," by which he means visuals that would appear in his mind even though his eyes were closed.<sup>42</sup> Closed-eye visuals did not occur, but he claims, he was introduced to a world closer to Blake's. He writes, "The other world to which mescaline admitted me was not the world of visions; it existed out there, in what I could see with my eyes open. The great change was in the realm of objective fact."<sup>43</sup> Huxley then describes his new perception of a vase of flowers that "broke all the rules of traditional good taste." He writes of the vase, "I was seeing what Adam had seen on the morning of his creation – the miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence."<sup>44</sup>

One of Huxley's attendants then asks whether the arrangement is "agreeable." Huxley replies that it is neither agreeable nor disagreeable, but that it "just is." He quotes

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<sup>42</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Meister Eckhart, “Istigkeit – wasn’t that the word Meister Eckhart liked to use? ‘Is-ness.’”<sup>45</sup> Huxley had become transfixed not by how well or poorly the flowers had been arranged, but by their existence. In them, he says he saw, “a transience that was yet eternal life, a perpetual perishing that was at the same time pure Being, a bundle of minute, unique particulars in which, by some unspeakable and yet self-evident paradox, was to be seen the divine source of all existence.”<sup>46</sup> He compares the experience to “The Beatific Vision, Sat Chit Ananda, Being-Awareness-Bliss,” although later in the essay he suggests that it is not fully “the Beatific Vision” or “Enlightenment.”<sup>47</sup> Huxley then recites a koan that he, under the influence of mescaline, claimed to understand more profoundly. He writes, “And then I remembered a passage I had read in one of Suzuki’s essays. ‘What is the Dharma-Body of the Buddha?’ (‘the Dharma-Body of the Buddha’ is another way of saying Mind, Suchness, the Void, the Godhead.) The question is asked in a Zen monastery by an earnest and bewildered novice. And with the prompt irrelevance of one of the Marx Brothers, the Master answers, ‘The hedge at the bottom of the garden.’”<sup>48</sup> Huxley saw in those flowers something more than he otherwise could have. His consciousness had expanded.

This consciousness expansion led Huxley to speculate about the function of the brain and the nervous system. Following Bergson, Huxley argues that quotidian consciousness arrives to most with this profound experience already filtered out. He writes,

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 5, 22.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5.

“The suggestion is that the function of the brain and nervous system and sense organs is in the main eliminative and not productive.”<sup>49</sup> He compares this filtering function of the nervous system to a “reducing valve.” He writes, “To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funneled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this Particular planet.”<sup>50</sup> For Huxley, this reducing valve amounts to what Blake meant by the phrase “the Doors of Perception.” Under the Cold War threat of nuclear war, Huxley suggests that this experience with mescaline could minimize the threat of annihilation.

With the aid of mescaline, the reducing valve of the nervous system, according to Huxley, could be impaired and more of Mind at Large could be experienced. He writes, “These effects of mescaline are the sort of effects you could expect to follow the administration of a drug having the power to impair the efficiency of the cerebral reducing valve.”<sup>51</sup> According to Huxley, some people like mystics and artists are able to experience more of Mind at Large without the aid of drugs. He writes, “What the rest of us see only under the influence of mescaline, the artist is congenitally equipped to see all the time. His perception is not limited to what is biologically or socially useful. A little of the knowledge

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 7.

belonging to Mind at Large oozes past the reducing valve of brain and ego, into his consciousness.”<sup>52</sup>

Huxley describes his mescaline-influenced experience of the works of a few artists and of a chair in a garden that looked to him like “a Last Judgment” which brought on a sense of panic. He describes his experience of the chair in the words of Rudolf Otto as the “*mysterium tremendum*” in which he felt under the threat of “disintegrating under a pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in a cosy world of symbols, could possibly bear.”<sup>53</sup> After this experience, Huxley comments that he has understood something about schizophrenia. An investigator asks, “So you think you know where madness lies?” to which Huxley replies with a “convinced and heartfelt, ‘Yes.’”<sup>54</sup>

Huxley likens the experience to something described in Theosophist Evans-Wentz’s translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. He writes, “An almost identical doctrine is to be found in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, where the departed soul is described as shrinking in agony from the Pure Light of the Void, and even from the lesser, tempered Lights, in order to rush headlong into the comforting darkness of selfhood as a reborn human being, or even as a beast, an unhappy ghost, a denizen of hell. Anything rather than the burning brightness of unmitigated Reality – anything!”<sup>55</sup> After explaining his insight

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

into schizophrenia, his wife asks, “Would you be able...to fix your attention on what *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* calls the Clear light?” Huxley replies that he “[is] doubtful,” but that “perhaps I could – but only if there were somebody there to tell me about the Clear Light. One couldn’t do it by oneself. That’s the point, I suppose, of the Tibetan ritual – someone sitting there all the time and telling you what’s what.”<sup>56</sup> Huxley suggests playing recordings of the text for those with mental disorders, predicting that such a text might help them “win some measure of control over the universe” and thus behave more peacefully.

Huxley concludes his essay by arguing that there is a primordial desire in humans, occurring across time and cultures, to “transcend self-conscious selfhood.”<sup>57</sup> He calls it a “principal appetite,” and suggests that drugs like mescaline appear wholly safe and effective for satisfying this appetite. Huxley writes, “Near the end of his life, Aquinas experienced Infused Contemplation. Thereafter he refused to go back to work on his unfinished book.”<sup>58</sup> According to Huxley, Aquinas was experiencing such a profound experience that it had made Aquinas’ other work seem “no better than chaff or straw.”<sup>59</sup> Pragmatically, Huxley feared that if one were only to exist exclusively in this state that she or he would, like Aquinas, lose the will to work and to perform one’s social responsibilities. Like James who only cautiously endorsed nitrous oxide experiments because they “weaken the will,” Huxley had identified the same effect with mescaline. However, Huxley argues

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

that mescaline could, if administered properly, assuage the principle appetite for self-transcendence. He writes,

[T]he man who comes back through the Door in the Wall will never be quite the same as the man who went out. He will be wiser but less cocksure, happier but less self-satisfied, humbler in acknowledging his ignorance yet better equipped to understand the relationship of words to things, of systematic reasoning to the unfathomable Mystery which it tries, forever vainly, to comprehend.<sup>60</sup>

As I have pointed out in chapter one, Huxley's text reveals the full gamut of metaphysical ideas and values. It shows an avid interest in consciousness, or what Huxley calls Mind at Large. It includes the perception of energy pulsating through everyday objects as well as theories of correspondence between both the mind and the human body and between inner and outer worlds. Huxley reveals pragmatic concerns about the effects of the experience on everyday life. As much as Huxley's account fits into a metaphysical tradition, it also fits into a particular strain of metaphysical thinking, a strain that I am calling *consciousness expansion*. Like James, Huxley theorizes that quotidian consciousness is usually experienced as already having filtered out certain experiences, that consciousness is determined in part by the physiology of the brain, and that some people under certain circumstances have access to what James calls "cosmic consciousness" and what Huxley calls "Mind at Large." Going even further, this metaphysical tradition involves not only a particular theory of consciousness (that it can expand), but also certain methods for investigating it – the comparison of mystical experiences and the ingestion of consciousness altering substances.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Three years before Huxley died in 1963, a graduate student introduced the *Doors of Perception* to Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary who was then only beginning to perform his own experiments with another consciousness-altering substance, psilocybin mushrooms. Leary met with Huxley who had been lecturing at MIT and won Huxley's support for a research project. Huxley confided in a friend, "how fortunate it was that such important work was about to be carried on at Harvard in the very same department started by William James, a seeker of visions through the use of nitrous oxide."<sup>61</sup>

#### Timothy Leary and the "Politics of Consciousness Expansion"

Leary first took psilocybin mushrooms in Mexico in 1960, a few years after his first wife had committed suicide and after only a year of lecturing at Harvard. Leary "picked one up. It stank of dampness. The smell was like crumbling logs or certain New England basements, and it tasted worse than it looked. Bitter, stringy;" he "jammed the rest" in his mouth.<sup>62</sup> After beginning to feel strange, "Like going under dental gas," Leary began laughing uncontrollably. He writes,

I laughed again at my own everyday pomposity, the narrow arrogance of scholars, the impudence of the rational, the smug naiveté of words in contrast to the raw rich ever-changing panoramas that flooded my brain...I gave way to delight, as mystics have for centuries when they peeked through the curtains and discovered that this world – so manifestly real – was actually a tiny stage set constructed by the mind. There was a sea of possibilities out there (in there?), other realities, an infinite array of programs for other futures.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Greenfield, *Timothy Leary: A Biography* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2006), 123.

<sup>62</sup> Timothy Leary, *Flashbacks: An Autobiography* (Los Angeles: JP Tarcher, 1983), 31.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

After meeting with the chair of the department of Psychology, who also happened to be in Mexico that summer, Leary returned to Harvard to study the effects such an experience might have on one's behavior. The research would be called the "Harvard Psilocybin Project."<sup>64</sup>

On his return, he moved into a house with Frank Barron. Barron had been studying the effects of the mushrooms on creativity. Barron instructed Leary when he moved in, "'I'd read William James first,' he said."<sup>65</sup> Leary writes, "James, the founder of the Harvard Psychology Department, was to my surprise an advocate of brain-change drugs."<sup>66</sup> He cites James' "The subjective Effects of Nitrous Oxide" reprinted in *The Will to Believe* (1897). After reading James, Barron took Leary to the Swedenborg Chapel near Harvard, "where William James listened to his father preach on transcendental-scientific visions."<sup>67</sup> When mentioning his return from the fateful trip that summer, Leary describes a history of metaphysical investigation occurring at Harvard. He begins with James, mentions Morton Prince's work with "hypnosis, trances, and visions," and Harry Murray, who had worked on "brainwashing and sodium amytal interrogation."<sup>68</sup> Becoming historically

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<sup>64</sup> Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987), 110.

<sup>65</sup> Leary, *Flashbacks*, 36.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 37.

knowledgeable of Cambridge's metaphysical past, Leary adds, "I felt like I was being initiated into a secret order of Cambridge Illuminati. Frank smiled at the idea."<sup>69</sup>

George Litwin, a graduate student in Harvard's psychology department who had been conducting his own research into mescaline, gave Leary a copy of Huxley's *The Door's of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*.<sup>70</sup> Leary went home that night and read the texts. He writes, "That night I read Huxley. And then I read those two books again. And again. It was all there. All my vision. And more too. Huxley had taken mescaline in a garden and shucked off the mind and awakened to eternity."<sup>71</sup> That year, scholar of religion Huston Smith had invited Huxley to MIT as a distinguished visiting lecturer. Leary learned of Huxley's proximity at a party, contacted the visiting scholar, and the two met for lunch at the Harvard Faculty Club.<sup>72</sup>

Leary describes Huxley as "the person you'd cast as a British philosopher – a serene Buddha with an encyclopedic mind. His elegant Oxford voice bubbled, except in moments of amused indignation when its pitch rose."<sup>73</sup> Leary and Huxley conversed "about how to study and use the consciousness-expanding drugs" and they "clicked along agreeably on the do's and the not-to-do's."<sup>74</sup> He adds,

We would avoid the behaviorist approach to others' awareness. Avoid labeling or depersonalizing the subject. We should not impose our own

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Greenfield, 116.

<sup>71</sup> Timothy Leary, *High Priest* (New York: World Pub. Co., 1968), 143.

<sup>72</sup> Leary, *Flashbacks*, 41.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Leary, *High Priest*, 143.

jargon or our own experimental games on others. We were not out to discover new laws, which is to say, to discover the redundant implications of our own premises. We were not to be limited by the pathological point of view. We were not to interpret ecstasy as mania, or calm serenity as catatonia; we were not to diagnose Buddha as a detached schizoid; nor Christ as an exhibitionistic masochist; nor the mystic experience as a symptom; nor the visionary state as a model psychosis. Aldous Huxley chuckling away with compassionate humor at human folly.<sup>75</sup>

Leary's biographer, Robert Greenwood, adds, "Huxley impressed Tim [Leary] by quoting Wordsworth, Plotinus, and William James."<sup>76</sup>

Huxley was included in the meetings in which Leary and his fellow researchers designed the first psilocybin experiments. Leary writes that Huxley "would come and listen and then close his eyes and detach himself from the scene and go into his controlled meditation trance, which was unnerving to some of the Harvard people who equate consciousness with talk, and then he would open his eyes and make a diamond-pure comment."<sup>77</sup> Leary writes that Huxley, "made many practical suggestions about how to create an aesthetic environment for the upcoming sessions."<sup>78</sup> Once Leary received the mushrooms, Huxley participated in the research.

After the research began, Leary believed so much in the importance of the research that he wrote, "The question that haunted our work in those early days was: how could we introduce these methods for mind expansion to society?"<sup>79</sup> Huxley suggested that they take

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Greenwood, 118.

<sup>77</sup> Leary, *High Priest*, 145.

<sup>78</sup> Leary, *Flashbacks*, 42.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 43.

mushrooms saying, “We’ll take the drug and ask our expanded brains that question.”<sup>80</sup> As

Leary describes the session,

Aldous sat up, lanky legs crossed, and looked at me quizzically. ‘So you don’t know what to do with this bloody philosopher’s stone we have stumbled onto? In the past this powerful knowledge has been guarded in privacy, passed on in the subdued, metaphorical obscurantism of scholars, mystics, and artists.’

‘But society needs this information,’ I said, passionately. My anti-elitist button had been pushed.

‘These are evolutionary matters. They cannot be rushed. Work privately. Initiate artists, writers, poets, jazz musicians, elegant courtesans, painters, rich bohemians. And they’ll initiate the intelligent rich. That’s how everything of culture and beauty and philosophic freedom has been passed on.’<sup>81</sup>

And so Leary began a series of experiments in which he provided psilocybin mushrooms to interested “elites,” including metaphysical beats like Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William S. Burroughs. A month later, Ginsberg had ingested mushrooms in Leary’s house and opposed Huxley’s “elitist” position. Leary writes, “Allen [Ginsberg], the quintessential egalitarian, wanted everyone to have the option of taking mind-expanding drugs. It was the fifth freedom – the right to manage your own nervous system...It was at this moment that we rejected Huxley’s elitist perspective and adopted the American egalitarian open-to-the-public approach.”<sup>82</sup>

Although Leary followed Ginsberg’s approach rather than Huxley’s, Huxley’s influence on Leary is nevertheless pronounced. Not only was Huxley professionally

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 50.

supportive of Leary, but his was an early account that shaped the way Leary understood the effects of psilocybin and LSD. Jay Stevens writes that after his first experience with the mushroom in Mexico “[Leary’s] context had shifted toward religion and revelation. He hadn’t really rushed around talking about God...it had been more along the lines of finally experiencing that elusive vitalizing transaction.”<sup>83</sup> By the time Leary returned to Cambridge and had been introduced to Huxley, Leary understood the experience not in the language of transactional psychology, but mysticism. In the summer of 1962, Huxley’s novel *Island* inspired Leary to rent out a hotel in Zihuatanejo, Mexico, where Leary could continue doing his research undisturbed by the outside world.<sup>84</sup> For Leary, part of this work meant “translating [Theosophist] W.Y. Evans-Wentz’ *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* into ‘psychedelic terms,’” the book that Huxley suggested could soothe those who suffered from too great a dose of Mind at Large.<sup>85</sup> Once it was published in 1963, Leary dedicated *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* to Huxley, quoting at length the passage from *Doors* where Huxley claims to have understood where madness lies.

### Cocking Snooks

In *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Leary, George Litwin, and Ralph Metzner published preliminary results from The Harvard Psilocybin Project. Predictably, they reported positive results: seventy-eight percent reporting the experience “positive and

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<sup>83</sup> Stevens, 108.

<sup>84</sup> Greenfield, 186.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

useful,” seventy percent reporting “pleasant or ecstatic experiences,” eighty-eight percent learning something, sixty-two percent reporting “that the experience changed their lives for the better,” and ninety per cent wishing to repeat the experience.<sup>86</sup> In the text, they provide testimonials from participants. Of one testimonial they write, “This last description illustrates the kind of ‘mystical’ or ‘transcendent’ experience that has been reported as occurring with LSD by other investigators...it may be pointed out that some of the psilocybin and LSD descriptions are remarkably similar to classical descriptions of mystical experiences and religious conversions.”<sup>87</sup> As Leary was conducting this research, he also participated in two experiments that reflect metaphysical ideas and values, and that set the stage for Leary’s involvement with politics and the underground press.

One of the difficulties with The Harvard Psilocybin Project was that the findings were entirely based on how subjects themselves remembered the experience. After participating in a session, a subject was required to fill out a questionnaire. They included questions like “Was the experience pleasant?” and “Did you learn a lot about yourself and the world?” to which respondents could check boxes ranging from “very unpleasant to wonderful or ecstatic” and from “more confused to tremendous insights.”<sup>88</sup> The questionnaires were analyzed, and they published the results. As leading as these questions

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<sup>86</sup> Timothy Leary, George Litwin, and Ralph Metzner, “Reactions to Psilocybin Administered in a Supportive Environment,” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 137 no. 6 (1963): 564.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 571.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 565.

might be, Leary was dissatisfied more by the lack of reliability of such methods, after all, this was only a preliminary study. Leary writes,

As scientists we were still dissatisfied. We were faced with the unavoidable problem in the field of psychiatry. How do you demonstrate that someone has improved? Self-appraisals are an important index but inconclusive; heroin addicts and born-again Christians claim to feel better but others might disagree. There didn't seem to be an objective way to keep score on life changes.<sup>89</sup>

Like a good metaphysical, Leary framed the benefits of consciousness expansion in terms of psychological health, but he also wanted pragmatic, life-changing results – the same criteria by which William James had evaluated religious experiences.

The Massachusetts prison system requested Harvard graduate students be assigned for “research and training.”<sup>90</sup> As Leary describes it, “They expected a quick turn-down. Just as prison guards were the bottom of the law-enforcement hierarchy, prison work was at that time the pits of psychology. Criminals simply didn’t change.”<sup>91</sup> Leary, however, viewed this as an opportunity because not only were convicted criminals notoriously difficult to change, there was a statistical marker that could prove the effectiveness of consciousness expansion – the recidivism rate. Leary writes, “The return-rate in Massachusetts prisons was running seventy percent. I felt we could decimate that percentage.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Leary, *Flashbacks*, 78.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

As part of the experiment, Leary and a group of graduate students administered psilocybin mushrooms to a number of prisoners who were about to be released. Leary writes that during the experiment, “Whenever visitors came to Cambridge inquiring about psychedelic drugs, we took them out to the prison. The convicts spoke about their mystical experiences to Gerald Heard, Alan Watts, and William Burroughs, [and] Aldous Huxley.”<sup>93</sup> As the prisoners were released, researchers were anxious to see what percentage of subjects would return to prison. Leary claimed jaw-dropping results, arguing that after ten months, their subjects’ recidivism rate was about half of what would otherwise have been expected. These findings were disputed by prison warden Edward Grennan, who argued that Leary and his fellow researchers lent so much support to the prisoners that “the same rate of recidivism might have been achieved if the same concentration and attention were given to any parolee by highly placed members in any community.”<sup>94</sup> Rick Doblin, Harvard educated researcher, found in 1998 that Leary’s reports were inflated because of the recidivism rate against which Leary compared his subjects’.<sup>95</sup> Based on Doblin’s findings and the tremendous advantage received by the subjects of the experiment, Leary’s impressive claims are inaccurate to say the least. Despite its shortcomings, Leary’s intention for the research was to provide critics tangible, practical results of consciousness expansion.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>94</sup> Greenfield, 151.

<sup>95</sup> Rick Doblin, “Dr. Leary’s Concord Prison Experiment,” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 30 no. 4 (1998): 419-426.

Leary writes, “When it became known on campus that a group of psychologists was producing brain-change, we expected that astronomers and biologists would come flocking around to use this new tool for expanding awareness...Instead, we were flooded by inquiries from the Divinity School!”<sup>96</sup> Walter Pahnke, one of these students, suggested a double-blind experiment in which they would test the effects of psilocybin if administered in a Church setting. Leary resisted the idea at first, imagining a group of thirty subjects who had never used psilocybin ingesting the powerful substance in a public place. After convincing Leary of its safety, Pahnke assembled twenty subjects from Andover Newton Theological Seminary in the Marsh Chapel at Boston University on Good Friday, spring, 1962.

Ten students had been given psilocybin, the other ten a placebo. While reading their Bibles, it quickly became apparent who had received the placebo. Leary writes, “The ridiculousness of running a double-blind study of psychedelic drugs was apparent. After thirty minutes everyone knew who had taken the pill.”<sup>97</sup> Leary describes the “visionary ten” worshippers wandering around the chapel murmuring prayers, chanting hymns, and one playing “weird exciting chords on the organ” while the others sat quietly in their pews.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> As quoted in Greenfield, 180.

<sup>97</sup> Leary, *Flashbacks*, 106.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

After the experiment, Pahnke collected his subjects' descriptions of the experience and had them evaluated by teams of psychologists "who knew nothing about the study."<sup>99</sup>

According to Leary,

The questionnaires and interviews revealed that the participants who ate the mushrooms had mystic religious experiences and the control group didn't...Our administration of the sacred mushrooms in a religious setting to people who were religiously motivated provided a scientific demonstration that spiritual ecstasy, religious revelation, and union with God were now directly accessible. Mystical experience could be produced for and by those who sought it.<sup>100</sup>

The results of the "Miracle at Marsh Chapel" in which ten worshippers were said to have simultaneous mystical experiences were published in *Time* magazine. As much as the findings, the experiment's design reveals Leary's metaphysical approach to consciousness, attempting to measure and describe the unusual kinds of consciousness available to the human mind.

Despite what Leary understood to be reproducible revelation, the research met resistance. Walter H. Clark was forced to dissociate himself from their research, Pahnke's master's thesis was approved but he was not able to continue the research, and "the enthusiasm of the divinity students was officially discouraged."<sup>101</sup> Here Leary believed that he had proven the accessibility of mystical experiences through a change in consciousness, but he was encountering resistance. He writes, "We had run up against the Judeo-Christian

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 109.

commitment to one God, one religion, one reality that has cursed Europe for centuries and America since our founding days.”<sup>102</sup>

Throughout the course of his time as a lecturer at Harvard, Leary’s research was the subject of a number of controversies, many of which were the result of the decision he had made with Ginsberg to approach the distribution democratically. Amid the controversies, psychedelic researcher Humphrey Osmond asked Aldous Huxley what he thought of Leary. Huxley replied,

Yes, what about Tim Leary? I spent an evening with him here a few weeks ago – and he talked such nonsense...that I became quite concerned. Not about his sanity – because he is perfectly sane – but about his prospects in the world; for this nonsense-talking is just another device for annoying people in authority, cocking snooks [a British term for expressing scorn or derision as if by thumbing one’s nose] at the academic world...I am very fond of Tim – but why, oh why, does he have to be such an ass?... Go about your business quietly, don’t break the taboos or criticize the locally accepted dogmas. Be polite and friendly – and get on with the job. If you leave them alone, they will probably leave you alone. But evidently the temptation to cock snooks is quite irresistible – so there he goes again!<sup>103</sup>

#### Underground Papers and The Politics of Consciousness Expansion

Within one year of the Marsh Chapel experiment, Leary was AWOL from the university and subsequently fired. Before leaving, Leary helped found the International Foundation for Internal Freedom (IFIF), an independent “drug research project” that was intended to set up research facilities all over the United States. The board of directors included Huston Smith, Walter Houston Clark, and Alan Watts.<sup>104</sup> After failing to establish

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> As quoted in Greenfield, 193.

<sup>104</sup> Greenfield, 193.

a presence outside of the United States, Leary and some fellow researchers settled in a mansion in Dutchess County New York, the Millbrook estate, which operated as the headquarters of IFIF, and where Leary resided for the next several years.

Despite losing his affiliation with Harvard, Leary's reputation grew. His experiments and ideas were the subjects of articles in popular magazines like *Esquire*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Newsweek*.<sup>105</sup> Artists, celebrities, and religious seekers visited Millbrook, sometimes for months at a time. In 1966, around sixty people were living in the mansion. As attention increased, so too did police surveillance at Millbrook. In 1965, Leary was once again traveling to Mexico for the summer. When he was turned away at the border, on his return trip through customs, officers found a small amount of marijuana. Leary and his daughter Susan were charged with possession of marijuana. As Leary was defending his possession on religious freedom grounds, surveillance of Millbrook continued, and soon police entered the premises and found more marijuana. Leary was again charged with possession. The busts initiated Leary's relationship with the underground press and inaugurated heightened political activity concerning consciousness expansion.

Leary was convicted of the charges in Laredo and sentenced to a heavy fine, twenty-thousand dollars and twenty years in prison. To many, the sentence seemed excessive. Leary intended to appeal the case to the Supreme Court, in part to obtain a ruling on the use of psychedelics as religious sacraments. Leary predicted that it would take thirty or forty months to reach the Supreme Court. In the meantime, Leary used underground papers

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 210.

to establish the religious bona fides of consciousness expansion. Underground papers not only covered Leary's political and legal struggles, but actively participated in them, providing a venue for metaphysical political expression and activity.

#### League for Spiritual Discovery

In April 1966, after the raid on the Millbrook estate, Leary held a press conference in which he encouraged the audience to abstain from using consciousness expanding drugs for a year. He said, "I think we should voluntarily stop doing what has caused anguish and confusion for those who do not understand... You who have taken psychedelic drugs know enough now to turn on without drugs. If you don't, I'm going to teach you."<sup>106</sup> The author of the article adds, "Starting with the next issue of *EVO*, Dr. Leary will begin a regular column dealing with consciousness expansion without the use of drugs."<sup>107</sup> A month later, Leary's column "Turn on / Tune in / Drop out" appeared in the *East Village Other* and then was syndicated in the *Los Angeles Free Press*, the *Fifth Estate*, the *Paper*, and the *Berkeley Barb*. The column never ran more than a few articles, however it was an early attempt at appeasing law-makers concerned with what they failed to understand as religious interest in consciousness expansion. The earliest semblance of the underground Press Syndicate was intended to ease Leary's legal pressure.

Within less than a year, Leary had abandoned his proposed moratorium and was publicly advocating the religious use of consciousness expanding substances like marijuana and LSD with the intention of demonstrating a religious defense for using the

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<sup>106</sup> Timothy Leary, "Leary's Politics & Ethics of Ecstasy," *Berkeley Barb*, May 6, 1966, 5.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

drugs. In doing so, he joined a number of groups that were forming for similar purposes. In Berkeley, Jefferson Poland organized the Clear Light of Fellowship group that considered LSD a sacrament, and Art Kleps founded the Neo-American Church which advocated the use of peyote as a religious sacrament, comparable to the Native American Church. Leary's group, the League for Spiritual Discovery (League) was announced in September 1966, and underground papers helped spread the word. The *San Francisco Oracle* published a press conference in which Leary outlines the purpose of the organization and encourages people to start their own religions.<sup>108</sup> The article was republished through the UPS in a "special issue" of the *Rag*.<sup>109</sup>

Leary's description of the League reflects characteristically metaphysical values at the same time that it seeks to change the legal parameters for using psychedelic substances. Leary speaks of finding "God within" through the use of consciousness expanding drugs, and of the beneficial effects such practices can provide.<sup>110</sup> The organization of the League also reflects a metaphysical value, a resistance to religious organization. In an effort to resist social organization, Leary restricted the number of people who could join, and refused to train people at Millbrook for setting up their own centers of worship. Historian Timothy Miller writes, "Leary wanted to avoid any organization at all for his psychedelic spirituality, keeping his religion 'pure' and aloof from social structures."<sup>111</sup> Leary describes

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<sup>108</sup> Timothy Leary, "Timothy Leary's Press Conference," *San Francisco Oracle* #4, December 1966, 1.

<sup>109</sup> Timothy Leary, "Head Line," *The Rag*, January 9, 1967, 1.

<sup>110</sup> Leary, "Timothy Leary's Press Conference," 2.

<sup>111</sup> Timothy S. Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 8.

his intentions, “We’re not a religion in the sense of the Methodist Church seeking new adherents. We’re a religion in the basic primeval sense of a tribe living together and centered around shared spiritual goals.”<sup>112</sup> Leary was attempting to create a kind of organization while maintaining the metaphysical value of opposing religious organizations.

In its place, Leary suggested people start their own religions, and even provided legal advice, saying,

Our attorneys in the state of New York are filing suit in the Supreme Court of New York in which we’re asking for a court order allowing the priests, in our religion whom we call ‘guides’, to import and distribute psychedelic chemicals: marijuana, peyote and LSD, only to coreligionists, that is only to initiate League members and only in League Shrines. Now, what’s involved to form a religion is to get a small group of friends or relatives together. Now in the state of New York the magic number’s seven, six people plus a lawyer.<sup>113</sup>

Although this approach might inhibit the creation of a vast and elaborate religious institution, Leary’s description codifies religious hierarchy by designating certain people as “guides” and suggesting later in the article that these guides initiate novice practitioners. Nevertheless, Leary’s intention with the organization was to avoid social structure while adapting to the legal definitions of what constitutes a religion. Forming officially recognized bodies not only provided opportunities to establish religious uses of consciousness expanding substances, but strengthened his defense of his arrest in Laredo, which he was defending on religious grounds at the time.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Leary, “Timothy Leary’s Press Conference,” 2.

Underground papers were the means by which many of these groups organized. The *San Francisco Oracle* and the *Rag* not only published Leary's call and advice for starting their own religion, they made it a feature of their issues. Leary appears on the cover of the *San Francisco Oracle* with the likeness of a halo and the *Rag* advertises its Leary issue as a "special issue." The *Barb* not only published information about Jefferson Poland's group, but contact information for persons interested in participating. Within months, Timothy Leary mimeographed a small pamphlet titled "How to Start Your Own Religion" which was reprinted as the third edition of the *Southern California Oracle*.<sup>114</sup> Underground papers were helping Leary and others organize metaphysical groups, groups that had not only spiritual but legal intentions.

### Come Together

In 1966, John Griggs was the leader of a group of people importing more marijuana and manufacturing more LSD in the United States than any other entity. They called themselves the "Brotherhood of Eternal Love," and they were devoted to the teachings of Timothy Leary. The group was incorporated as a religious organization and also operated a psychedelic shop and book store in Laguna Beach. In 1969, the group operated out of a ranch in the San Jacinto mountains. After being evicted from Millbrook, Leary was living with the Brotherhood when television crews from ABC and NBC came to interview him after the Supreme Court had ruled his conviction in Laredo unconstitutional (for reasons

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<sup>114</sup> Timothy Leary, "Start Your Own Religion," *Southern California Oracle*, June 1967, 4-5.

other than Leary's religious defense). Leary declared it the "the happiest day since the Emancipation Proclamation," and added that he now intended to run for governor.<sup>115</sup>

Although Leary mentioned his intention to run for governor of California on television, it was at the offices of the *Los Angeles Free Press* that he officially announced his candidacy. He said,

The highest court in the land, and I mean the highest court, has said yes; the Federal marijuana prohibition is as dead as the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment...The quiet, love underground is going to come above ground today. This is the beginning of a new period of joy. We're going to start a political party. By party I don't mean Democrat, Republican machine politics, we mean party – like celebration.<sup>116</sup>

Art Kunkin, editor of the *Los Angeles Free Press*, served as campaign manager, and Leary's candidacy was supported by the *Berkeley Barb* and the *San Diego Free Press*.

The *Los Angeles Free Press* printed a front page photo of John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Bed-in protest, beneath which the paper reads that Lennon had composed Leary's campaign song, "Come Together."<sup>117</sup> A few months later the *Free Press* published Leary's campaign platform, which surprisingly included a "\$1000 fine" for "unhealthy or asocial actions" including:

abortion, bigamy, cigarette smoking, divorce, killing wild animals, gun possession, marijuana possession, purchasing of a new smog-producing automobile, homosexual courting, prostitution, public nudity, heroin possession, LSD tripping, possession of hard liquor, living in ghetto or central urban neighborhoods, gambling, and public mental illness.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Greenfield, 353.

<sup>116</sup> "Leary Tosses Head into the Ring," *Los Angeles Free Press*, May 23, 1969, 2.

<sup>117</sup> *Los Angeles Free Press*, June 13, 1969, 1.

<sup>118</sup> Timothy Leary, "What Kind of Party Do You Want?" *Los Angeles Free Press*, July 25, 1969, 5.

As deplorable as many of his positions were, a reader of the *Free Press* submitted a letter encouraging Leary's candidacy writing, "As always the doctor is far sighted and can see the growing need for what I will call \*PPP\* (psychedelic political power)...This is our revolution, the psychedelic community of the entire world. Even though \*organization\* is an ugly word, it's what we need, and quickly...Dr. Leary has all my support."<sup>119</sup> Underground papers were one of the primary media by which Leary was running his campaign.

Leary's campaign came to a halt in December of 1969, nearly a year before the election. Leary returned to a Houston court after prosecuting attorneys refiled his charges from the Laredo bust. Being convicted of a federal crime meant that he was no longer eligible to run for governor, and he was subject to sentencing. The *Los Angeles Free Press* printed letters from leading religious figures and scholars including George Litwin, David McClelland, Alan Watts, Allen Ginsberg, Walter H. Clark and Harvey Cox asking that the judge hand over a lenient sentence. Despite these letters, for possession of a small amount of marijuana, Leary was sentenced to ten years in prison and a ten-thousand-dollar fine.<sup>120</sup> The judge remarked that "[Leary] has preached the length and breadth of the land, and I am inclined to the view that he would pose a danger to the community if released."<sup>121</sup> Even after convicted, the *Free Press* lobbied to keep Leary out of prison. Leary's gubernatorial candidacy had been facilitated, from start to finish, by Underground papers.

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<sup>119</sup> Dave Burnham, "Leary for Guv," *Los Angeles Free Press*, June 20, 1969, 6.

<sup>120</sup> Greenfield, 369.

<sup>121</sup> As quoted in Greenfield, 369.

## Holding Together

As Leary began serving his sentence in Santa Ana, his legal fees were increasing. Ken Kesey and his wife at the time Rosemary Leary cast the I-Ching for guidance (the I-Ching is an ancient Chinese method of divination, usually cast with yarrow stalks or Chinese coins). The oracle advised “Holding Together” which became the name of Leary’s defense fund. The incident was published in the *Berkeley Barb*, the *Los Angeles Free Press*, and the *East Village Other*.<sup>122</sup> The *Barb* included a hand-written note by Leary, “Smudged by [Rosemary’s] tears, Tim’s smuggled note reads, ‘these are times which test the depth of our faith, trust and patience. Love cannot be imprisoned.’”<sup>123</sup> The *East Village Other* printed full page ads on behalf of the Holding Together fund, asking for any “green energy” to be sent to Leary’s home address in Berkeley.<sup>124</sup> Underground papers were facilitating Leary’s legal defense.

On Leary’s third day in prison, he was administered a psychological test. The examination was partially based on tests that he had developed himself, and so he tried to achieve the highest possible score in order to earn a transfer to a “minimum security prison where escape would be possible.”<sup>125</sup> In May, Leary was transferred to the west wing of

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<sup>122</sup> Rob Hayes, “Holding Together,” *Berkeley Barb*, March 6, 1970, 7. “‘Holding Together’ Freedom Fund to Raise Bail for Dr. Tim Leary,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, March 6, 1970, 1. “Free Tim Leary,” *The Rag*, April 6, 1970, 13.

<sup>123</sup> Hayes, 7.

<sup>124</sup> “Come Together – Join the Party,” *East Village Other*, April 14, 1970, np.

<sup>125</sup> Greenfield, 378.

California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo.<sup>126</sup> Underground papers continued helping with the defense fund.

On September 10, 1970, the Weather Underground, a radical and militant left-wing organization, broke Leary out of prison. Leary was flown to a Black Panther embassy in Algiers, a country with no extradition treaty with the United States. The Weather Underground had recently changed revolutionary tactics, expanding from a strictly military approach to a broader cultural approach, as outlined in the "New Morning" statement.<sup>127</sup> The Brotherhood of Eternal Love had been disbanded and were operating out of disparate locations, however two of them paid the Weather Underground seventeen-thousand dollars to facilitate Leary's escape from prison.

When the news broke of his escape, underground papers increased Leary's coverage. The *East Village Other* announced on its front page, "Proud Eagle Flies Free" and included an *I-Ching* reading on the editorial page surround by the text, "Tim Leary scaled a twelve foot wall to freedom: Proud Eagle Flies Free."<sup>128</sup> The *Barb* published a letter from the Weather Underground. It reads,

The Weatherman Underground has had the honor and pleasure of helping Dr. Timothy Leary escape from the POW camp at San Luis Obispo, California...LSD and grass, like the herbs and cactus and mushrooms of the American Indians and countless civilizations that have existed on this planet, will help us make a future world where it will be possible to live in peace. Now we are at war.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>128</sup> "24. Fu / Return (The Turning Point)," *East Village Other*, September 15, 1970, 2.

<sup>129</sup> Bernardine Dorhn, "A Letter From Underground About Leary's Liberation," *Berkeley Barb*, September 18, 1970, 2.

In addition to this letter by Weatherperson Bernadine Dohrn, the *Barb* published a letter written by Leary himself. Leary writes, “There is the time for peace and the time for war. There is the day of laughing Krishna and the day of Grim Shiva. Brothers and Sisters, at this time let us have no more talk of peace.”<sup>130</sup> He concludes the letter, “Warning – I am armed and should be considered dangerous to anyone who threatens my life or my freedom.”<sup>131</sup> The *Freep* published the letter on its front page, superimposed over an image of Leary’s smiling face.<sup>132</sup> Through underground papers, Leary called for armed revolution, an extreme which he had not, until then, endorsed.

Leary’s conversion to fist-oriented violence met controversy. Until then, Leary had always advocated as peaceful a revolution as possible. He deliberately avoided the Chicago Democratic Convention in 1968 for fear of physical violence, even though he was sympathetic to the purpose of the planned demonstration. Leary had attended the organizing meeting and he suggested a “nudist parade through the streets of Chicago.”<sup>133</sup> Leary said at the meeting that “Bolshevik bomb throwing was out. The new bombs were neurological. You don’t blow up the Czar’s palace. You blow minds.”<sup>134</sup> However now that he was a fugitive, Leary declared his willingness to behave violently.

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<sup>130</sup> Timothy Leary, “A Letter From Underground About Leary’s Liberation,” *Berkeley Barb*, September 18, 1970, 3.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> “A Letter from Tim Leary on his Escape from Jail,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, September 18, 1970, 1.

<sup>133</sup> Greenfield, 332.

<sup>134</sup> As quoted in Greenfield, 333.

Many underground authors were happy to see Leary embrace violent revolution. An editorial in the *East Village Other* defended Leary's position. The author criticizes Beat writer John Clellon Holmes' criticism of Leary's transition by quoting Leary,

We are amused by...the astonishing power of media myopia, neurological inertia! The anguished irritation that we kept evolving, changing, experimenting, learning, blundering stumbling onto new and higher forms of energy...The liberal-hippie fear of the gun is a hypocritical cop-out. Everyone who lives on Amerikan soil relates to The Gun. Is protected by A Gun. You are either protected by the White-racist policeman's Gun. Or you are protected by the Panther Holy Piece.<sup>135</sup>

The author concludes, "Right On, Brother Tim!!!"<sup>136</sup> The *Berkeley Barb* published an interview with "Sister Kay Beth of Berkeley" who argued that, "[Leary] is gonna change now. He's gonna grow...Now Tim Leary comes out HEAVY! Christ, from the 'Weathermen Underground!' It's too much, man. I get insomnia thinking of the revolutionary potential."<sup>137</sup> Mary Reinholz writes in the *Freep*,

now Tim Leary has joined the children of light and life is a holy battle against the forces of death and darkness...Timothy Leary is my brother now. He has dropped the Patriarchal garbage...I did not like him when he was the 'high priest.' A high priest requires lowly followers...now Leary has been reborn.<sup>138</sup>

Leary's transition also met controversy, both from those committed to nonviolent revolution, as well as from those embracing an armed revolution. Travis Ashbrook, one of the members of the Brotherhood of Eternal Love, was committed to nonviolence. He said

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<sup>135</sup> "Hirap," *East Village Other*, November 24, 1970, 2.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Leo Laurence, "Leary's Gonna Grow," *Berkeley Barb*, October 9, 1970, 6.

<sup>138</sup> As quoted in Gerry, "Tim Leary – Not My Brother Yet," *The Rag* 5 no. 3, 14.

of Leary, “He forgot about God and his inner higher being. From that point on, Tim lost his center and he never did get it back.”<sup>139</sup> Baba Ram Das, formerly Leary’s fellow researcher, said, “One more thing we do not need is one more nut with a gun.”<sup>140</sup> In an article titled “Not My Brother Yet” published in the *Rag*, the author asks,

Where was Tim when they first locked up Huey? Peace and acid. When they gunned down Fred Hampton, or shackled Bobby Seale, or gave Lee Otis Johnson 30 years on the other side of their steel bars and guns?...Now that Tim Leary’s ass is backed to the wall, he cries ‘go over it.’ Now that Tim Leary’s appeals have run out he tells us to pick up our guns.<sup>141</sup>

To many of Leary’s former allies, Leary had abandoned an essential characteristic of non-violence, and to many others, he appeared self-centered and opportunistic.

The debates over Leary’s conversion to revolutionary violence were waged in underground papers. The Weather Underground published news of Leary’s escape in an underground paper. Leary announced his fist-conversion in an underground newspaper, and in the pages of underground papers, Leary’s turn to violence sparked dialogue about how to carry out their revolution. Underground papers were the means by which Leary defended his religious use of LSD, and by which he conducted his gubernatorial candidacy. They also were the medium through which Leary, a metaphysical outlaw, remained in contact with the counterculture while a fugitive.

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<sup>139</sup> As quoted in Greenfield, 392.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Gerry, 14.

### The Production of Religious Authority

Leary designed the League for Spiritual Discovery to create legal opportunities for the religious use of consciousness expanding drugs and to aid in his criminal trial. He designed the organization so that he would not be the leading figure of a large network of consciousness expanders. However in lieu of this organization, underground papers provided the means by which his national countercultural authority could spread.

Underground papers supported Leary's religious authority by publishing material, including Leary's interviews, articles, columns, and syndications of his books. Leary's column "Turn on / Tune in / Drop out" was one of the first columns to be syndicated by the UPS. The *San Francisco Oracle* published a famous "Houseboat Summit" in which Leary, Watts, Ginsberg and Snyder discussed countercultural controversies, like whether to fight a revolution or to "drop out."<sup>142</sup> In 1968, both the *Los Angeles Free Press* and the *East Village Other* published portions of Leary's autobiography, "High Priest."<sup>143</sup> By the time Leary received his sentence for the Laredo bust, he had become a central topic of underground papers. From February through October of 1970, there was scarcely an issue of the *Barb* that did not contain an article on, or information from, Leary, often making the front page. All of the attention could have hardly emphasized to a greater degree the perceived importance of Timothy Leary.

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<sup>142</sup> Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Gary Snyder, Alan Watts, "The Houseboat Summit," *San Francisco Oracle* #7, 2.

<sup>143</sup> Timothy Leary, "High Priest," *East Village Other*, October 11, 1968, 14-15. Lawrence Lipton, "The High Priest of LSD," *Los Angeles Free Press*, October 4, 1968, 25.

In addition to printing and re-printing his works and covering his controversies, underground papers like the *San Francisco Oracle* and the *Oracle of Southern California* contributed to Leary's religious authority in the ways that they presented images of him. Leary appears on the cover of the *San Francisco Oracle* smiling and radiating light. Allen Cohen writes,

Gabe Katz [art editor of the *San Francisco Oracle*] wanted desperately to draw Tim [Leary] on the cover because of his almost worshipful admiration of him. Though the rest of the staff didn't want to add to Tim's guru and leadership status, Gabe was very insistent...His original drawing had multiple halos and rays but we prevailed upon Gabe to cut it down to just a pronounced aura and a few rays.<sup>144</sup>

Even though the majority of the staff resisted presenting Leary in this way, their reason for wanting to do this was because he had already achieved "guru status." After being imprisoned in 1970, Bob Hayes of the *Berkeley Barb* penned the article, "A Saint is in Chains – Just Like He Predicted."<sup>145</sup> Hayes writes as though Leary had clairvoyant knowledge, "The only trouble with writing about Tim Leary and the things he and his family are undergoing right now is that he's already forecast most of it, in one way or another."<sup>146</sup> The papers add to Leary's authority not only by spreading information about Leary and re-printing his ideas, but also by the ways in which they present him – the high priest radiating light. Considering the ways in which the underground press came to function for Leary, Leary was the subject of a *de facto* religious hierarchy. That relationship

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<sup>144</sup> Allen Cohen, "The San Francisco Oracle: A Brief History," *San Francisco Oracle, Facsimile Edition: The Psychedelic Newspaper of the Haight-Ashbury, 1966-1968* (Berkeley, CA: Regent, 1991), xxviii.

<sup>145</sup> Bob Hayes, "A Saint is in Chains – Just like he Predicted," *Berkeley Barb*, April 3, 1970, 6.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

helped Leary spread metaphysical ideas and practices, and turned a metaphysical leader into a gubernatorial candidate, a fugitive, and a symbol of countercultural interest in consciousness expansion.

#### CHAPTER 4 – “THE POLITICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS EXPANSION PART 2

On October 21, 1967, at least thirty-five thousand people protested the war in Vietnam in Washington DC. The initial protest involved predictable methods: speeches, music, and marching. After demonstrating at the Lincoln Memorial, tens of thousands of protestors marched across the Potomac River where the demonstration took a decidedly metaphysical turn.

The event had been billed as “the Exorcism of the Pentagon.” Ed Sanders, musician and book store owner, had designed a ritual exorcism, drawing on metaphysical religious practices like alchemy, Native American shamanism, and Paganism. Sanders printed a leaflet for the event reading, “We Freeman, of all colors of the spectrum, in the name of God, Ra, Jehovah, Anubis, Osiris, Tlaloc, Quetzalcoatl, Thoth...We are demanding that the pentacle of power once again be used to serve the interests of GOD manifest in the world as man.”<sup>1</sup> After Sanders scattered cornmeal in four directions in front of a large eye of providence, protestors collectively allied their mental energies with the intention of levitating the Pentagon. Allen Ginsberg chanted “Om” on stage, and Kenneth Anger secretly performed what he believed was a more efficacious occult ritual beneath the stage. On this cold autumn night in Washington, metaphysical religion provided the method for countercultural protest.

The event ended in violence, 647 arrests, and forty-seven hospitalized. Although the Pentagon never levitated into the air, underground papers reported the event a successful, confrontational demonstration of the corruption of the American government.

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, the Novel as History* (New York: New American Library, 1968), 120.

The event provided the context for the iconic image of protestors placing daisies in military rifles, an image that Daniel Ellsberg reports “dissolved” the authority of the Pentagon.<sup>2</sup> Allen Ginsberg reported that the event helped turned popular sentiment against the war in Vietnam.<sup>3</sup>

Advertisements for the protest had run in underground newspapers all over America months before it took place. The ads emphasized the metaphysical nature of the protest, characterizing the Pentagon as a symbol recognized as evil across time and culture. The ads appealed to the counterculture’s metaphysical proclivities as much as their political sensibilities. The role of the underground press at this protest was also evident by a meeting convened the night before the demonstration. There, representatives from underground papers discussed the future of the UPS, planned many of the events, and prepared to cover the protest with a different political bias than daily newspapers and television news programs.

For author Norman Mailer, the event’s political importance broke from earlier countercultural metaphysical exploration. He writes, “now suddenly an entire generation of acid-heads seemed to have said goodbye to easy visions of heaven...now the witches were here, and rites of exorcism, and black terrors of the night...The hippies had gone from Tibet to Christ to the Middle Ages, now they were Revolutionary Alchemists.”<sup>4</sup> Those Revolutionary Alchemists had not appeared out of a vacuum. They had emerged out of a

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<sup>2</sup> Larry Sloman, Michael Simmons, and Jay Babcock, “Out Demons Out.” *Arthur* 13 (2004), 38.

<sup>3</sup> Derek Taylor, *It Was Twenty Years Ago Today* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 251.

<sup>4</sup> Mailer, 125.

countercultural alliance between heads and fists committed to end the war in Vietnam that had been facilitated by metaphysically-oriented underground newspapers.

### The Human Be-in

On January 14, 1967, more than twenty thousand people crammed into Golden Gate Park for the Human Be-In. At 11 a.m. on that sunny Saturday morning, Allen Ginsberg circled the Polo Fields muttering Buddhist prayers intended to “ward off any negative energy that might be lurking to ruin the event.”<sup>5</sup> Buddhist Gary Snyder began the ceremony by blowing into a white-beaded conch shell. Timothy Leary, high on LSD, interrupted a game of patty-cake that he had been playing to speak briefly. He said, “The only way out, is in,” and instructed people to “Turn on, tune in, and drop out,” a catch-phrase that he had coined at least six months prior with Marshall McLuhan.<sup>6</sup> The event was emceed by a Haight-Ashbury local who called himself “Buddha,” and Jerry Rubin, representative of the more politically-oriented countercultural movement in Berkeley admonished the crowd, “The police, like the soldiers in VietNam, are victims and agents!”<sup>7</sup>

Famous San Francisco rock bands like the Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother and the Holding Company, and the Grateful Dead performed, although there were difficulties with the sound system, which was allegedly too small for such a large gathering. Free issues of the *San Francisco Oracle* circulated among the crowd. A masked parachuter landed nearby

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<sup>5</sup> Peter H. Connors *White Hand Society: The Psychedelic Partnership of Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2010), 202.

<sup>6</sup> Neil Strauss, *Everyone Loves You When You're Dead: Journeys into Fame and Madness* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 337.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Levine, “The Be-In: A Gathering of the Tribes: The First American Mehla: A Baptism,” *San Francisco Oracle* #6, 9.

and began distributing tabs of LSD. The Diggers, a local group who operated many public services for people in the Haight-Ashbury handed out free turkey sandwiches.<sup>8</sup> One participant described an altercation within the Hell's Angel's group that was providing the service of taking care of lost children, but otherwise most reports describe a remarkably peaceful event. Ginsberg concluded the event, "Now that you have looked up at the sun, look down at your feet and practice a little Kitchen Yoga after this first American Mehla. Please pick up any refuse you might see about you. Shanti."<sup>9</sup>

Participant Helen Swick Perry writes of the experience, "Afterwards I knew there was an actual day, January 14, 1967, on which I was initiated into this new society, this new religion, as surely as if I had been initiated into the Ghost-Dance Religion of the American Indians."<sup>10</sup> She adds, "It was a religious rite in which nothing particular happened."<sup>11</sup>

#### 666: The Love Pageant Rally

The Be-In was the third of a series of events that had been organized by residents in the Haight-Ashbury. The first occurred on October 6, 1966, the Love Pageant Rally. Cohen recalls that he and Michael Bowen, an artist for the *San Francisco Oracle* and a practicing occultist, had the idea for the Rally while sipping coffee and watching a group of "angry, sign-carrying hippies marching and then storming the Park Police Station in

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<sup>8</sup> Robert C. Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll: The Rise of America's 1960s Counterculture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 197.

<sup>9</sup> Levine, 24.

<sup>10</sup> Helen Swick Perry, *The Human Be-In* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 85.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

protest of the bust of their Commune.”<sup>12</sup> Cohen’s and Bowen’s idea was to “invent a new mode of celebration that would energize change more than anger and hate engendering confrontations.”<sup>13</sup> The *San Francisco Oracle* advertised the event by publishing a metaphysical “declaration of independence.” It reads,

When in the flow of human events it becomes necessary for the people to cease to recognize the obsolete social patterns which have isolated man from his consciousness and to create with the youthful energies of the world revolutionary communities of harmonious relations to which the two billion year old life process entitles them...We hold these experiences to be self evident, that all is equal, that the creation endows us with certain inalienable rights, that among them are: the freedom of the body, the pursuit of joy, and the expansion of consciousness...We declare the identity of flesh and consciousness. All reason must respect and protect this holy identity.<sup>14</sup>

The notice announces the demonstration in apocalyptic terms, “The first translation of this prophesy into political action will take place October 6, 1966 (666...the mark of the ascension of the beast) the date the California law prohibiting the possession of LSD comes into effect.”<sup>15</sup> The notice describes a presentation in which people planned to present “living morning glory plants and mushrooms” (psychedelic substances) to the mayor of San Francisco, the attorney general of northern California, and a San Francisco police captain. It encourages participants to bring, “the color gold, photos of personal saints and

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<sup>12</sup> Allen Cohen, “The San Francisco Oracle: A Brief History,” *San Francisco Oracle, Facsimile Edition: The Psychedelic Newspaper of the Haight-Ashbury, 1966-1968* (Berkeley, CA: Regent, 1991), xxvi.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> “A Prophesy of a Declaration of Independence,” *San Francisco Oracle* #1, 12.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

gurus and heroes of the underground...incense [sic], chimes, gongs, cymbals, symbols, Joy.”<sup>16</sup>

At least one thousand people gathered in the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park for the rally. They were dressed in “ecstatic” costumes and danced to the Grateful Dead. A group of real estate brokers who were nearby for a conference gawked at the happening. Participants handed out flowers to one another, FBI agents, and the gawking real estate agents. Ken Kesey’s bus “Further” was there, and police searched for Kesey, who was wanted at the time. The master of ceremonies read the previously published declaration, and “at the appropriate moment hundreds of people placed a tab of acid on their outstretched tongues and swallowed in unison.”<sup>17</sup> At the appropriate time, the flowers and mushrooms were presented to the civil servants. Cohen writes that, “the *Oracle* considered it a second Boston Tea Party” and that, “the event had the feel of a new community ritual, and the idea for the Human Be-In...was born.”<sup>18</sup> This metaphysical Boston Tea Party had been organized by the staff of the *Oracle*; they used the *Oracle* to publicize it, and then also documented the event in their paper. The underground periodical helped make metaphysical political expression possible.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shalin, *Acid Dreams: The CIA, LSD and the Sixties rebellion* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 149.

<sup>18</sup> Cohen, xxvi.

## Psychedelic Rangers

The same day as the Human Be-In, a globe-trotting occultist named John Starr Cooke meditated “in sympathy” with the event for six hours.<sup>19</sup> Cooke was Michael Bowen’s guru, and was responsible for the idea of the Human Be-In. Cooke was bald, wore a thin goatee and had gray eyes. After being diagnosed with polio while living in Algiers, Cooke moved to Carmel, California, where he practiced tarot reading, healing, and channeled with an Ouija board. According to Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shalin, “Some of his admirers claimed he could activate Shakti, or kundalini energy and induce a blissful spinal seizure merely by touching people on the forehead.”<sup>20</sup> While he was living in Carmel, Cooke ingested acid “nearly every day for two years.”<sup>21</sup> Cooke introduced Bowen to LSD before relocating to Tepoztlan, Mexico, a small village not far from where Leary had first ingested psilocybin.

Three years before the Be-In, Bowen visited Cooke in Tepoztlan where he was initiated into a “supersecret” group called the “Psychedelic Rangers.”<sup>22</sup> Cooke was incorporating into his teachings high-dose LSD initiations (more than 10 times the usual dose) to “selected individuals.” Under the guidance of Cooke, Bowen ingested twelve *Datura* flowers which he declares, “Made LSD look like nothing. Like zero. Most powerful

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<sup>19</sup> Gene Anthony, *The Summer of Love: Haight-Ashbury at its Highest* (Millbrae, CA: Celestial Arts, 1980), 124.

<sup>20</sup> Lee and Shalin, 158.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Greenfield, *Timothy Leary: A Biography* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2006), 300.

<sup>22</sup> Cottrell, 202.

psychedelic experience ever.”<sup>23</sup> In 1966, Cooke instructed Bowen to move to the Haight-Ashbury district where he kept Cooke up-to-date on the events of the area. Bowen spoke with Cooke the night of the Love Pageant Rally. Lee and Shalin write, “During their conversation, according to Bowen, the plan for an even bigger event was conceived: a ‘Gathering of the Tribes,’ a spiritual occasion of otherworldly dimensions that would raise the vibration of the entire planet.”<sup>24</sup> Cooke’s purpose for the event was “to bring together cultural and political rebels who did not always see eye to eye on strategies for liberation. In effect the goal was to psychedelicize the radical left.”<sup>25</sup>

#### Underground Papers and the Be-In

As with the Love Pageant Rally, underground papers publicized the Be-In. The cover of the January 13, 1967 edition of the *Barb* announces,

When the Berkeley political activists and the love generation of the Haight Ashbury and thousands of young men and women from every state in the nation embrace at the Gathering of the tribes for A Human Be-In at the Polo field in Golden Gate Park the spiritual revolution will be manifest and proven.<sup>26</sup>

The fifth issue of the *San Francisco Oracle* advertised the event. Their first experimentation with color, in purple ink, a *sadhu* covered in ash with a prominent third eye appears behind the announcement, “A Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In.”<sup>27</sup> The image was also printed as a poster advertising the event. Bowen was the artist

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<sup>23</sup> As quoted in Greenfield, 300.

<sup>24</sup> Lee and Shalin, 159.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> “Tune in / Turn on / Be-In,” *Berkeley Barb*, January 13, 1967, 1.

<sup>27</sup> “A Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In,” *San Francisco Oracle* #5, 1.

responsible for the image. Allen Cohen informed Art Kunkin of the *Los Angeles Free Press*, “the days of fear and separation are over...Now that a new race is evolving in the midst of the old, we can join together to affirm our unity, and generate waves of joy and conscious penetration of the veil of ignorance.”<sup>28</sup>

Despite their intentions to bring together the heads and the fists, as the event unfolded, it became clear that there was not much interest in political causes on that afternoon. Ed Denson of the *Barb* viewed the event as a missed opportunity to mobilize twenty thousand people towards a particular goal. He writes, “Nothing happened at the Be-in, and the opportunity to gather all of those people was wasted.”<sup>29</sup> Unlike the Love Pageant Rally, this event did not have any particular policy or law that it sought to reform; it was an opportunity for these disparate participants in the counterculture to simply be together. Perry’s recollection of the event reflects the event’s political neutrality. She writes, “There was no program; it was a happening...It was a religious right in which nothing particular happened...There was clearly a renewal of the spirit of man, unplanned, non-political.”<sup>30</sup> Even Michael Bowen, who had intended the event to include political importance recalls, “Jerry Rubin was up there shouting, but it didn’t matter. Because the most important thing was that all these people saw one another. The thrill was that everybody saw one another and realized there was an actual connection.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> As quoted in Lee and Shalin, 196.

<sup>29</sup> Ed Denson, “What Happened at the Hippening,” *Berkeley Barb*, January 20, 1967, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Perry, 86.

<sup>31</sup> As quoted in Greenfield, 302.

Whether or not their methods were politically effective, the organizers of the Be-In were metaphysicals intent on combining their organizing efforts with political causes, even if those went unarticulated at the event. For many who contributed to the *San Francisco Oracle*, the event was a tremendous success. Steve Levine writes, “This meeting was a baptism, not a birthday party. It was a calm and peaceful approbation, a reaffirmation of the life spirit, a settling of the waters.”<sup>32</sup> Underground papers were an important part of how they spread the word, and the Human Be-In set the stage for future countercultural protests that did have specific political goals. With little more than word of mouth, posters and publications in underground papers, a small group of consciousness expanders mobilized more than twenty thousand people to do little else than simply be at a park on a particular afternoon. As Lee and Shalin write, “Thousands of people had come together to do nothing in particular, which in itself was quite something.”<sup>33</sup>

#### “Revolutionary Alchemists”

The success of the Be-In inspired people all over the country to imitate the event. On Easter Sunday, 1967, more than ten thousand people participated in a Be-In in New York’s Central Park.<sup>34</sup> The *Los Angeles Oracle* devoted a full page ad and article advertising a Love-In on the same day. Frederick Adams writes, “The Spring Equinox is the NATURAL beginning of the Holy Year. Most ancient peoples in intimate touch with Nature, such as the Jews, the Greeks, the Egyptians, acknowledged this time as the Rebirth

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<sup>32</sup> Levine, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Lee and Shalin, 162.

<sup>34</sup> Don McNeill, “Central Park Rite is Medieval Pageant,” *The Village Voice*, March 30, 1967, 1.

of their annual round of Love Celebrations.”<sup>35</sup> Be-Ins and Love-Ins were reported in underground papers in Chicago, Milwaukee, Washington DC, Detroit, Flint, and Austin. Many places hosted more than one Be-In. Sometimes they had political agendas, like opposing the war in Vietnam; sometimes they were politically neutral, although even when they had no political agenda, authors in underground papers were sure to point out their political significance. Frank Wolf of the *Los Angeles Provo* writes of the Love-In advertised in the *Los Angeles Oracle*,

The ramifications of [the Love-In] are probably far more dangerous to the establishment than the less subtle and more active citizens of Watts who protested the establishment by burning the place down... The power of empathy, championed by the acid heads, is what is going to carry the first wave of the revolution.”<sup>36</sup>

John Starr Cooke and Michael Bowen of the *San Francisco Oracle* started a wave of public gatherings that reached multiple cities all over the United States. The political mobilization of these groups peaked on October 21, 1967 at the Exorcism of the Pentagon – a metaphysical demonstration inspired and publicized by underground papers.

#### Underground Papers vs. Pentagons

Charlie Brown Artman was one of seven hundred students who were arrested for occupying the administration building at UC Berkeley during the Free Speech Movement.<sup>37</sup> Artman, believing that he was a reincarnated Native American, studied

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<sup>35</sup> Frederick Adams, “The Love-In of the Spring Equinox,” *Los Angeles Oracle*, nd., np.

<sup>36</sup> Frank Wolf, “How to be Couth: The Love-In Phenomenon,” *Los Angeles Provo*, May 1, 1967, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Wayne Garcia, “20 Years Later, Charlie Artman is Still a Hippie with a Cause,” *Gainesville Sun*, January 14, 1985, 1.

Native American philosophy and used peyote for religious purposes.<sup>38</sup> He wore traditional Native American clothing and lived in a “tipi” (he suggests this spelling).<sup>39</sup> Camping illegally, he was forced to move his tipi all over the Bay Area. He taught a class at the Free University in Berkeley titled “The New Age Consciousness and Various Paths to Enlightenment.”<sup>40</sup> Gene Anthony calls him “a wandering holy man,” and Allen Cohen calls him a shaman.<sup>41</sup> Sometime before the Human Be-In, Artman met with Michael Bowen and explained that in occult practices, pentagons are symbols of inverted power and are associated with war and violence. He attributed American involvement in the Vietnam War to the shape of the defense building in Washington DC. Bowen “decided on the spot...that someone had to do something; someone had to put positive energy into his country’s defense.”<sup>42</sup>

Along with Allen Cohen, Bowen proposed the idea to Jerry Rubin and Max Scherr during a planning meeting for the Human Be-In.<sup>43</sup> Cohen writes that they had intended to “overcome [the Pentagon’s] impregnability as both the symbol and seat of evil” by

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<sup>38</sup> W.J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War, the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 135.

<sup>39</sup> Scholar of American Indian/Native studies Laura Donaldson would consider Artman’s adoption of Native American identity highly problematic for ignoring the long history of colonialism and white supremacy against Native Americans. She goes so far as to call similar imitations of Native Americans, “neocolonialism.” See Laura Donaldson, “On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans: New Age Native Americanism and Commodity Fetishism as Pop Culture Feminism,” *Signs* 24 no. 3 (1999): 694.

<sup>40</sup> Rorabaugh, 135.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony, 10; Cohen, xlii.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony, 10.

<sup>43</sup> Cohen, xlii.

“directing magical and conscious energy” towards it.<sup>44</sup> By this time, Rubin was well-known for organizing political demonstrations, and when he was tapped to organize the March on the Pentagon, he incorporated it into the program. The idea evolved into the performance of an exorcism in which thousands of people would circle the Pentagon and through the collective power of their minds, cause the building to levitate three hundred feet into the air, turn orange, and vibrate. The event was billed as the “Exorcism of the Pentagon.” Underground papers all over the country promoted the metaphysical demonstration as a new kind of political demonstration, a demonstration that was mobilizing the heads, and that represented a change in tactics from “protest to resistance.”<sup>45</sup>

The *East Village Other*, the *San Francisco Oracle*, and the *Fifth Estate* advertised the Exorcism of the Pentagon, appealing to their readers’ metaphysical sensibilities while also promoting the demonstration as a break from prior demonstrations. The September 1, 1967 edition of the *East Village Other* promotes the Exorcism under the heading: “Come March October 21: Tripping Across the Potomic [sic].”<sup>46</sup> It reads,

Now, at last, we’re getting past the talk and the analysis and the petitions and the protest – past the cunning white logic of the universities – and we’re heading back down into ourselves...Gary Snyder says it’s the Neolithic that’s coming to an end. Says man is transferring his best attention from objects to states of mind.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Thorne Dreyer, “Here We Begin: People Call for Revolution: Pentagon Up-Tight,” *The Rag*, October 30, 1967.

<sup>46</sup> Keith Lompo, “Come March October 21: Tripping Across the Potomic,” *East Village Other*, September, 1, 1967, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

The tenth edition of the *San Francisco Oracle* devoted its entire back page to promoting the Exorcism. It reads,

At the Pentagon on October 21, we will witness the death of the old Liberal war protest and the beginnings of a new scene. The old protestors are coming to the ultimate war protest to end protests. They are probably going to do their old thing and make speeches; carry pickets and so on but they are also going to meet new comers to the scene who will be involved in street or guerilla theater and a religious exorcism ritual. The participants will read like a Magic Menue of Shamens, Indian Medicine Men, Wizards...and thousands of Mr. Nobody's sick of senseless killing. All will perform in a spontaneous happening and religious rite to exorcise the traditional and actual symbol of evil – The Pentagon.<sup>48</sup>

Even Detroit's *Fifth Estate*, a fist-oriented paper, published an article by Marshall Bloom titled, "Hippies to hit heavy in D.C."<sup>49</sup> Bloom writes,

And what are you going to do, General, when they make the magic prayer and use the magic potion to die the Potomac Red?...You know that the PENTAGON is a symbol of evil in almost every culture, and that the only thing that can be done to exercise [sic] the five-sided figure is to form a magic, human circle around it...and mutter to yourself that hippies aren't supposed to be political, and feel what it's like to be exorcised as an evil spirit, General.<sup>50</sup>

Artman's metaphysical idea was bringing the fists and the heads together in a larger and more dramatic way than had yet been achieved. The Exorcism had a more specifically political agenda than the Be-In, and a much more elaborately planned demonstration.

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<sup>48</sup> Richard J. Honigman, "Pentagon Rising," *San Francisco Oracle* #10, np.

<sup>49</sup> Marshall Bloom, "Hippies to Hit Heavy in DC," *The Fifth Estate*, October, 15, 1967, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

For many, the new tactics that would be employed by the Exorcism were made especially available through consciousness expanding drugs like LSD. Abbie Hoffman, one of the organizers of the Exorcism, writes,

Revolution for the hell of it? Why not? It's all a bunch of phony words anyway. Once one has experienced LSD, existential revolution, fought the intellectual game-playing of the individual in society, of one's identity, one realizes that action is the only reality; not only reality but morality as well. One learns reality is a subjective experience.<sup>51</sup>

Allen Cohen expresses a similar feeling, "The mass movement against the war had equal parts of LSD vision, marijuana sensory delight, political ideology and moral rage."<sup>52</sup> For Cohen and Hoffman, the new political strategies were the result of widespread use of LSD, of consciousness being expanded.

Organizers of the demonstration relied on underground papers to notify people about the demonstration, often appealing to metaphysical ideas including unusual powers of the mind and the existence of energy. Martin Carey writes in the *East Village Other*,

On October 21<sup>st</sup>, through magic drama...we shall use our powers as sorcerers, ringing the Pentagon with sound to exorcise its evils. If our hearts are pure, and we all come to the same point together, we shall pass through it, watching the Pentagon rising higher and higher on waves of energy, until it disintegrates into the wind.<sup>53</sup>

A month later, George Metesky published a letter in the *East Village Other* proclaiming,

Sorcerers, swamis, priests, warlocks, rabbis, gurus, witches, alchemists, medicine men, speed freaks and other holy men will join hands and encircle the Pentagon – 1200 people for each ring...We shall all join in the mighty

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<sup>51</sup> Abbie Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell of it* (New York: Dial Press, 1968), 9.

<sup>52</sup> Cohen, xxxii.

<sup>53</sup> Martin Carey, "Mystics, Saints, Artists, Holymen, Astrologers, Witches, Sorcerers, Warlocks, Druids, Hippies, Priests, Shamen, Ministers, Rabbis, Troubadours, Prophets, Minstrels, Bards, Roadmen, Come to Exorcise the Pentagon, Washington, Oct. 21," *East Village Other*, September 15, 1967, 10.

OM, and the Pentagon will begin to tremble and, as our magic grows stronger and stronger, the Pentagon will rise in the air.<sup>54</sup>

Beat poet and metaphysical Gary Snyder published poetry promoting the event in the *San Francisco Oracle*. His poem, “A curse on the men in Washington, Pentagon” appears in the eighth issue of the *Oracle*. It reads, “As I kill the white man / the ‘American’/ in me / And dance out the Ghost dance: / to bring back America, the grass and the streams, / to trample your throat in your dreams. / This magic I work, this loving I give / that my children may flourish / and yours won’t live.”<sup>55</sup> Underground papers were publicizing the demonstration by appealing to metaphysical ideas and publishing metaphysical authorities in support of the demonstration.

Underground papers did more than merely notify people about the demonstration. They helped people get to the demonstration as well. The *Berkeley Barb* published a notice about a group identifying as “Jamie’s Nightly Dinner Party” who were raising money to take a bus to Washington D.C. for the event.<sup>56</sup> The group used the paper to solicit “unwanted junk” for them to sell at a local flea market to finance the journey. The article announces, “En route, the group will use sensory-theatrical methods to urge people to Washington.”<sup>57</sup> The article also provides information about a larger-scale bus service from Los Angeles, listing the price, number of seats, and contact information. A similar article

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<sup>54</sup> George Metesky, “Awakening of the Pentagon,” *East Village Other*, October 10, 1967, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Gary Snyder, “A Curse on the Men in Washington,” *San Francisco Oracle* #8, 17.

<sup>56</sup> “Oct. 21 Nears,” *Berkeley Barb*, September 22, 1967, 11.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

appears in the September 15, 1967 issue of the *Fifth Estate*, announcing methods for getting to the event.<sup>58</sup> Metesky's letter in the *East Village Other* announces where people could obtain free bus tickets to the event courtesy of the psychedelic and radical group the Diggers, as well as where to meet if one was driving and had space for additional passengers. In addition to helping spawn the idea, underground papers were helping people participate in the event.

#### Preparing for the Exorcism

Metesky's letter also announced a preliminary exorcism performed by Ed Sanders at the Village Theater. Sanders was the leader of the countercultural band The Fugs, publisher of the countercultural magazine, *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, and owner of the countercultural book store, "The Peace Eye Book Store." He was to perform the actual exorcism at the demonstration, and in order to raise money for it, he performed a preliminary ritual on October 13, 1967. The preliminary ritual lasted about an hour. Sanders burned an image of the Pentagon and collected the ashes in a bottle. According to scholar of religion Joseph Laycock,

A Native American shaman consecrated the ceremony by throwing down cornmeal" and it peaked when "participants joined hands around a table-sized plywood model of the pentagon and chanted 'Up, demon! Up, demon!,' as the model was pulled by piano wires toward the ceiling."<sup>59</sup>

The demonstration at the Pentagon was to be much more elaborate. Practicing occultist and filmmaker Harry Smith was a frequent visitor at the Peace Eye Book Store. Sanders asked for Smith's advice when designing the actual ritual. Sanders recalls,

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<sup>58</sup> "March on Washington Set," *The Fifth Estate*, September 15, 1967, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Laycock, "Levitating the Pentagon: Exorcism as Politics, Politics as Exorcism," *Implicit Religion* 14 no. 3 (2011): 300.

So I went to Harry and asked him what happened in an exorcism and he gave me some advice. So he filled me in on what his view was. He told me about consecrating the four directions, surrounding it, circling it, using elements of earth, air, fire and water, alchemical symbols to purify the place, to invoke certain deities, and so on...It was part real, part symbolic, part wolf ticket, part spiritual, part secular, part wishful thinking and part anger...And since I knew Indo-European languages, I learned this Hittite exorcism ritual. I actually put together a decent exorcism.<sup>60</sup>

The plan for the exorcism was an elaborate blend of religious symbolism. Harry Smith was to bring a live cow painted with occult symbols. Paul Krassner, the editor of the *Realist* and author of the underground column “Rumpleforeskin,” was enlisted to bring cornmeal from Iowa that was to be sprinkled around the Pentagon in a circle. Michael Bowen had obtained thousands of daisies that would be dropped from a plane into the interior space of the Pentagon. Abbie Hoffman proclaimed that he had obtained a revolutionary new drug that he called “lace” which was a powerful aphrodisiac that inspired anyone who touched it to begin copulating. He put on a demonstration for members of the press, and staged two reporters “accidentally” contacting the liquid who then began copulating on the spot.<sup>61</sup>

Sanders mimeographed a leaflet describing the ceremony. It includes the invocation of a “Hittite spell,” praying for soldiers and their violent karma, consecrating the four directions, circling the Pentagon in cornmeal, invoking “Powers & Spirits,” ceremonial representations of the four elements, and the actual banishment of the evil spirit within the

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<sup>60</sup> Sloman *et al*, 30.

<sup>61</sup> Hoffman, 44.

Pentagon, which is referred to as “The EXORGASM.”<sup>62</sup> The ritual was to conclude with a peace mantra.

The night before the Exorcism, representatives of more than one hundred underground papers met in an abandoned loft in Washington D.C. The meeting lacked focus, but demonstrated the extent to which metaphysicals were part of the underground press, as well as their involvement in the demonstration at the Pentagon. Walter Bowart of the *East Village Other*, wearing a Native American headdress, proclaimed to the papers’ representatives the importance of the Underground Press Syndicate, and began reciting his own poetry. Allen Cohen of the *San Francisco Oracle* stood up and recited his own poetry in what Peck calls an “impromptu poem-off.”<sup>63</sup> After infiltrating the Pentagon and leaving occult talismans in ninety-three of the Pentagon’s restrooms, occultist and filmmaker Kenneth Anger appeared at the underground press meeting where he was “wandering around the room, insulting people, and spouting paranoid gibberish.”<sup>64</sup>

The meeting had been called by Ray Mungo and Marshall Bloom of the then recently founded Liberation News Service (LNS). Their plan was to have a democratically owned news service comparable to the Associated Press, although with perspectives and content that would support underground papers. With the intention of producing their own content, they believed that LNS would complement the valuable services that UPS was

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<sup>62</sup> Laycock, 302.

<sup>63</sup> Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 70.

<sup>64</sup> John McMillan, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

already providing to scores of papers, and would further unify the head- and fist-oriented papers. As the meeting devolved into poetry contests and was interrupted by wandering occultists, it became clear to Mungo and Bloom that if LNS was to succeed, they would need to run the organization themselves. Mungo writes, “Our conception of LNS as a ‘democratic organization’ owned by those it served, was clearly ridiculous; among those it served were, in fact, many whose very lives were devoted to the principle that no organization, no institution was desirable.”<sup>65</sup> Mungo, Bloom, and the rest of the representatives left the meeting having accomplished very little, but ready to cover the demonstration with dramatically different perspectives than the daily newspapers.

#### Levitating the Pentagon

The Exorcism was part of a larger demonstration that was being called the “March on the Pentagon.” Earlier in the day, one hundred thousand people had gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial. At least thirty-five thousand demonstrators then marched across the Potomac on the Memorial Bridge towards the Pentagon. Sanders, Bowen, Hoffman and a few others arrived at the parking lot early to prepare for the ritual. A “right-wing minister holding a bible” approached the group.<sup>66</sup> “Figuring that he was superstitious,” Sanders “raved out a chant of mumbo-jumbo at him to try to make him feel that he shouldn’t actually come too close.”<sup>67</sup> A stage was set up on the back of a flatbed truck that had been

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<sup>65</sup> Ray Mungo, *Famous Long Ago: My Life and Hard Times with Liberation News Service* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 12. As quoted in McMillan, 93.

<sup>66</sup> Sloman *et al*, 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*.

funded by the Sanders' performance at the Village Theater. Behind the truck was a canvas backdrop on which was painted a day-glo image of the "Eye of Providence."<sup>68</sup>

The actual ritual was far less elaborate than the mimeographed leaflet that Sanders had printed let on. The whole ceremony lasted about fifteen minutes. Krassner had been stopped at the airport and his cornmeal confiscated. Smith was prevented by authorities at the Pentagon from bringing in the esoterically adorned cow. Bowen arrived at the airport with the daisies, but FBI agents prevented him flying over the Pentagon in order to drop them, although he was allowed to keep the daisies. Earlier that week, Krassner and a woman known as "Mountain Girl" were caught measuring the sides of the Pentagon to see how many people it would take to circle it. In a subsequent meeting with Pentagon officials, Hoffman negotiated for a permit to levitate the Pentagon, however it became clear that they would not be allowed to form a human circle around the building. Mailer writes, "Of course, exorcism without encirclement was like culinary art without a fire – no one could properly expect a meal."<sup>69</sup>

Participants received a mimeographed paper containing a script of the exorcism. The paper demonstrates metaphysical significance of the powers of the human mind. It reads,

We are demanding that the pentacle of power once again be used to serve the interests of GOD manifest in the world as man...By the act of reading this paper you are engaged in the Holy Ritual of Exorcism. To further participate focus your thought on the casting out of evil through the grace

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>69</sup> Mailer, 139.

of GOD which is all (ours). A billion stars in a billion galaxies of space and time is the form of your power, and limitless is your name.<sup>70</sup>

Sanders performed the ritual by scattering small amounts of cornmeal in four directions and performing an invocation with his band the Fugs. Calling upon Mesopotamian, Greek, Egyptian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, and made-up deities, Sanders proclaimed a living and flowing universe.<sup>71</sup> Participants joined in as he chanted, “Out, demons out! Out demons out!”<sup>72</sup> (Sloman et al 34).

Sanders then called for a public “grope-in” on the grounds of the Pentagon. He called out, “For the first time in the history of the Pentagon there will be a grope-in within a hundred feet of this place” Hoffman, high on LSD that he had obtained from “Charlie” of the *San Francisco Oracle*, began pairing people up to make love in public protest. Hoffman instructed people, “No you’re with her, and him and her...No you go with her, and him, he should be with her and get that other guy out of there, and lie down now. Lie down, come on, do it!”<sup>73</sup> John Eskow, a participant recalls, “I remember it really well because he made a match with me and some girl that turned out absolutely delightfully. So I was part of that sort of communal love thing that was happening, as Ed Sanders was chanting ‘Out, demons, out!’”<sup>74</sup> Sanders instructed people to form circles around those making love. He then called out, “These are the magic eyes of victory. Victory, victory for

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<sup>70</sup> Sloman *et al*, 33.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

peace. Money made the Pentagon – melt it. Money made the Pentagon, melt it for love.”<sup>75</sup> People began burning money as others chanted, “Burn the money, burn the money, burn it, burn it.”<sup>76</sup> Others began chanting the Hare Krishna mantra. As Sanders concluded the ceremony by satirically invoking the name of a made-up deity, “Xabrax Phresxner,” the crowd chanted “End the fire and war, and war, end the plague of death. End the fire and war, and war, end the plague of death.”<sup>77</sup> Mailer recalls the ritual concluding with “a long sustained Ommmmm.”<sup>78</sup>

As couples made love on the grounds of the Pentagon and Sanders proceeded with the ritual, Kenneth Anger was underneath the flatbed truck performing his own occult ritual. Sanders recalls that Anger was

burning something down there and making snake sounds at whomever should try to come near...It looked like he was burning a pentagon with a tarot card or a picture of the devil or something in the middle of it. In other words the thing we were doing above him, he viewed as the exoteric thing and he was doing the esoteric, serious, zero-bullshit exorcism.<sup>79</sup>

For Anger, the exorcism as performed by Sanders lacked legitimate magical power. It was more theater than magic ritual. He recalls, “I don’t burn Tarot cards; I respect them too much. [What I was doing] was saying Ed Sanders and the Fugs are a bunch of crap; this

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<sup>75</sup> Mailer, 137.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Sloman *et al*, 33.

isn't the way to fight a war. After all, I was there to protest the war. I knew what I was doing. It was a Crowley-type ritual."<sup>80</sup>

The demonstration at the Pentagon was larger than just the Exorcism that had been billed in underground newspapers like the *San Francisco Oracle* and the *East Village Other*. As some demonstrators were chanting "Out demons out!" a wedge of about one hundred people wearing helmets and protective clothing charged toward a line of military police. At the center of the wedge flew the National Liberation Front flag of the Viet Cong.<sup>81</sup> Soon the mass of people scrambled away. Mailer was caught in the commotion and observed that the people that had formed the wedge were then running from MPs who were defending the Pentagon with mace, a then newly developed chemical weapon. Demonstrators took to violent actions and occupied two areas that were initially off limits, the steps of the main entrance to the Pentagon and a large area to the west of the Pentagon. MPs guarded the Pentagon with rifles, clubs and tear gas. Sanders passed around the daisies that Bowen was prevented from dropping from the sky, and some demonstrators nervously and delicately placed them into the barrels of the rifles.

Demonstrators remained into the evening, huddling around bonfires. With thousands of people demonstrating, swells of violence would erupt and then die down. MPs marked particular areas that were off-limits and arrested those who were civilly disobedient. Eventually people were instructed to leave or face arrest. In all, there were more than six hundred arrests and scores of injuries.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Mailer, 140.

### Coverage of the Event

Live television coverage of the event was suppressed by ABC, CBS, and NBC for fear that the presence of television crews would “encourage the demonstrators to perform for the cameras.”<sup>82</sup> Daily newspapers described the demonstration as an unfortunate incident of violence. James Reston argued in the *New York Times* that “everybody seemed to have lost in the antiwar siege of this weekend.”<sup>83</sup> Reston mentioned ugly signs that read “LBJ the Butcher” and “Johnson’s War in Vietnam Makes America Puke.” He writes, “It is difficult to report publicly on the ugly and vulgar provocation of many of the militants...They spat on some of the soldiers in the front line...and goaded them with the most vicious personal slander.”<sup>84</sup> Jimmy Breslin of the *Washington Post* called the demonstrators “troublemakers,” “dropouts,” and “drifters,” and writes that they “turned a demonstration for peace...into a sickening, club-swinging mess.”<sup>85</sup>

However, underground papers declared the event a dramatic victory for the protestors. Thorne Dreyer of the LNS proclaimed, “On October 21, 1967, the white left got its shit together.”<sup>86</sup> He announced that an “amazing magic was created” when MPs allegedly dropped their weapons and helmets and joined the protestors. He writes, “Maybe it means we finally have the makings for a second American revolution.”<sup>87</sup> Marshall

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<sup>82</sup> “TV Nets Killed It,” *Berkeley Barb*, October 27, 1967, 3.

<sup>83</sup> As quoted in McMillan, 98.

<sup>84</sup> McMillan, 98.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>86</sup> Dreyer, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Dreyer, 4.

Bloom, also of LNS, described in detail the rumors about the defecting MPs, and Elliot Blinder described what he called the “Tear Gas Controversy” which had been created by the rumor that protestors had used tear gas on themselves with the intent of making MPs look more violent than they actually were.<sup>88</sup> The *Berkeley Barb* devoted a center-page spread to the event. The article was a personal account by Stewart G. Bryant of his experiences at the demonstration.<sup>89</sup> It was supplemented with photos from the *Washington D.C. Free Press*. The article describes acts of violence on the part of MPs, including the use of tear gas and dragging and pulling people out of restricted areas.

Even for many of the underground papers, the ritualistic exorcism was marginalized in comparison to the dramatic occupation of the front steps of the Pentagon. The exorcism received a scant two paragraphs in the *Los Angeles Free Press*.<sup>90</sup> However, the metaphysical presence at the demonstration was alluded to in head-oriented papers like the *East Village Other* and the *San Francisco Oracle*. An article in the *East Village Other* describes protestors who “cast mighty words of white light against the demon-controlled structure.”<sup>91</sup> A later edition of the *East Village Other* included letters from people who attended the demonstration. One letter reads, “On October 21<sup>st</sup>, the Pentagon rang with the sounds of peace and a new found strength! If only our voices could make its walls crumble

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<sup>88</sup> Elliot Blinder, “Tear Gas Controversy,” *Buffalo Insider*, November 20, 1967, 13.

<sup>89</sup> Stewart G. Bryant, “Pentagon Perspective: Not Buried in the Dust,” *Berkeley Barb*, October 27, 1967, 8-9.

<sup>90</sup> Della Rossa, “Exorcism at the Pentagon,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, October 27, 1967, 15.

<sup>91</sup> Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 124.

to dust, perhaps its evil spell would disappear.”<sup>92</sup> In the subsequent printings of the tenth issue of the *Oracle*, the back page advertisement for the Exorcism was replaced by a photo collage of a Haight-Ashbury resident who called himself Gandalf, meditating shirtless and superimposed over the image of a US Marshall and the demonstration at the Pentagon.<sup>93</sup> It was accompanied by text taken from Lewis Mumford’s *The City in History*, which Cohen reports was, in addition to Charlie Brown Artman, responsible for the idea to exorcise the Pentagon. The image of Gandalf meditating appeared in multiple underground papers, including Detroit’s *Fifth Estate* and Austin’s the *Rag*.<sup>94</sup>

Although it was initially overshadowed by news of the violence and disobedient occupation of the Pentagon, the Exorcism ritual has since received much attention. Norman Mailer’s Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Armies of the Night*, describes his experience of the event. Abbie Hoffman’s *Revolution for the Hell of It* opens with a chapter describing the events leading up to the Exorcism, as well as the Exorcism itself. Hoffman argues that “The Pentagon happening transcended the issue of the War.”<sup>95</sup> Roszak writes of the Exorcism,

Is the youthful political activism of the sixties any different from that of the thirties? If the difference shows up anywhere, it reveals itself in the unprecedented penchant for the occult, for magic, and for exotic ritual which has become an integral part of the counter culture.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> T.H. “Others,” *East Village Other*, November 15, 1967, 21.

<sup>93</sup> Cohen, xlix.

<sup>94</sup> *The Fifth Estate*, November 15, 1967, 3; *The Rag*, October 30, 1967, 2.

<sup>95</sup> Hoffman, 45.

<sup>96</sup> Roszak, 124.

Ginsberg attributes changing attitudes toward the war and the Pentagon specifically to the Exorcism. He speculates, “I think we demystified the authority of the Pentagon, and in that sense we *did* levitate it.”<sup>97</sup>

Wandering Peyote Shaman Charlie Brown Artman’s and Psychedelic Ranger Michael Bowen’s metaphysical idea to “put positive energy into the department of defense” had been realized. It had been forged and executed in the language and practices of metaphysical religion, especially occultism and consciousness expansion, and it had been realized on account of underground papers. The idea was cultivated in the meeting between Bowen, Cohen and Rubin prior to the *San Francisco Oracle*’s Be-In. Underground papers publicized the event, appealing to metaphysical ideas like unusual powers of the mind and cosmic energy, and they alluded to the metaphysical significance of the event in their coverage.

Before underground papers, the importance of consciousness expansion was restricted to a philosophical or religious significance. For Blood, using nitrous oxide initiated one into the secret of philosophy which provided a feeling of philosophical resolution, but he never mentioned any political importance. Inspired by Blood’s pamphlet, James experimented with nitrous oxide and the experience provided evidence for the difference and accessibility of mystical states of consciousness. After compiling a comparison of the ethics and philosophies of mystics, Huxley followed in James’ footsteps and ingested Peyote with the intention of experiencing for himself what James had called “artificial mystical experience.” For Huxley, the experience paralleled mystical

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<sup>97</sup> Taylor, 251.

experiences, and expanded on the idea that quotidian consciousness is but a reduced experience that appears already filtered down by the “Doors of Perception.”

Following in their footsteps, Leary began researching consciousness expansion through psilocybin and LSD as the means for changing behavior. His experiments at Harvard reflected pragmatic concerns and were centrally focused on human consciousness. As Leary became increasingly familiar with the experiences as both a participant and a researcher, and as he became more familiar with Huxley and literature on mystical experiences, his writings included descriptions of cosmic correspondence and energy flow. By 1965, Leary was a full-fledged metaphysical, and although some claimed that he was politically neutral, his public persona, intellectual contributions, millennial expectations and legal troubles placed Leary in the center of the counterculture. Underground papers provided the space for Leary to become increasingly political from 1968 to 1971. From running his gubernatorial campaign to publishing his calls for armed revolution, Underground papers facilitated, through Leary, the political expression of consciousness expansion, of metaphysical religion.

Beyond Leary, underground papers helped other metaphysicals express themselves politically. Staff at the *San Francisco Oracle* and *Berkeley Barb* organized, publicized, and covered the Human Be-In, which was intended to unify various parts of the counterculture. Out of the contact between the heads and the fists at the Human Be-In, underground papers planned, publicized and covered the Exorcism of the Pentagon, a dramatic example of metaphysicals engaging political life. Being central to the American counterculture, underground papers not only provided the space for metaphysicals to express themselves,

but opened up political possibilities that had never existed before. With underground papers, consciousness expansion was not just navel-gazing introspection: metaphysicals ran for office, communicated as fugitives, and organized anti-war demonstrations. There was a politics to it.

## CHAPTER 5 – THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF AMERICAN OCCULTISM

The following chapter demonstrates the democratizing effects that underground newspapers had on American occultism. The chapter shows how underground papers provided a context in which occult ideas became the subjects of public discourse, effecting a change in discursive style and increasing the visibility of occult groups, ideas and practices. As forums for occult expression, underground papers helped disperse occult ideas and practices without the patronage of any particular group or perspective. Outside of the confines of affiliated literature and discourse, the astrological idea of a dawning Aquarian Age became one of the primary expressions of countercultural expectation. This chapter traces the development of the millenarian idea of an Aquarian Age from its origins in solar myth theories to its expression in the American counterculture. The chapter demonstrates the changes that underground papers introduced to occultism in the United States. With similar effects as the proliferation of Christian literature in the early nineteenth century, underground papers democratized American occultism.

### Christian Periodicals and Democratization in Antebellum America

Historian Jon Butler calls the Antebellum period of American religious history a “Spiritual Hothouse.”<sup>1</sup> He documents the popularity of occult practices that had remained prominent through the revolution and that had been practiced on the shores of the United States since colonial settlers arrived with hermetic literature in the seventeenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 225.

Butler demonstrates that Americans held persistent beliefs in occult practices like witchcraft, astrology, and alchemy.

For Butler though, the spiritual hothouse was only part of the story of religious practice in Antebellum America. The American population also was undergoing what Butler refers to as the “Christianization” of the American people. Between 1780 and 1860, Christian organizations increased from 2,500 to 52,000, significantly eclipsing the growth rate of the population.<sup>2</sup> As Christian organizations and denominations proliferated, so too did the number of churches and religious buildings. Butler writes, “Buildings seem to tell a story of people expanding – between 1780 and 1820 denominations probably constructed 10,000 new churches in America, and between 1820 and 1860 they probably added 40,000 more to the earlier total.”<sup>3</sup>

Butler attributes the aggressive expansion of American Christianity in this period not only to population growth and geographic expansion, but to a shift in religious authority. After the Revolution, the enactment of disestablishment laws in the majority of states provided the space for innovative religious leaders to create new denominations and religious organizations. Butler argues that the shifts in the location of religious authority from the state to voluntary organizations resulted in “an extraordinary expansion of denominational institutions, new means to reach great numbers of individuals and groups, and a new confidence to shape society and its values.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 268.

Among the “new means to reach great numbers of individuals” were extensive printing campaigns.<sup>5</sup> Historian Nathan O. Hatch writes, “Virtually nonexistent in 1800, religious periodicals had by 1830 become the grand engine of a burgeoning religious culture, the primary means of promotion for, and bond of union within, competing religious groups.”<sup>6</sup> He points to the “one million Bibles and six million tracts” that the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society were annually printing by 1830. By the same year, “the Methodist weekly *Christian Advocate and Journal* and *Zion’s Herald* and the monthly interdenominational *American National Preacher* each claimed a circulation of twenty-five thousand, among the largest of any journalistic work in the world.”<sup>7</sup> Hatch quotes a Methodist journal from 1823 on the proliferation of Christian publications, “‘A RELIGIOUS NEWSPAPER would have been a phenomenon not many years since, but now the groaning press throws them out in almost every direction’.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The groups who innovated the religious printing industry were predominantly Christian, however many of these Christians included occult practices and beliefs. The American Tract Society included in *The Christian Almanac* astrological information on “the signs and daily locations of planets” (Butler, 230). After 1848, spiritualist periodicals like the *Spiritual Telegraph* and the *Banner of Light* were often critical of conservative forms of Christianity, but were themselves likely to include Christian perspectives of spiritualist phenomena. Butler writes, “Most spiritualists came from American Christian groups, usually mainstream denominations. Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Methodist laypersons adopted spiritualist views because they believed spiritualism represented the most perfect expression of Christianity yet revealed” (Butler, 253).

<sup>6</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 126.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 125. The deluge of printed material was made possible in part by technological and economic developments in the printing industry. Christian printers took advantage of the recently invented steam-powered Treadwell press and the Fourdrinier papermaking machine. Hatch writes that “the American Bible Society had sixteen Treadwell presses in operation, four years before Harper Brothers introduced their first” and that Amos H. Hubbard was the first to build a Fourdrinier papermaking machine in America (Hatch, 144). Hubbard made contributions to the American Bible Society in “reams of paper rather than money” (Hatch, 144). Additionally, stereotyping had become inexpensive and was “a principal reason for the consolidation of several societies into the American Tract society in 1825” (Hatch, 144). Hatch writes that “neither the Abolitionists, Millerites, nor the Methodists, could have carried out their communication

According to Hatch, the deluge of printed material helped democratize American Christianity. Populist religious leaders like Elias Smith and Lorenzo Dow “were intoxicated with the potential of print.”<sup>9</sup> In writing they opposed the authority of clergy and preferred vernacular language instead of dense theological treatises. Populist religious leaders “associated virtue with ordinary people and exalted the vernacular in word, print, and song.”<sup>10</sup> They opposed the “age-old distinction that set the clergy apart as a separate order of men, and they refused to defer to learned theologians and traditional orthodoxies.”<sup>11</sup> Like the counterculture that would come later, they imagined themselves on the verge of a “new age of religious and social harmony” that “would naturally spring up out of their efforts to overthrow coercive and authoritarian structures.”<sup>12</sup>

As Butler points out though, these groups were hardly democratic themselves. They erected their own institutional hierarchies and attributed religious authority to their populist leaders.<sup>13</sup> Butler refers to them as “republican hierarchies,” arguing that Hatch has mistaken democracy for anti-authoritarianism. For Hatch though, the democratization occurred on a cultural rather than institutional level. He writes, “The democratization of Christianity, then, has less to do with the specifics of polity and governance and more with

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strategies without these technologies” (Hatch, 144).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>13</sup> Butler, 238.

the incarnation of the church into popular culture.”<sup>14</sup> Baptists and Methodists may not have erected democratic organizations; however, their activities had democratizing effects on Christianity in general. Their aggressive printing and evangelizing strategies made Christianity available to a rapidly growing populace. They democratized Christianity by adding to the diversity of Christian practices and by making them accessible to new people in new ways. Christian periodicals were especially accessible. They printed images and used vernacular rhetoric. They spread anti-authoritarian, anti-clerical brands of Christianity among a growing populace. American Christianity was more diverse and more accessible in part because of these periodicals. Christian newspapers were becoming an increasingly popular form of cultural expression.

Comparable to the democratizing effects of Antebellum Christian periodicals, countercultural underground papers contributed to the democratization of occultism. In the early 1970s, occultism appeared to be an increasingly prominent feature of American religion. More people were interested in astrology, witchcraft and magic, and these teachings and practices were becoming more visible. Scholar of religion Edward A. Tiryakian called the then recent surge of interest an “Occult revival.”<sup>15</sup> Catholic priest and sociologist Andrew Greeley acknowledged an occult revival, quipping in 1969 that “God is dead, but the devil lives.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hatch, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Edward A. Tiryakian “Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1972): 491-512.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Greeley, “There’s a New-Time Religion on Campus,” *New York Times Magazine*, June, 1969, 30.

Occult articles, columns, advertisements and special issues in underground papers made occultism available to the new and particularly large generation of young people. In contradistinction to many prior occult practices and periodicals, underground papers transformed occult ideas and practices into topics of public discourse. They did so without the patronage of any particular group or perspective. Through underground papers, practicing occultists debated and defined the meaning of occult ideas, and at the same time they introduced occult groups, ideas and practices to a wider swath of American culture than had been attained prior to the late 1960s. Although underground papers had democratizing effects on many occult practices and ideas, the astrological idea of the Age of Aquarius most clearly reveals these effects. The idea of a dawning Aquarian Age became one of the primary expressions of countercultural expectation.

#### Astrological Explanations of Religious Myths

At the same time that populist periodicals were Christianizing the American people, comparative mythologists in Europe were challenging the historical accuracy of the Bible. French revolutionary Charles Francois Dupuis and his fellow countryman Francois Henri Stanislas Delaunay argued that the central myth of Christianity, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, was a mythological allegory of the path that the sun takes through the signs of the zodiac.<sup>17</sup>

Delaunay took the argument further than Dupuis by identifying the procession of the spring equinox. He argued that many religious myths tracked the position of the sun at

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<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Campion, *The New Age in the Modern West: Counterculture, Utopia and Prophecy from the late Eighteenth Century to the Present Day* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 64.

the time of the spring equinox. According to Delaunaye, the sun had passed from the sign of Pisces to Aquarius at the spring equinox of 1726. Campion writes, “As to what this meant, [Delaunaye] wrote simply ‘*Plus de changements.*’ We could translate this as ‘more changes,’ but another reading might be ‘enough change,’ meaning that there will be no more change because the final stage of history has been reached.”<sup>18</sup> Delaunaye connected the astronomical phenomena of the procession of the equinox with religious myths and with large-scale historical changes. Joscelyn Godwin calls Dupuis’ and Delaunaye’s theories “Solar Theories” because the myths are explained by the sun’s location relative to the zodiac.<sup>19</sup>

Dupuis’ and Delaunaye’s astrological interpretations of religious myths were noticed in the United Kingdom where sympathetic thinkers further developed the interpretation. One-time reverend of the Church of England Robert Taylor encountered Dupuis’ work after being released from prison on charges of blasphemy.<sup>20</sup> Taylor became known as “the Devil’s Chaplain” for actively opposing Christianity. He pointed to corrupt Christian leaders, and “stupid” and “ignorant” practitioners who either ignored or missed the astrological allegory contained in the myth of Jesus.<sup>21</sup>

Less than a decade after Taylor was released from prison, English magistrate and reformer of the York Lunatic Asylum Godfrey Higgins published *Anacalypsis: An Attempt*

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>19</sup> Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1994), 25.

<sup>20</sup> Campion, 65.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

*to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis, or an Inquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations, and Religions* (1836). Higgins regularly cites Taylor, referring to him as “the learned and ingenious, Deist.”<sup>22</sup> Higgins shares Taylor's disdain for clergy. He writes that “great numbers of the priests in every age and of every religion, have been guilty of frauds to support their systems, to an extent of which [one] could have had no idea until he made the inquiry.”<sup>23</sup> Like Taylor, Higgins was critical of the clergy for actively contributing to confusion. According to Higgins, the clergy was more than just guilty of fraud. They had “produced more demoralization and misery in the world than all other causes put together.”<sup>24</sup> Despite this view of the clergy, Higgins considered his work as straddling a fence between Christians and Deists. The former, he argues, attacked his work on the grounds of blasphemy, the latter because “it was superfluously religious.”<sup>25</sup> Had he lived in the late twentieth century, Higgins might have styled himself “spiritual but not religious” on account of what he viewed as a corrupt and largely ignorant clergy.

In two volumes and in more than a thousand pages, Higgins compares the religious myths of Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Ancient Greeks and Egyptians, arguing that they are astrological allegories and that they were inherited from an early and advanced civilization on Atlantis. Like Delaunay, Higgins understands religious myths as

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<sup>22</sup> Godfrey Higgins, *Anacalypsis: An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis: or an Inquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations, and Religions* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1965), vol. 2, 44.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, xiv.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

allegories for the procession of the equinox. Higgins argues that humans have worshipped gods according to which sign of the zodiac the sun rises at the time of the spring equinox. For Higgins, “When the sun was in Taurus, the sign of the Bull, at the spring equinox from 4700 BCE onwards...gods were worshipped as Bulls; when it entered Aries, ram-headed gods were in vogue, while Christianity, symbolized by the Fish, was connected with Pisces.”<sup>26</sup> According to Higgins, the transition to Aquarius had not happened in 1726, but instead was only about to occur in the middle of the nineteenth century. Higgins “worried ‘that perhaps man is near his end,’ but he looked forward to a coming ‘new aera’.”<sup>27</sup>

Higgins referred to his entire theory – the astrological meanings of religious myths, the ancient civilizations, the historical cycles, and their preservation in the various priesthoods – as “the Mythos.”<sup>28</sup> Despite only two hundred printings, Higgins work “became the well-known standard work on the solar origins of religion and the developing ideas of the stars’ relationship to history.”<sup>29</sup> Higgins’ occult ideas about the significance of long astrological periods were popularized in the United States through the institutional legacy of the Theosophical Society.

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<sup>26</sup> Campion, 66

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 65. In addition to the astrological explanation of religious myths and symbols, Higgins argues that hidden within the Bible is a secret numerical code which predicts the appearance of an avatar every 600 years. Higgins labelled the 600 year cycle a “Neros” cycle. According to Higgins, the beginning of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the latest Neros cycle, inviting Higgins to speculate as to who the avatar might have been (Campion, 84). According to Higgins’ calculations, the early nineteenth century was special because it marked not only the transition from the Piscean Age to the Age of Aquarius, but also the appearance of an avatar in accordance with the Neros cycle.

<sup>28</sup> Godwin, 84.

<sup>29</sup> Campion, 66.

### The Theosophical Society's Institutional Legacy

In the summer of 1874, William and Horatio Eddy's farm in Vermont attracted the attention of investigators of spiritualist phenomena. The July 4, 1874 edition of the *Banner of Light* includes a notice, "Communications are coming in nearly every week from persons visiting the residence of the Eddy Brothers, in Vermont, to the effect that the spiritual manifestations in the presence of these mediums are of a more interesting nature and more convincing than ever before."<sup>30</sup> Col. Henry Steel Olcott picked up an issue of the spiritualist periodical, and, having neglected his interest in spiritualism for some time, decided to investigate the phenomena at the Eddy's farm.

Olcott describes the Eddy house as "dark, rough, and uninviting."<sup>31</sup> He was even less friendly toward the Eddy brothers themselves, saying that they, "look more like hard-working rough farmers than prophets or priests of a new dispensation," and that they had "stiff joints, a clumsy carriage, shrink from advances, and make new-comers feel ill at ease and unwelcome."<sup>32</sup> Despite the Eddy brothers' rudeness, Olcott published a positive review of the phenomena at their farm in the *New York Sun*.<sup>33</sup> His article prompted the *New York Daily Graphic* to send Olcott back to the unwelcoming farm for a more thorough investigation, along with an artist, Alfred Kappes, who would sketch the phenomena.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *The Banner of Light*, July 4, 1874, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Epen Sargent, "The Proof Palpable of Immortality," *The Banner of Light*, September 26, 1874, 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Albanese, 272.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

After returning to the farm, Olcott met Helena Petrovna Blavatsky who was also there investigating spirit manifestations. Blavatsky was a Russian immigrant with an extensive background in spiritualism who had just arrived in the United States from Paris. Olcott recalls Blavatsky confessing,

I hesitated before coming here,” she said, “because I was afraid of meeting that Colonel Olcott.”

“Why should you be afraid of him Madame?” [Olcott] rejoined.

“Oh! Because I fear he might write about me in his paper.”

[Olcott] told her that “she might make herself perfectly easy on that score, for [he] felt quite sure Col. Olcott would not mention her in his letters unless she wished it.”<sup>35</sup>

Olcott then introduced himself, adding that he and Blavatsky “became friends at once.”<sup>36</sup>

Blavatsky eventually convinced Olcott of her superiority over other mediums, claiming to control elemental spirits rather than, as with many other mediums, submitting to the condition of “mediumistic slavery.”<sup>37</sup> Blavatsky also exposed Olcott, “little by little,” to the existence of a secret group of spiritual masters who intervened on behalf of humanity, and who also communicated directly with Blavatsky.

Within a year, about twenty people were gathered in Blavatsky’s apartment in New York City to witness mechanical engineer and practicing Freemason George H. Felt “make elemental spirits visible by chemical means.”<sup>38</sup> Among those in attendance were Blavatsky,

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<sup>35</sup> Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: the True Story of the Theosophical Society* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1895), 5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Albanese, 272.

<sup>38</sup> Godwin, 19.

Olcott, and William Q. Judge.<sup>39</sup> Felt failed to manifest any elementals, however Olcott passed a note to Judge suggesting the formation of a society of occult research. Judge passed the note to Blavatsky who nodded silently.<sup>40</sup> A few days later the group met again and formed the Theosophical Society. Olcott was named the president and delivered his inaugural address on November 17, 1875.<sup>41</sup>

Together, Blavatsky and Olcott formed the central leadership of the Theosophical Society. In 1877, Blavatsky published her first major treatise with the editorial assistance of Olcott and others, *Isis Unveiled*. In two volumes and more than a thousand pages, *Isis Unveiled* points to occultism as the means by which science could be reconciled with religion. Blavatsky claimed that the text had been dictated to her by the secret group of spiritual Masters with whom she remained in contact and who worked toward the spiritual evolution of humanity. According to Olcott, the text was a “phenomenal production by one who had never written a book before.”<sup>42</sup> He suggests that Blavatsky “appeared to write in a dissociated state, or to be possessed by another personality, and to have the ability to quote at length and verbatim from sources that were not to hand.”<sup>43</sup>

In the text, Blavatsky describes long cycles of time comparable to Higgins’. Instead of following the procession of the equinox, Blavatsky follows Indian mythology, claiming

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Albanese, 275.

<sup>41</sup> Godwin, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Olcott, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

that humanity was, according to Hindu philosophers, in a *kali yuga*, a state of “gross materiality.”<sup>44</sup> After describing the four billion-year Indian cycle of time, Blavatsky writes, “This computation, which was secret and which is hardly hinted at even now, led Higgins into the error of dividing every ten ages into 6,000 years. Had he added a few more ciphers to his sums he might have come nearer to a correct explanation of the neroses, or secret cycles.”<sup>45</sup> Despite their differing conclusions, the institutional legacy of the Theosophical Society would carry forward both calculations.

*Isis Unveiled* met tremendous success. One thousand copies sold within ten days of its publication, and within a year, two subsequent printings sold out.<sup>46</sup> Even with the book’s success, the Theosophical Society “did not fare well” in its first few years.<sup>47</sup> Soon after publication, *Isis Unveiled* was charged with plagiarism and the Society for Psychical Research published a damning article, alleging that Blavatsky had fraudulently produced letters that she had claimed arrived from the Mahatmas. The resultant fissures contributed to the Theosophical Society's institutional proliferation.

In London, the progenitors of the first Theosophical lodge disliked Olcott’s and Blavatsky’s criticisms of Christianity and preference for Asian religions. This was made apparent by the election of Anna Kingsford, a doctor and medium who had channeled a

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<sup>44</sup> Campion, 67

<sup>45</sup> H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: a Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1972), 272.

<sup>46</sup> Albanese, 275.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Hermetically inspired interpretation of Christianity.<sup>48</sup> Over time, two competing factions formed within the England lodge. In 1884, Kingsford was removed from the presidency by the faction that preferred Asian religions. Blavatsky permitted Kingsford to form another lodge called the “Hermetic Society.”<sup>49</sup> After his return from India, Sinnett became the president of the original lodge, but after a few years, many members were critical of his intentions, and Blavatsky formed her own “Blavatsky Lodge” in London, thus creating a third Theosophical institution in the same city. Controversies in London led to the establishment of three distinct organizations with connections to Theosophy.

Similar controversies over the Society’s leadership led to the formation of three large branches of Theosophy, each with historical ties to Blavatsky’s original Theosophical Society. After Blavatsky’s death in 1891, American William Quan Judge shared the presidency of the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society with European Annie Besant.<sup>50</sup> Judge claimed to have correspondence with the Mahatmas. Besant challenged the authenticity of the correspondence, and after Judge suggested that Besant was under control of “Dark Powers,” Judge was expelled from the Esoteric Section. American lodges defended Judge and soon declared independence from the rest of the Theosophical Society, calling themselves the Theosophical Society in America.<sup>51</sup> After Judge’s death in 1896, more fissures formed within the Theosophical Society in America, and even more

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

organizations were formed. Besant toured the United States in 1897 and re-established American lodges sympathetic to her leadership. By 1900, “there were around seventy-one branches of the Theosophical Society in the United States, three distinct Theosophical organizations, and the international network extended across Europe and into India.”<sup>52</sup>

The various lodges formed networks that encompassed the entire geography of the United States, from New York to Los Angeles. Lodges sponsored classes and lectures and printed periodicals promoting Theosophically-inspired understandings of occultism, including the existence of secret Masters, advanced ancient civilizations, Akashic records, astral bodies and cyclical understandings of time. Godwin writes that “The Theosophical Society...holds a crucial position as the place where all these [occult and esoteric] currents temporarily united, before diverging again.”<sup>53</sup>

#### Channeling the Age of Aquarius in the Early Twentieth Century

In *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky criticizes Higgins’ solar myth theory for associating ancient religious expression with the symbols of the zodiac.<sup>54</sup> Despite her criticisms, the Theosophical Society’s institutional expansion contributed to the popularization of Higgins’ association and the idea of a coming Aquarian Age. One-time Theosophist and New Thought practitioner Levi H. Dowling popularized the idea of the Aquarian Age in the United States by publishing periodicals, establishing a religious community in California, and by channeling one of the earliest and most widely-read

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<sup>52</sup> Campion, 68.

<sup>53</sup> Godwin, xi.

<sup>54</sup> H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1977), 653.

expressions of Aquarian Age thinking, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (1908). Dowling's popularity was made possible in part by the institutional legacy of the Theosophical Society.

In *The Aquarian Gospel*, Dowling describes eighteen missing years of Jesus' life as it is depicted in the canonical gospels, essentially Jesus' life from ages thirteen to thirty. In this gospel, Dowling associates the sign of Aquarius with Christ's return. He writes that the Christ will return when "the man who bears the pitcher will walk forth across an arc of heaven."<sup>55</sup> Dowling incorporated specifically Theosophically-inspired ideas into his gospel. He writes of root races, sub-races, Tibetan masters, and the lost continents of Atlantis and Lemuria.

The Theosophical background of *The Aquarian Gospel* is even more pronounced insofar as Dowling claimed to have channeled the text by accessing the Akashic records. For those sympathetic to the Theosophical idea of the Akashic records, Dowling's reference lends a certain degree of credibility to his authenticity as a medium. The first introduction of the gospel also relied on occult authority established through the Theosophical Society. It included numerous citations of the influential member of the Theosophical Society C.W. Leadbeater (1854-1934).<sup>56</sup> Dowling's message made sense within, and drew authority from, an occult milieu that had been powerfully influenced by

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<sup>55</sup> Levi H. Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (Los Angeles, CA: E.S. Dowling, 1911), 258.

<sup>56</sup> John Benedict Buescher, *Aquarian Evangelist: the Age of Aquarius as it dawned on the mind of Levi Dowling* (Fullerton, CA: Theosophical History, 2008), 31. Leadbeater shared with Dowling the belief that Jesus of Nazareth had been a historical person, and that he had been especially tapped into "Christ consciousness."

the Theosophical Society. It promoted specifically Theosophical ideas and appealed to Theosophical authority.

The *Aquarian Gospel* was immensely popular. It sold out its first printing and has remained in print throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.<sup>57</sup> Dowling spread his message of the Aquarian Age by following institutional strategies that were common among occult practitioners of the time. Like many other occultists, Dowling published his ideas in occult-themed periodicals and in well-advertised correspondence courses. Eventually he established a religious community in Los Angeles emphasizing a millennial interpretation of a coming Aquarian Age. He called the community “The Aquarian Brotherhood,” and after the publication of the *Aquarian Gospel* in 1908, “a couple hundred” people joined, including Dowling’s wife Eva.<sup>58</sup> The group soon acquired its own periodical, re-titling it *The Aquarian New Age*.<sup>59</sup> The periodical served as a medium for Dowling to publish texts that he had psychically accessed through the Akashic records, including another gospel in which he calls Jesus the prophet of the Piscean Age.

At the time of the publication of *The Aquarian Gospel*, other spiritualists had already channeled and published their own alternative gospels.<sup>60</sup> Like Blavatsky’s “Book of Dzyan,” which formed the basis of the *Secret Doctrine*, critics accused Dowling of

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 32

intending to replace the canonical gospels with his *Aquarian Age Gospel*.<sup>61</sup> Even establishing a socialist Brotherhood was not unusual at the time. Cyrus Teed and Edward Arthur Wilson were religious leaders who also founded communities featuring Aquarian Age thinking around the same time as Dowling.<sup>62</sup> Like many other occult organizations, these groups published periodicals that promoted their ideas.

The Theosophical Society's influence helped make possible a network of organizations and publications that promoted occult ideas. By the early twentieth century, occultists had formed hundreds of organizations, established a variety of correspondence courses, and were printing thousands of periodicals. If not themselves of Theosophical heritage, many of these occult organizations promoted Theosophical thinking and practice. Dowling's strategies for spreading the gospel of the Aquarian Age were successful partly because of the pervasiveness of the Theosophical Society. In this Theosophically-influenced context, Aquarian Age thinking took root.

#### The Aquarian Age before the Late 1960s

After Dowling died in 1911, others in Southern California carried forward his message about the Aquarian Age. Chapter two of *The Voice of Isis* (1917), channeled by Harlette Augusta Curtiss, identifies the importance of the equinox's transition into Aquarius.<sup>63</sup> Curtiss writes, "The year 1912 marks the beginning of a most important era in

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>62</sup> James A. Santucci, "The Aquarian Foundation," *Communal Societies* 9 (1989): 39-61 and Lyn Millner, *The Allure of Immortality: An American Cult, a Florida Swamp, and a Renegade Prophet* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 2015).

<sup>63</sup> Beuscher, 35.

the history of the world...In this great journey our solar system has reached and is now entering the sign Aquarius.”<sup>64</sup> Harvey Spencer Lewis claimed to have revived the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) and incorporated Aquarian Age thinking into the organization’s purpose. In AMORC’s periodical *Rays from the Rose Cross*, the first page regularly announces, “This Western Wisdom School, like all earlier Esoteric Orders, is secret, but the Rosicrucian Fellowship is its Herald of the Aquarian Age, now at hand, promulgating this blended scientific soul science: The Western Wisdom Religion for the Western World.”<sup>65</sup> Even though Dowling had died, occult communities in Southern California were incorporating the idea of the Aquarian Age into their worldviews. Alice Bailey arrived in Hollywood, CA in 1917 as the idea of the Aquarian Age was taking root.

More than any thinker before her, Bailey popularized the millennial expectations that the idea of the Aquarian Age came to represent.<sup>66</sup> When Bailey moved to Hollywood, she had left her abusive husband and was raising three children while working at a sardine factory.<sup>67</sup> Having left her Episcopalian husband and a conservative style of Christian practice, Bailey found inspiration in the Theosophical Society, and soon became the editor of the *Messenger*, the periodical of the Theosophical group Krotona.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Harlette Augusta Curtiss, *The Voice of Isis* (Washington, D.C.: Curtiss Philosophic, 1935), 39.

<sup>65</sup> Max Heindel, “A Brief Resume of the Rosicrucian Philosophy,” *Rays from the Rose Cross*, October, 1916, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Steven Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age: a History of Spiritual Practices* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), 53.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>68</sup> Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived, a History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1980), 151.

While editor, Bailey published correspondence that she claimed to have had with a Tibetan master who called himself Djwal Khul.<sup>69</sup> Bailey, like Blavatsky, was in dialogue with a Tibetan spiritual master. Comparable to Judge's correspondence with Tibetan Masters, Bailey's articles sparked controversy over the authenticity of her contact with Djwal Khul. She left the organization in 1919.

In the *Messenger* and subsequent publications, Bailey announced the coming of the Aquarian Age from a Christian perspective and with millenarian fervor. For Bailey, the transition of the sun at the time of the spring equinox from Pisces into Aquarius was initiating changes that were taking place during her lifetime. She writes, "the Aquarian Age is coming into manifestation for our planet as a whole, bringing in its wake universal awareness and the new modes of expressing world synthesis, human interests and the world religion."<sup>70</sup> Working with Djwal Khul, she was helping birth the new Aquarian civilization. Sutcliffe writes, "[I]n a 1937 address [Bailey] celebrates the role of 'seed groups in the New Age' which tiny as they may be, will come to flower, and - through an eventual 'scattering of the seed', succeed finally in 'covering the earth with verdure'."<sup>71</sup> In 1944, Bailey wrote, "The New Age is upon us and we are witnessing the birth pangs of the new

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<sup>69</sup> Sutcliffe, 46.

<sup>70</sup> Alice Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis, 1951), 374.

<sup>71</sup> Sutcliffe, 51.

culture and the new civilization.”<sup>72</sup> For Bailey, the Aquarian Age was about to usher in an entirely new, global society.

Bailey’s methods for disseminating information about the Aquarian Age included many strategies that were similar to Blavatsky’s and Dowling’s. Bailey established the Lucis Trust as an educational charity in 1922.<sup>73</sup> A year later, Bailey offered “The Arcane School” as a private correspondence course to help explain her teachings.<sup>74</sup> Through the Lucis Trust, Bailey also created the Lucis Publishing Company in order to publish texts and a quarterly periodical, the *Beacon*, and established a network of small groups of meditators known as “Triangles,” as well as the organization “Men of Goodwill” which was “oriented to political, cultural and interfaith activity, including championing the cause of the United Nations.”<sup>75</sup> Sutcliffe compares these organizational strategies to the bureaucracies of commercial organizations and contrasts them with “ecclesial settings.”<sup>76</sup> As distinct as these organizations may have been from the Episcopalian church in which Bailey was raised, they reflect the institutional strategies of other occult leaders of the early twentieth century. Like the Theosophists that had come before, she channeled texts, published periodicals, established correspondence education, and erected a variety of groups. Also similar to the occultists who had come before, Bailey’s writing style was

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>73</sup> Michael York, *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 34.

<sup>74</sup> Sutcliffe, 47.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 52.

“bourgeois” and “patrician” Like the lengthy and verbose tomes that Higgins and Blavatsky had produced, Bailey’s writing would have been difficult to digest for those without sufficient time and education.

Despite their “bourgeois” character, by the late 1960s, Bailey’s discourses on the Aquarian Age were in wide circulation among those interested in occult and esoteric knowledge. Sutcliffe writes, “That the Arcane School had no monopoly over the emblem [of the ‘New Age’] only accelerated its diffusion into the wider spiritual culture. The allure of Bailey’s ‘New Age’ is attested by the strength of popular reference to her discourse among key post-war activists.”<sup>77</sup>

By the time that Bailey had established the Lucis Trust, the idea that Jesus’ life was an allegory for astrological transitions had been transformed from its inception during the French Revolution. Comparative mythologists initiated the idea as an argument against Christianity, and over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it became one of the ways that occultists came to express millennial expectation, often inflected with Christian rhetoric. The Theosophical Society played an instrumental role in this transition. It provided the institutional infrastructure that facilitated the proliferation of the idea. In the institutional wake of the Theosophical Society, people like Dowling and Bailey appealed to Theosophical religious authority and followed similar organizational strategies. In this occult context, the idea of the Aquarian Age remained confined to specific esoteric groups, occult periodicals, lengthy and verbose texts, and, in the Post-War period, within the veneer of tri-faith America. However, with the advent of the

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 54.

counterculture, and especially through the medium of underground newspapers, the idea of the Aquarian Age broke out of the institutional legacy of the Theosophical Society.

### Underground Papers and the Democratization of Occultism

Before countercultural interest in astrology, the notion that large-scale social change would accompany the transition of the sun's location at the time of the spring equinox remained primarily within the confines of occult literature and teachings. By the early 1970s, countercultural interest had thrust the term "Age of Aquarius" into public awareness. In October 1967, James Rado, Gerome Ragni and Galt MacDermot produced the off-broadway musical *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical*. The production included a musical opening with reference to the Age of Aquarius, "When the moon is in the seventh house / And Jupiter aligns with Mars / then peace will guide the planets / And love will steer the stars / This is the dawning of the age of Aquarius."<sup>78</sup> Astrologically, the song mistakes planetary alignments for the procession of the equinox, however it helped popularize the term "Age of Aquarius," as well as the countercultural interpretation that social changes associated with the coming age were already taking place. Released by the band *5<sup>th</sup> Dimension*, the song reached number one on the US Billboard Top 100 for six weeks in 1969. The song won two Grammy awards, and *Hair* made it to Broadway after only a few months.

The Age of Aquarius found its way into other forms of cultural expression as well. By 1974, numerous authors had published books attempting to understand countercultural

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<sup>78</sup> James F. Harris, *Philosophy at 33 1/3 rpm: Themes of Classic Rock Music* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 194.

changes that were taking place. Many of them labeled those changes with the moniker the “Age of Aquarius.” William Braden discusses technological changes and responsibilities in *The Age of Aquarius: Technology and the Cultural Revolution* (1970). William D. Sherman discusses the ways in which business was changing in *Corporate Social Responsibility: A New Age of Aquarius?* (1972). Goodyear Publishing Company printed a 311-page edited volume *Age of Aquarius: Contemporary Bio-social Issues* that covers economic, environmental, sexual, and social changes. John Charles Cooper criticizes the religious changes that were taking place in *Religion in the Age of Aquarius* (1971), as does Edmund C. Gruss in *Cults and the Occult in the Age of Aquarius: An Introduction* (1974). More conspicuously for the historian of religion, Sydney Ahlstrom describes religious changes in his chapter, “Piety for the Age of Aquarius: Theosophy, Occultism, and Non-Western Religion.” He writes,

The turning away from the religious traditions of the West was a major sign of the times. Simultaneously, the displays of countless novelty shops were providing evidence that a lively religious counterrenaissance was advancing under the sign of Aquarius. A popular revival of astrology was in progress, and with it renewed prestige for the Cabala and the Thrice-Greatest-Hermes.<sup>79</sup>

Ahlstrom then describes the historical lineages of Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, Vedanta, Baha’i, and Buddhism, and briefly mentions the consciousness expansion activities of Timothy Leary. Ahlstrom and these other authors were concerned with cultural changes. They used the “Age of Aquarius” to label those changes. As with *5<sup>th</sup> Dimension*’s hit song, the procession of the equinox was of negligible importance for these authors. Still though,

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<sup>79</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1970), 1037.

these publications are evidence that the “Age of Aquarius” had entered the vernacular of American culture, even if it did so primarily as a label for countercultural religious behavior with little of the occult meaning that had been developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Underground authors engaged more thoroughly with the occult meaning of the Age of Aquarius than observers of the counterculture. Through special issues, columns, feature articles, and advertisements, authors in underground papers debated the timing and meaning of the sun’s location at the spring equinox, and they celebrated the arrival of the Aquarian Age with festivals. In addition to discussing and facilitating the importance of the Age of Aquarius, underground papers provided manuals for people to practice other forms of occultism including astrology more generally, tarot-reading, and witchcraft. The increased visibility and discursive opportunities that underground papers offered occultists democratized American occultism by 1.) turning occult ideas, especially the idea of the Age of Aquarius, into topics of public discourse, and 2.) publicizing occult events, groups, teachings, and resources. Through underground papers, occult practices and ideas more fully permeated American culture.

#### Occult Public Discourse

In 1967, artist and astrologer Carl Helbing was writing “The Gossiping Guru” column for the *San Francisco Oracle*. Having noticed an unusual astrological occurrence in which the moon, sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter and the north lunar node were all in Aquarius, Helbing solicited information from his readers. He writes, “Who then

can tell us further of Him who was born February 5, 1962, when 7 planets were in Aquarius?”<sup>80</sup>

Theosophist Kitty McNeil replied with a letter describing a global meeting of spiritual adepts that took place in an ethereal realm on 3 August, 1961. Her letter was printed in the sixth issue of the *Oracle* and describes the arrival of an “Aquarian avatar.”<sup>81</sup> McNeil narrates how many adepts psychically gathered information from the Akashic records and focused their meditation toward the “Great White Brotherhood.” She writes, “With a mighty collective effort, a great plea for an avatar went forth.”<sup>82</sup> McNeil describes seeing the soul of a child being imprinted with the collective consciousness of the adepts who were meditating. She calls the child a “very important” recipient of the “downpouring force,” and says that “all those who are ‘tuned in’ are expressing some of the manifested energy of the cosmic avatar.”<sup>83</sup> She cites Alice Bailey’s *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* as the “only source material” she could find to “account for the foregoing event.”<sup>84</sup> Suggesting a dramatic spiritual awakening that would happen soon, McNeil concludes, “Perhaps inner vision will be common enough by [1975] to reveal [the child’s] special nature and mission to the elect. May it be so.”<sup>85</sup> Helbing used an underground paper to solicit occult information from his readers, and McNeil replied with Theosophical information

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<sup>80</sup> Carl Helbing, “Gossiping Guru,” *Oracle* #4, 8.

<sup>81</sup> Kitty McNeil, *Oracle* #6, 3.

<sup>82</sup> McNeil, 18.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

supplemented by the work of Alice Bailey. In publishing their correspondence, the *Oracle* facilitated public discourse on an occult topic.

The democratic ethos of the *Oracle* contributed to the newspaper's role in facilitating occult public discourse. Distinguishing the *Oracle* from other publications, McNeil writes, "Most any publication in the country would smile and tap their heads knowingly at anyone who purported to have tuned in on that scene."<sup>86</sup> Given Helbing's solicitation, McNeil viewed the *Oracle* as a publication that might be willing to publish a letter embedded with occult beliefs. Similarly, the January 21, 1970 edition of the *East Village Other* includes a reader-submitted letter entitled "Aquarian Doom." The author writes, "Dear EVO – This is to advise your people that if you care to live, evacuate New York and move to Midwest by Jan. 22, 1970, at the latest. You can print it – no one straight will listen."<sup>87</sup> Like McNeil, the author of this letter believed that an underground newspaper would be receptive to his occult belief of an apocalyptic Aquarian Age, and so he submitted a letter for publication. Underground papers provided potential contributors confidence that occult ideas were not taboo.

Editors of underground papers often welcomed articles and information on occult topics. Publishers of the *Oracle* made the topic of the Aquarian Age into the theme of the sixth issue. The cover and back-cover were designed by Rick and Ida Griffin as masculine and feminine representations of the Water-bearer symbol of Aquarius (*see figure 5*). The issue features three articles that describe the transition into the Age of Aquarius differently

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>87</sup> Beau, "Aquarian Doom," *The East Village Other*, January, 21, 1970, 6.

and with differing emphases. In an interview with prominent astrologer Gavin Arthur, Arthur describes the intellectual changes that the Aquarian Age would initiate.<sup>88</sup> In an unattributed article former beatnik and practicing occultist Ambrose Redmoon emphasizes the ethical responsibilities of the revolutionary generations that were characteristic of the transition into the Aquarian Age.<sup>89</sup> Writing as “Gayla,” John Starr Cooke’s fellow medium Rosalind Sharpe Wall interprets the symbols of the zodiac in order to explain the changes that she believed had already begun. Although similar in some ways, each article interprets the Aquarian Age differently.<sup>90</sup> This edition of the *Oracle* differs from prior occult publications in which mediums claimed authoritative status through a Tibetan master or by accessing the Akashic records. Instead of a doctrine or prophecy to be accepted or rejected, the *Oracle* presented the idea of the Aquarian Age as a topic of public discourse to which very different authors contributed differing perspectives.

As astrology became increasingly popular in the counterculture, the Aquarian Age became one of the most visible means by which people understood the changes they were seeking. Alan Oken, astrologer for the *Rat* describes the occult revival of the late 1960s as an expression of the Aquarian Age. He writes, “Aquarians...will have...an innate ability in the fields of Astrology, Palmistry, the Tarot, etc. Again I would like to point out that the Aquarian Age has raised a tremendous interest in all these related subjects.”<sup>91</sup> Writing in

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<sup>88</sup> Gavin Arthur, “The Aquarian Age,” *Oracle* #6, 4.

<sup>89</sup> “Aquarian Beat,” *Oracle* #6, 7.

<sup>90</sup> Gayla, “Aquarian Symbols,” *Oracle* #6, 21.

<sup>91</sup> Alan Oken “Aquarius,” *Age of Aquarius* vol. 1, issue 2, n.p.

the *Astral Projection*, a head-oriented underground newspaper in Albuquerque, James J. Bowie assumes that readers could recognize the astrological significance of the changes that were happening. He writes, “Necessarily before the new age can dawn, the old must be broken down. Need it be pointed out that this ‘breaking down’ is happening?”<sup>92</sup> The Age of Aquarius was an expression of the counterculture’s self-consciousness insofar as participants in the counterculture understood themselves as the harbingers of the new astrological era. The Age of Aquarius was of interest to publishers of underground newspapers not only because of a heightened interest in astrology, but because it was a means for participants in the counterculture to explain and understand themselves.

Although many countercultural authors often interpreted the Age of Aquarius with themselves in mind, they rarely agreed on the specific timing of the Age of Aquarius. Gavin Arthur believed that the Age of Aquarius would not begin until 2660.<sup>93</sup> In the same issue, Rosalind Sharpe Wall suggests that the Aquarian Age had begun in 1959.<sup>94</sup> Writing in the *Rat*, William Colby identifies the Aquarian Age generationally. He writes, “The Age of Aquarius is approaching and we, the generation born after 1940, are the first wave of this new Soul movement.”<sup>95</sup> Despite disagreement on the calendrical timing, many associated changes initiated by the counterculture with the changes that would accompany the Age of Aquarius. Even Arthur, who believed that the Age of Aquarius was not to occur for another

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<sup>92</sup> James J. Bowie, “The Dawn of Aquarius,” *The Astral Projection* April 1, 1969, 21.

<sup>93</sup> Arthur, 4.

<sup>94</sup> Gayla, 31.

<sup>95</sup> William Colby, “Astrological Views,” *The Rat*, May 2, 1969, 13.

five hundred years, argued that participants in the counterculture were foreshadowing what was to come. The interviewer of the *Oracle* asks if Arthur believed that participants in the counterculture were precursors of the Aquarian Age. Arthur responds, “Yes, just as the early Christians came 500 years before the Piscean Age. The last decade of each age foreshadows the age to come.”<sup>96</sup> So even though it had not technically begun, the changes of the counterculture were, for Arthur, particularly Aquarian. For most though, the Aquarian Age had already begun and participants in the counterculture were ushering it in. Bowie suggests that his readers, “take advantage of the energies available with the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.”<sup>97</sup>

Like their disagreements about when the Age of Aquarius would begin, authors also disagreed on the meaning of the Age of Aquarius. Some authors drew from the works of earlier occultists. Ambrose Redmoon interprets the changes of the counterculture with Theosophical views. He associates the transition of the Age of Aquarius with the evolution of humans into the sixth sub-race, a perspective that draws on Blavatsky’s *Secret Doctrine*. The *Free Aquarian*, an underground publication in New Jersey, printed an article in which the author attributes her explanation of the Age of Aquarius to the Rosicrucian Order.<sup>98</sup> The author continues, “Today the Rosicrucian Order, Amorc, is one of the descendants of those very mystery schools of Egypt, carrying on the work started by them. This writer is

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<sup>96</sup> Arthur, 20.

<sup>97</sup> Bowie, 21.

<sup>98</sup> Ramatu, “Introduction to Astrology,” *The Free Aquarian*, September, 1973, 12.

honored to be a member.”<sup>99</sup> Others produced their own interpretations. Joey Goldfarb of the *Avatar* believed that the majority of astrologers had gotten the sign wrong. He argues that the sun was transitioning from Pisces into Aries rather than Aquarius, a sequence that matched the sun’s yearly progression through the zodiac and that matched his interpretation of the canonical gospels. He believed that the transition was from “disorganized oneness” into “organized oneness.”<sup>100</sup> Bowie relied on Christian liturgy to make sense of the Aquarian Age. He writes,

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven...This well-known phrase from the Lord’s Prayer has much relevance for us these days as we pass from the Age of Pisces into the Age of Aquarius...The establishment of the kingdom of Heaven on earth is the challenge of the New Age.<sup>101</sup>

Although understandings of the Aquarian Age were means of self-conscious participation in the counterculture, underground authors differed about the timing and meaning of the Age of Aquarius, and they culled information about it from multiple sources. Collectively, underground papers were subjecting an occult idea to the differing perspectives and multiple viewpoints that are characteristic of public discourse.

Despite their differences, many authors in underground papers also expressed shared beliefs about the Age of Aquarius. For many, the Age of Aquarius would usher in a new kind of knowledge accompanied by universal brotherhood. Arthur argues that one

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Joey Goldfarb, “The Art of Astrology,” *Avatar* #19, 4.

<sup>101</sup> James J. Bowie, “Thy Kingdom Come...” *The Astral Projection*, June 1, 1969, 20.

of the reasons he believes the Aquarian Age had not yet occurred was because in the Aquarian Age, “art, science, religion, and philosophy” would be “unified once more” and their unification would be “manifest everywhere.”<sup>102</sup> Bowie echoes Arthur’s vision of unified fields of knowledge. He writes, “Astrology is the science of this new age for it unites psychology, biology, astronomy, sociology, etc., and adds one major element of its own to unify this gambit of ‘ologies.’ That element is the Soul and its evolution through the process of reincarnation.”<sup>103</sup> The *Oracle* describes the changing process of knowledge production through the language of duality. It reads, “Physics and metaphysics will be one...It will be the end of duality.”<sup>104</sup> Like Blavatsky’s efforts in *Isis Unveiled*, these authors were envisioning an Aquarian Age that transcended distinctions between science and religion.

In addition to transformed knowledge, authors in underground papers believed that the Aquarian Age would initiate a period of “universal brotherhood.” Colby writes, “The concept of the Aquarian Age is that through science man will achieve true humanitarianism and brotherhood.”<sup>105</sup> Bowie echoes the sentiment. He writes, “If you in your turn are working either consciously or unconsciously toward establishing the goals of universal brotherhood and world peace with the alleviation of suffering and sorrow through right

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<sup>102</sup> Lorraine Glennby, “Brotherhood of Cosmic Sons and Daughters,” *The Rag*, May 8, 1967, 5.

<sup>103</sup> Bowie, April, 1969, 21.

<sup>104</sup> Oracle, “The Aquarian Age,” *Oracle* #6, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Colby, 13.

directed mental energy and knowledge, then you are now truly a new age being.”<sup>106</sup>

For many, the astrological changes explained countercultural ambitions toward the reorganization of knowledge and toward universal brotherhood. Despite different understandings of when it would occur and despite drawing on different sources, underground papers helped authors establish a shared rhetoric and general expectations for the transition into the Aquarian Age. They were debating and defining the meaning of the Age of Aquarius. Underground papers thus facilitated public discourse not only because they printed multiple and varying perspectives, but because they helped establish shared viewpoints and rhetoric. Through underground papers, participants in the counterculture gave more specific meaning to what Delaunay so vaguely styled *plus de changements*.

The roles that underground papers played in their communities also contributed to public discourse on the Aquarian Age. Underground papers were read differently than daily papers. Rather than being sold to subscribers who often consumed newspapers or magazines personally, underground papers were often shared between multiple readers and households. A single issue would pass through multiple hands. Having few subscribers, underground papers were often sold in public places like countercultural book stores and coffee shops, places where people socialized and discussed current events and countercultural interests. They were in mass supply at be-ins, concerts and other countercultural events. In all of these contexts, underground papers provided topics for discussion. In addition to facilitating and containing public discourse about the Aquarian Age, underground papers also inspired it because of how and where people read them.

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<sup>106</sup> Bowie, April, 1969, 21.

Embedded in countercultural networks, underground papers were effective media for leaders in the counterculture to communicate their ideas to others. They offered potential audiences to those who wished to have their voices heard. One could reach many people with a single article or column. Arthur's interview in the *Oracle* was reprinted in the *Los Angeles Oracle* and then cited by another article that was printed in the *East Village Other* and the *Rag*. Through underground papers, Arthur's interview on the Aquarian Age was printed in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Austin. The *Freep* printed a profile of Arthur and his work, calling him the "Prophet of an Aquarian Age."<sup>107</sup> The article describes Arthur's introduction to astrology through Carl Jung, his famously accurate prediction that John F. Kennedy would die in office, and his book, *The Circle of Sex* (1966). The article reads, "It's nice to have the world come around to your way of thinking, and that's what has been happening to silver haired Gavin Arthur, the San Francisco astrologer who has gotten a lot of hippies turned on with his Aquarian Age theory."<sup>108</sup> Underground papers made it possible for Arthur to reach many more readers than only those in San Francisco.

Because underground papers were effective means of reaching many people, religious leaders like Father Yod and Mel Lyman relied on them to promote their teachings and groups. Father Yod was the religious leader of the "Source Family," a religiously-

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<sup>107</sup> Nat Freedland, "Gavin Arthur: Astrologer Prophet of an Aquarian Age," *Los Angeles Free Press*, August 18, 1967, 16.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

oriented commune in Los Angeles that operated one of the first organic food stores in the United States. Father Yod took out a full page ad in the *Los Angeles Free Press* advertising his weekly religious meetings. In gothic-styled font, the ad reads, “The Ten Commandments for the Age of Aquarius.”<sup>109</sup> Obedience to “your Earthly Spiritual Father” and loving “your Earthly Spiritual Father” are the first two of these commandments and refer specifically to Father Yod. The ad concludes, “The wise will find within these commandments the keys to liberation while in this Earth, and life everlasting in the next. Those who feel the vibration within, come to the Source on Sunday at 11:00 AM.”<sup>110</sup> The note is signed, “The Father.”<sup>111</sup> Father Yod used an underground newspaper to advertise his group, and he did so by offering a revelation clad in Aquarian Age rhetoric.

Mel Lyman also used an underground newspaper to spread his spiritual teachings. Lyman led the “Fort Hill Community” in Massachusetts. They published their own underground newspaper, *Avatar*. Lyman wrote a number of columns for the paper and responded to reader-submitted letters. One of the columns that Lyman authored was titled “Essay on the New Age.” Although he never mentioned the Aquarian Age (perhaps because Goldfarb believed that they were entering the Age of Aries rather than Aquarius), Lyman describes comparable global changes that he believed were taking place. Lyman writes of the “material expansion” of the United States having been completed and that this

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<sup>109</sup> “The Ten Commandments for the Age of Aquarius,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, November, 27, 1970, 7.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

would soon usher in a “new age” characterized by “inward flight.”<sup>112</sup> According to Lyman, people were soon to realize that humans collectively form one body and that through this revelation, an age of love would be established. He writes,

I am telling you to get yourself together so we can be ‘one’ in practice and not just theory. Our dense body is the planet earth, our muscular system is work as human beings, our bloodstream is energy, our nervous system is communication, our mind is knowledge, our heart is art, and our soul is Christ, how can we not help but love one another.<sup>113</sup>

Whereas Father Yod used an already existing underground paper to advertise his group, Lyman helped publish a paper and used it to express his views. Both were religious leaders and both used underground papers to communicate their messages about the Aquarian Age and to grow their groups. Underground papers made these religious leaders’ occult discourse available to the public.

At the same time that underground papers provided space for spiritual leaders to spread their teachings and advertise their groups, underground papers also made participating in public discourse more accessible to would-be writers. The *Oracle* appreciated the letter from McNeil, an otherwise unpublished author, to the extent that she became a columnist for the paper. Redmoon was a practicing occultist who had trouble publishing his ideas. In an interview in the *Chicago Tribune*, his daughter recalls, “He said things that really blew people away. Everywhere he would try and publish his writings, they found him too wild...It was very frustrating to him that people were not listening...He

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<sup>112</sup> Mel Lyman, “Essay on the New Age,” *Avatar* #19, 23.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

tried for so long and worked so hard to be heard.”<sup>114</sup> In publishing McNeil’s letter and column as well as Redmoon’s article, the *Oracle* expanded the pool of occult authors who were writing about the Aquarian Age. Underground papers expanded the pool of occult authors.

Underground papers contributed to public discourse on the topic of the Aquarian Age in at least five ways: 1.) by contributing to the diversity of views about the meaning and timing of the Age of Aquarius, 2.) by helping establish shared expectations and rhetoric, 3.) by inspiring public conversations, 4.) by providing audiences for spiritual leaders, and 5.) by expanding the pool of occult authors. Through these forms of public discourse, underground papers helped transform the idea of the Age of Aquarius into one of the primary forms of countercultural expression.

Although public discourse on the Aquarian Age was particularly widespread, underground papers also turned other occult ideas and practices into subjects of public discourse. Science fiction author and practicing occultist Marion Zimmer Bradley pseudonymously authored an occult-themed column in the *EVO* titled “Emanations.” The column ran weekly for at least eight months. Publishing as “Elfrida Rivers,” Bradley answered readers’ questions about a variety of occult topics. Nearly every entry begins, “In this column, questions will be answered on occultism, mysticism, witchcraft, ritual magic

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<sup>114</sup> Julia Keller, “The Mysterious Ambrose Redmoon’s Healing Words,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 29, 2002.

and such matter.”<sup>115</sup> Rivers promoted the column by offering an occult book to the reader who submitted the “best question (i.e. of general interest)” of the month.<sup>116</sup>

Readers responded with questions about astrology, tarot cards, witchcraft, and psychic abilities. One reader asked if Rivers believed that cats were psychic. Rivers writes, “No, I don’t – and I say this as an old catlover, and not without a guilty glance at my Siamese...However, if you mean ‘Do you think cats can see into other planes,’ yes; I do.”<sup>117</sup> She gives as evidence the examples of ghost-hunters using cats “as canaries are used in coal-mines; to detect alien presences before any human being can sense them” as well as mediums who claim that cats cannot be coaxed into a haunted room. Rivers often took the correspondence column as an opportunity to evaluate occult ideas, practices and thinkers. When discussing the value of Rosicrucianism, Rivers repeats Aleister Crowley,

Now if I am to be attacked for revealing Rosicrucian secrets, let them do their worst – but I can honestly say that, good as their course of study is, at least at the early levels, I found nothing whatever in the whole nine years which I have not read openly elsewhere. I felt right at home when Aleister Crowley was quoted to me, about the Order of the Golden Dawn, when he said that they had ‘bound him to secrecy with fearful oaths, and then entrusted the Hebrew alphabet to his keeping.’<sup>118</sup>

As with the Aquarian Age, Bradley’s column facilitated occult public discourse by providing space for correspondence and public discussion.

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<sup>115</sup> Elfrida Rivers, “Emanations,” *East Village Other*, January 31, 1969, 12.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., February 7, 1969, 16.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., June 18, 1969, 18.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., June 11, 1969, 9.

Underground papers also facilitated occult public discourse by subjecting books and thinkers to critical assessment by printing reviews of occult-themed books. Bradley reviewed an occult book in the *EVO* titled *Sex and the Supernatural* by Brad Steiger. Bradley praises the text from an occult perspective. She writes, “anyone who has ever encountered occult phenomena is going to read the book with a sort of delighted surprise, saying; ‘Why, yes, of course; so that’s what happened’.”<sup>119</sup> In the “Great Guru Search” special edition of the *Freep*, Art Kunkin takes the liberty of expressing his opinions on occult thinkers like P.D. Ouspensky and G.I. Gurdjieff.<sup>120</sup> Kunkin and Bradley contributed to occult public discourse by providing their opinions of occult literature in underground newspapers, literature that in earlier years had been primarily confined to occult circles.

Underground papers facilitated public discourse around a variety of occult topics, not just the Age of Aquarius. They opened up new possibilities for occultists to communicate with one another (and outsiders), to recruit followers, and to evaluate occult ideas and practices. They added to the diversity of perspectives and authors, and they inspired public conversations. By facilitating occult public discourse, underground papers helped occult practices and ideas become increasingly prominent features of the counterculture and of American culture more generally. In short, by facilitating public discourse, underground papers democratized occult ideas.

### Public Practice

Underground papers also contributed to the democratization of occultism by

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<sup>119</sup> Elfrida Rivers, “Books,” *East Village Other*, April 9, 1969, 30.

<sup>120</sup> Art Kunkin, “The Great Guru Search,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, June 8, 1973, s-1.

making occult groups and practices increasingly public. Authors in underground papers published articles, reviews on occult-themed events and gatherings. They advertised for local occult groups and classes, and they helped people begin occult practice by publishing manuals for tarot-reading, for casting astrological charts, for performing spells. In all of these ways, and to varying degrees, underground papers provided readers with resources for practicing occultism. As with the production of occult public discourse, the Age of Aquarius took on particular importance in the ways that underground papers shaped public occult practice, including adding an occult dimension to the largest public festival of the era, Woodstock.

In the early 1960s, Michael Lang was a teenager who had embedded himself in the developing countercultural activity in the East Village.<sup>121</sup> As much as anyone else, he was responsible for one of the most well-known examples of an Aquarian Age festival, and one of the most significant moments of the counterculture, Woodstock.

Lang used LSD for the first time in 1961. Moved by the experience, he began listening to jazz and rock music while tripping. He writes, “I continued to use acid as a tool to explore. An educational experience, it expanded my awareness, and I found a very clear spiritual path.”<sup>122</sup> That spiritual path involved introducing other people to LSD and listening to jazz and rock music.

Lang moved to Coconut Grove, Florida where he borrowed money from his parents to open a psychedelic shop. The countercultural community in Coconut Grove and Lang’s

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<sup>121</sup> Michael Lang and Holly George-Warren, *The Road to Woodstock* (New York: Ecco, 2009), 3.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

business became the subjects of police harassment.<sup>123</sup> Broke and tired of Miami, Lang moved to Woodstock, New York, a small town where descendants of Dutch settlers and bohemian migrants comprised the majority of the town's population. Lang became friends with Artie Kornfield, an executive working for Capitol records, and together they imagined and initiated plans to host a three-day music festival in Woodstock. Lang writes of his vision for the festival, "Overall, I envisioned the festival as a gathering of the tribes, a haven for like-minded people, where experimental new lifestyles would be respected and accommodated."<sup>124</sup>

Lang and Kornfield met with two young venture capitalists, John Roberts and Joel Rosenman, who decided to fund the festival.<sup>125</sup> In February, 1969, Lang and Kornfield began working on the project. From its inception, the project was bathed in occult rhetoric. Lang writes, "We settled on calling our creation: 'An Aquarian Exposition: The Woodstock Music and Art Fair'."<sup>126</sup> He explains his vision for the festival not in the generic way that later authors simply labelled the counterculture the "Age of Aquarius," but in the more fully occult sense. He writes of deciding on the event's title,

I suggested 'Aquarian Exposition' to encompass all the arts, not only music, but crafts, painting, sculpture, dance, theater...And I wanted to reference the Aquarian Age, an era of great harmony predicted by astrologers to coincide with the late twentieth century, a time when stars and planets would align to allow for more understanding, sympathy, and trust in the

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 64.

world. Our festival would be that place for people to come together to celebrate the coming of a new age.<sup>127</sup>

Billed with an occult name and designed with occult-inspired ambitions, the Aquarian Exposition drew the attention of hundreds of thousands of people from all over the United States.

Underground papers advertised the festival by helping sell tickets and by previewing the festival in articles. Ads for the festival appeared in underground papers all over the country. The *Astral Projection*, as far away from New York as New Mexico, helped pre-sell tickets, as did *Ramparts* magazine and other underground papers. The ad reads, “Woodstock Music and Art Fair presents: An Aquarian Exposition,” and specifically states that zodiac charts would be available at the Crafts Bazaar.<sup>128</sup> The *EVO* features a preview of the festival.<sup>129</sup> Under the heading “Aquarian,” the article describes the location of the festival, the bands that were scheduled to play, and some of the additional things to do there.<sup>130</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the article gives specific directions to the site that had moved from Woodstock to Wallkill to Bethel, and that was still being misleadingly referred to as “Woodstock.”<sup>131</sup> The *Rat* printed a more thorough preview. It includes an article by columnist Jeff Shero describing the festival as a test of whether the “hip dreams”

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> “Woodstock Music and Arts Fair presents: An Aquarian Exposition,” *The Astral Projection*, August 1, 1968, 28.

<sup>129</sup> John Hilgerdt, “Woodstock Music and Arts Fair,” *East Village Other*, August 13, 1969, 11.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

of “head’s [sic] heads” could actually work.<sup>132</sup> He writes, “Enter the Aquarian Exposition, the ‘Festival of Music and Peace’. Every possible point of confrontation in the festival has been eliminated. A historic test of what is possible under the system has begun.”<sup>133</sup> Later in the issue, the *Rat* includes a detailed, full-page map of the festival site, including the local roads and the areas designated for performances, booths, food, security, and parking. Opposite the map, author Jon Grell provides a practical manual for “How to Survive in Bethel New York During a Three Day Musical (?) Orgy.”<sup>134</sup> Jane Friedman, founder of Wartoke Concern, the company that Lang had hired to publicize the event, recalls the importance of underground papers, “We had a three-month contract, and we spent every single day in the office, from about ten in the morning till three in the morning, and we sent out about three thousand pieces of mail nearly every day of those months. We had developed an incredible list of underground press.”<sup>135</sup> More than 100,000 tickets were pre-sold, partly through underground papers.

The Aquarian Exposition lasted three days, August 15-17, 1969. 400,000 people braved excessive traffic and rainy weather to attend the festival. The weather and hundreds of thousands of people turned Max Yasgur’s dairy farm into a muddy mess. The crowd was twice as large as expected, leaving the restrooms, food services, available temporary

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<sup>132</sup> Jeff Shero, “Woodstock...” *The Rat*, August 12, 1969, 13.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Jon Grell, “How to Survive in Bethel New York During a Three Day Musical (?) Orgy,” *The Rat*, August 12, 1969, 13.

<sup>135</sup> Lang, 102.

shelters and parking over-taxed. Some people parked twenty miles away. The festival featured two areas where people conglomerated. Within a fenced off field, a sea of ticket holders surrounded the main stage where prominent rock bands performed. In the *EVO*, John Hilgerdt reports that people began calling this area “the glob” as it was muddy, difficult to move, and quickly became “a drag.”<sup>136</sup>

Across the road was an area accessible to anyone with or without a ticket called “Movement City” where people took respite from the glob. There, the Hog Farm, a New York collective dedicated to the counterculture, served free food. People used and gave away LSD, marijuana and mescaline. They played music. They conversed and made new friends. Hilgerdt describes it with utopian rhetoric. He writes, “A few thousand of the absolutely most together and peaceful and beautiful heads in the world are gathered in a grand tribal new beginning...All the petty bullshit that before kept us apart vanished and for the first time we were free.”<sup>137</sup> Despite preferring his experiences at Movement City, Hilgerdt writes approvingly of the glob, “This is not to say that blob, as it was also known, on the other side of the hill was bad, because it wasn’t. It too was peaceful and groovy, but it was a different place.”<sup>138</sup>

For participants like Hilgerdt, attending the festival was a transformative experience. Underground papers documented their reactions. Hilgerdt writes, “We now know we can live together as we had only done previously in our fantasies. No one will

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<sup>136</sup> John Hilgerdt, “We Are One,” *East Village Other*, August 20, 1969, 3.

<sup>137</sup> Hilgerdt, August 20, 1969, 7.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

leave here the same person that existed before. For a few days we were all in a beautiful place. Can we do it again? All I know is, I don't want to leave here. I feel like I've come home."<sup>139</sup> Jon Grell published a poem in which he compares his experience with a Native American ritual. He writes,

we were in one cosmic entity – our unity was our power...yeah baby, i saw what i was fighting for. i was with my people. like the indian gathering on the plains to celebrate an annual peyote ritual, we were a people, gathered in the greatest manifestation of our culture.<sup>140</sup>

Grell describes attendees as they left, "they know and they feel, and it's down so deep in their head that, baby, this is where it's at...and they're gonna make it happen. And one day soon, Hendrix will play and no one will leave. And we will be one for the rest of time."<sup>141</sup> Comparable to the initiatory effects that the Human Be-In had for Helen Swick Perry, the Aquarian Exposition provided many a utopian of vision of the kind of society for which people in the counterculture hoped and fought. For them, it was a temporary realization of the Aquarian Age. Through Underground papers, organizers promoted the event, and in underground papers, authors expressed the event's ritualistic and transformative power. The Aquarian Exposition provided many participants a transformative vision of what they hoped to achieve at the same time that it was embedded with historically occult language and ideas.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Jon Grell, "The Hip Fantasy," *The Rat*, August 27, 1969, 12.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

Underground papers contributed in similar ways to other public occult events as well. The *Barb* advertised a summer solstice festival that would take place June 16, 1967.<sup>142</sup> The festival was part of the Summer of Love, and thousands of people showed up dressed in costume to celebrate the astrological occurrence. Dame Sybil Leek, a practicing witch, composed a letter to be read at the introduction to the festival. In the hopes that it would help people attend, the *Barb* published part of the occultist's letter. Leek compares the event to ancient religious practices. She writes, "Intoxication is the way to reality. There are three gods whose function is to bring the soul to the realization of its own glory: Dionysus, Aphrodite, and Apollo, or, if you wish, wine, women, and song...The ancients...were well aware of this and made their religious ceremonies orgia, meaning work."<sup>143</sup> The *Freep* printed a full-page advertisement of the *Chauli* festival, a going away festival organized for the *Oracle of Southern California*. The advertisement calls the festival, "The First Great Parade of the Aquarian Age," and explains further "You should come to the great and joyous festival of *Chauli* because you will experience magic, smell the wind and become embraced by energy of the highest order."<sup>144</sup> The festival turned violent as people refused to comply with police forces; 77 people were arrested. The *Freep* printed an article containing the perspective of one of the attendees. It reads, "What Dana feels to be the deputies' worst transgression was their failure to recognize the religious significance which the festival had for the thousands who attended in preference to services

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<sup>142</sup> Robert Hurwitt, "Love-Quake Solstice Foreseen," *The Berkeley Barb*, June 16, 1967, 3.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> "Chauli," *The Berkeley Barb*, April 12, 1968, np.

of a conventional religious kind.”<sup>145</sup> Even politically oriented papers like the *Barb* and the *Freep* advertised and reviewed occult-themed events and festivals, thus adding to their publicity and to the democratization of occultism in American culture.

Underground papers also provided public exposure of occult groups. As with popular festivals, the idea of the Age of Aquarius was a central component of many groups that were active within the counterculture. In San Jose, California, the countercultural community self-identified as the “Aquarian Family.” They organized local countercultural institutions that supported their community by providing drug crisis prevention, the San Jose switchboard, music festivals, and the San Jose Free University. As their name indicates, many of these services promoted metaphysical religious practices, especially the idea that the Aquarian Age was beginning.<sup>146</sup> The *San Jose Red Eye* was a part of the Aquarian Family, and promoted many of their activities and ideas. It was printed with the financial assistance of the Institute for Research and Understanding, a non-profit organization affiliated with the Aquarian Family.

George Santos, president of the San Jose Free University, authored a column for the *Red Eye* titled “God at the Interface.” The column spanned the length of the paper from 1969 to 1972. The column reveals Santos’ expectations for the Age of Aquarius. He writes,

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<sup>145</sup> Jim Osborn, “Hippie Busts,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, April 19, 1969, 1.

<sup>146</sup> Three months before the Aquarian Exposition, the Aquarian Family hosted the “Aquarian Family Festival” on the football field of San Jose State University. Like the Aquarian Exposition, the Aquarian Family Festival featured many prominent rock bands. It was organized in protest to another rock concert occurring at the same time. Among the bands it featured were Quicksilver Messenger Service and the Ace of Cups, bands managed by Ambrose Redmoon. Before the festival, a practicing wiccan exercised demon spirits in order to ensure a safe event.

“The Aquarian Age is happening as fast as each make changes in our own spaces, changes in our habit patterns, changes in the way we use each day.”<sup>147</sup> Other metaphysicals promoted their practices and ideas through the paper as well. Contributor Gloria Ruiz authored a series of articles covering occult topics like astrology, auras, and psychic phenomena.<sup>148</sup> The May 4, 1972 edition of the *Red Eye* contains an extensive introduction to the occult legacy of the Theosophical Society in the form of Ascended Master teachings. It specifically mentions Guy Ballard, Mark Prophet, and the Summit Lighthouse.<sup>149</sup> The article provides a phone number and advertises places where practitioners regularly met, as well as a prayer invoking the language of Ascended Masters’ teachings. The February 10, 1972 issue includes an advertisement for Alice Bailey’s Arcane School.<sup>150</sup> It reads, “Esotericism is a practical way of life. The training given in the school is threefold: occult meditation, study, and service to humanity.”<sup>151</sup> The *Red Eye* publicized the religious practices of historically occult groups like the Summit Lighthouse, and the Arcane School, and it also was an important feature of the countercultural community in San Jose, a community that self-identified as the “Aquarian Family.”

In addition to spreading his ideas about the changes that he believed were occurring, Santos used the *Red Eye* to publicize the Free University. Special issues of the *Red Eye*

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<sup>147</sup> George Santos, “God at the Interface,” *The San Jose Red Eye*, February 25, 1972, 8.

<sup>148</sup> Gloria Ruiz, “Auras,” *The San Jose Red Eye*, April 20, 1972, 8.

<sup>149</sup> Dan Waylor, “Ascended Masters,” *The San Jose Red Eye*, May 4, 1972, 9.

<sup>150</sup> “The Arcane School,” *The San Jose Red Eye*, February 2, 1972, 14.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

contained extensive lists of the Free University's classes, complete with paragraph-long descriptions and information on how to attend. As with many free universities, the San Jose Free University offered classes in practical skills like craftsmanship and on political issues like the war in Vietnam, feminism, and ecology. The introduction to the university and the course listings also reflect heightened interest in occult practices and specifically an expectation of the coming Aquarian Age. Santos explains the purpose of the Free University by invoking his expectations for the Aquarian Age. He writes,

Changing public education is often slow and frustrating...Dissatisfied students, creative teachers and energy people in a community have an effective way to affect education (all social communications) at all levels, so that evolution, personal growth and the Aquarian Age can happen at their own chosen speed. A free university is the effective way to change education and open up the channels of communication in a city.<sup>152</sup>

The classes offered by the Free University also reflect heightened interest in astrology and other occult topics. The same issue lists classes in tarot, psychic phenomena, witchcraft, and astrology. Listed among the classes is a weekly open house where Gavin Arthur “answer[ed] questions and [led] discussions on astrology and related subjects.”<sup>153</sup> The San Jose Free University was created with a vision of the Aquarian Age by a community dedicated to this belief, and through the *Red Eye*, the San Jose Free University advertised its classes. An underground paper was making public occult teachings and practices.

Other underground papers also publicized the activity of occult groups. Don Donahue of the *Barb* attended and published a review of a Satanic wedding hosted at

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<sup>152</sup> George Santos, “Why a Free University,” *San Jose Red Eye*, February 26, 1970, 18.

<sup>153</sup> “Astrology,” *San Jose Red Eye*, February 26, 1970, 32.

founder of the Church of Satan Anton Lavey's home. Donahue describes the details of the ceremony as well as how the event turned into a media circus with many underground reporters and photographers.<sup>154</sup> The *Freep* interviewed Sybil Leek before she was to give a lecture at a Masonic building in Los Angeles. The interview suggests that there were forty "authentic covens" in the United States, and advertises Leek's lecture. The paper reads, "Sybil Leek does not come flying in on a broomstick. Nor does she cast spells or wear a black peaked hat. She is the best-known of some 8,000 (her figure) witches in England today, and the foremost authority lecturing on the Occult world and witchcraft."<sup>155</sup> Underground papers like the *Barb* and the *Freep* provided publicity for occult groups that were looking to grow their numbers, advertise their events, and dispel stereotypes. Occult groups were more visible features of the religious landscape of the counterculture and of America more generally because of underground papers.

Occultists also contributed to the visibility of their practices and teachings by publishing manuals in underground papers. Joey Goldfarb's column "Using Astrology" was printed regularly in the *Avatar* and methodically introduces readers to astrological practices. Each entry is roughly a page-length introduction to one or two planets, the houses, or the signs of the zodiac. In later entries, he describes how astrology works, explaining that the position of planets affects the energy available on the earth.<sup>156</sup> Alan

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<sup>154</sup> Don Donahue, "Satiating Satan," *The Berkeley Barb*, February 3, 1967, 5.

<sup>155</sup> Milton Klamen, "Interview with a Witch," *Los Angeles Free Press*, December 10, 1965, 6.

<sup>156</sup> Joey Goldfarb, "Using Astrology," *Avatar*, April 12, 1968, n.p.

Oken authored a similar manual in his column in the *Rat*.<sup>157</sup> (the *Rat* 18 April, 1969). The *Venice Beachhead* features a full-page article titled “Discovering the Occult” in which Maurice LeCroy explains in detail how to cast a natal chart. Countercultural interest in astrology turned underground papers into mediums through which astrologers provided novices information necessary to begin practicing astrology.

In addition to astrology, practicing occultists also used underground papers to teach other occult practices including witchcraft, tarot reading and palmistry. Self-identified witch and published occult author Kathryn Paulsen authored a column titled “The Witching Well” that ran weekly in the *Freep* for the better part of 1971. In the column, she helps novices recognize whether or not they are witches and provides specific instructions for casting a variety of spells.<sup>158</sup> Also in the *Freep*, astrologer Lady Laura authored the astrology column for more than a year. The column primarily consisted of weekly horoscopes, however Laura began most entries with introductions to a variety of occult practices. Within a two-month span, she introduced readers to numerology, how to read auras, how to care for and read tarot cards, and how to burn candles so that one’s desires can be accomplished.<sup>159</sup> Palm reader Roger Desmond authored a three-part manual on palmistry in the *Red Eye* in which he provides detailed charts and descriptions of the occult meanings attached to the creases in one’s hands.<sup>160</sup> Even though astrology and the idea of

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<sup>157</sup> Alan Oken, “Astrology,” *The Rat*, April 18, 1969, 14.

<sup>158</sup> Kathryn Paulsen, “The Witching Well,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, January 29, 1970, 38.

<sup>159</sup> Lady Laura, “Astrology,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, May 5, 1972, 12; June 23, 1972, 10; June 30, 1972, 6; July 14, 1972, 12.

<sup>160</sup> Roger Desmond, “Palmistry,” *San Jose Red Eye*, December 10, 1970, 5.

the Age of Aquarius were occult ideas of primary importance for the counterculture, practicing occultists used underground papers to publicize a wide range of occult practices and teachings.

In addition to publicizing occult events, groups, and teachings, underground papers also provided readers with resources to learn and practice occultism. Like the free university in San Jose, the “Communiversity” in Austin published its course listings in the *Rag* and featured courses on astrology, and on the “New Age” in particular. In the description of a class called “Divine Principle,” the *Rag* reads, “Topics to be discussed include principles of creation, origin of negative forces, the life after death, unity of religions...directions for the New Age.”<sup>161</sup> Marion Zimmer Bradley used her column in the *EVO* to introduce readers to occult literature. Many times throughout the course of her column Bradley recommends the works of Dion Fortune, especially *Psychic Self-Defense*.<sup>162</sup> The *Rag*, the *EVO*, and the *Red Eye* publicized local occult groups and classes, and provided recommendations of occult literature. Occult resources were increasingly visible because of underground papers.

Occult merchants also added to the visibility of occult resources by advertising in underground papers. “Ram Importers,” an occult-themed store in the East Village in New York, regularly advertised in the *East Village Other*. Their ad features a shirtless, bearded man in meditation, flanked by the words “Books, Occult, Yoga.”<sup>163</sup> Another occult-themed

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<sup>161</sup> “Divine Principle,” *The Rag*, September 18, 1972, 10.

<sup>162</sup> Elfrida Rivers, “Emanations,” *East Village Other*, June 25, 1969, 19.

<sup>163</sup> “Ram Importers,” *East Village Other*, June 9, 1968, 9.

store, Stanley Mitchell, Ltd, boasts in Detroit's *Fifth Estate* that it is "Michigan's largest Occult Supply Store."<sup>164</sup> The Occult Bookstore, a business that had been in operation since 1918 in Chicago, advertised in the *Chicago Seed*. The advertisement offers books on astrology, magic, extra-sensory perception, Kabbalah, palmistry, hypnotism, tarot cards, witchcraft, numerology, and natural healing.<sup>165</sup> Contributing to the availability as well as the visibility of occult resources, Art Kunkin of the *Freep* opened two "Free Press Bookstores" that regularly advertised occult books in the *Freep*. The February 27, 1970 edition advertises *The Prevalence of Witches* by Aubrey Menen, *Witches' Sabbath* by Maurice Sachs, and *Dragons, Elves, and Heroes* edited by Lin Carter.<sup>166</sup> A few months later, the bookstores ran an ad in the *Freep* advertising *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* by A.E. Waite, as well as both large and small tarot decks and an instruction booklet to accompany them.<sup>167</sup> Readers of underground papers could learn not only about occult ideas, events, groups, and practices, but where to go to learn more and where to go to purchase occult materials.

The *San Francisco Oracle* also contributed to the availability of occult resources. The ninth issue of the *Oracle* includes the 22 major arcana cards of the Aquarian Age Tarot deck channeled by John Starr Cooke and Rosalind Sharpe Wall.<sup>168</sup> Readers could cut-out

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<sup>164</sup> "Occult-Witchcraft," *The Fifth Estate*, January 6, 1973, 17.

<sup>165</sup> "The Occult Bookstore," *Chicago Seed*, October 14, 1967, 2.

<sup>166</sup> "Free Press & Kazoo Bookstores," *Los Angeles Free Press*, February 27, 1970, 44.

<sup>167</sup> "Free Press & Kazoo Bookstores," *Los Angeles Free Press*, May 2, 1969, 27.

<sup>168</sup> John Starr Cooke and Rosalind Sharpe Wall, "The World," *Oracle* #9, 7.

the images that Cooke had painted for the deck and read the interpretations provided by Cooke and Wall. Cooke's and Wall's explanation of the deck draws on alchemical symbolism, the maxim, "as above so below," and the prophecies of Madame Blavatsky.<sup>169</sup> Allen Cohen writes of the new deck, "The new symbols were intended to reverse and bring to completion the old meaning of the archetypal symbols in order to manifest a new consciousness for the new age."<sup>170</sup> The deck introduced readers to tarot, but it also provided them the resources necessary to begin reading tarot. As an expression of the idea of the Aquarian Age, the new tarot deck was an innovation in occultism. The images on the cards of the deck were adaptations of the images and symbols of Waite's deck and of other occult traditions like Theosophy and alchemy. The *Oracle* made the innovative resource available to a generation of potential occultists.

### Conclusion

Since European settlers arrived on the East Coast, occult practices like alchemy and astrology have been persistent features of American religion. In the nineteenth century, Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott established the Theosophical Society, which, over the course of the twentieth century, solidified the presence of occult practices through a variety of institutional strategies. Theosophical groups formed secret and public organizations. They published channeled texts and printed periodicals. They created educational institutions and intentional communities. Although largely rejected by Blavatsky, the idea of the Age of Aquarius became embedded in the Theosophical

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Allen Cohen, "The San Francisco Oracle: A Brief History," *San Francisco Oracle, Facsimile Edition: the Psychedelic Newspaper of the Haight-Ashbury, 1966-1968* (Berkeley, CA: Regent, 1991), xlv.

Society's institutional legacy. Levi Dowling, Harvey Spencer Lewis and Alice Bailey promoted the idea in their respective teachings. As countercultural interest in astrology piqued, the idea of the Age of Aquarius became one of the primary means by which participants in the counterculture expressed utopian ambition. Because so many in the counterculture expressed themselves this way, the "Age of Aquarius" became a rhetorical device used by outsiders to label the countercultural movement. The idea was no longer confined to the marginalia of occult literature and groups. It was an increasingly pronounced feature of the counterculture specifically and by extension, American culture more generally. On a cultural level, participants in the counterculture democratized the idea of the Age of Aquarius.

Underground papers contributed to this democratization, and to the democratization of other occult practices as well, by facilitating public discourse on occult topics and by increasing the visibility of occult events, groups, teachings, and resources. Because Underground papers were often unaffiliated with occult groups or teachings, they facilitated innovative forms of occult public discourse. They published diverse, and sometimes contradictory, perspectives (sometimes within the same issue). Because of their democratic ethos, they expanded the pool of occult authors to people who were otherwise unpublished, and they provided religious leaders interested in occultism with potential audiences. Through underground papers, countercultural occultists debated and defined the meaning of the Age of Aquarius and contributed to the diversity and number of occult voices.

Additionally, many occultists used underground papers to advertise occult-themed events and resources, to document the activities of local occult groups, and to provide instructions for occult practices. Because of underground papers, occult discourse and practices were more prevalent and visible features of American culture. Just as the flood of Christian periodicals in Antebellum America contributed, in a cultural sense, to the democratization of Christianity and to the Christianization of America, the rise of underground papers contributed to the occult revival of the late 1960s. By facilitating public discourse on occult topics as well as the visibility and availability of occult practices, underground papers democratized American occultism, especially the idea that they would soon experience the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.

## CHAPTER 6 – THE HIPPING OF NATIVE AMERICAN AND ASIAN TRADITIONS

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, underground newspapers helped make Native American and Asian traditions hip. At the same time that they introduced readers to Native American and Asian practices, ideas, leaders, groups, and events, they also represented these traditions through the prism of countercultural values and interests, often emphasizing the ways that these traditions could facilitate sexual liberation, consciousness expansion, and social revolution. As advertisers, filmmakers, and television producers increasingly looked to the counterculture to define what was hip, these traditions were transformed in the eyes of many Americans from objects of suspicion and hostility to valuable and recognizable cultural expressions associated with youthfulness and religious individualism. Being labelled hip in the late 1960s helped define the trajectory of Native American and Asian cultures in the United States, especially by piquing the interests of white, middle and upper class Americans. Underground papers were central to the counterculture's engagement with Native American and Asian traditions, but also to the increasingly common perception that these traditions were hip.

### Hip / Square

The feature article of the March 1970 edition of GQ magazine was an exposition by Jason McCloskey on the so-called "Peacock Revolution" of men's fashion. Titled "Aquarius Rising," McCloskey marked 1968 the seminal year in which men's fashion transformed from grey flannel suits into "the undeniable look of funky cats and frontier princes."<sup>1</sup> The transformation, he claimed, originated from a new consciousness introduced

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<sup>1</sup> Jason McCloskey, "Aquarius Rising," *Gentleman's Quarterly*, March 1970, 107.

by the youth of America. According to historian Thomas Frank, this transformation in men's fashion reflected a larger development in which "[young people] had become the decade's arbiters of taste, and advertising could target adults through appeals to their children."<sup>2</sup> Frank describes a peak moment in 1968 "when youth and counterculture became the paramount symbols of this new sensibility in ads, hip became virtually hegemonic, almost extinguishing the older, square style altogether."<sup>3</sup> According to Frank, "[the countercultural hip] celebrated the mystical carnivalesque properties of creativity," and "actually embraced the critique of mass society...the glorious chaos of hip."<sup>4</sup> Being hip came to symbolize opposition to the "older, square style" of grey flannel suits and also what many perceived to be the middle-class conformity of the 1950s, not only in fashion, but in entertainment, music and food. According to Frank, this stylistic revolution has remained an important feature of American advertising and consumer interests ever since.

According to Mark Oppenheimer, practitioners of mainline religious traditions also began taking cues from the counterculture in 1968. He writes,

sometime between the Summer of Love in 1967 and the Woodstock festival in 1969...even the conservatives began to dress down, talk more informally, and listen to different music. Those changes made it apparent that there was a counterculture afoot, bound to influence even the most staid religious denominations. And by the mid-1970s, the counterculture had become the culture.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 109.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Oppenheimer, *Knocking on Heaven's Door* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 6.

According to Oppenheimer, the most dramatic change introduced by the counterculture on mainline religious practitioners (specifically Unitarians, Roman Catholics, Jews, Episcopalians and Southern Baptists) was aesthetic. He writes,

what was countercultural in the mainline religions was often aesthetic...What changed was the form, not the content, of the religious traditions. Different music, clothing, and décor became permissible...for both the supporters and critics of such changes, the most important fact was how different the worship service now *looked* or *felt*, rather than any new ideas being taught.<sup>6</sup>

Like Frank with regard to advertising, Oppenheimer identifies a dramatic shift in the style of mainline religious practices. In accordance with the general shift of looking to the counterculture to define American taste, practitioners of these “most staid religious traditions” adopted countercultural styles in efforts influenced by and in order to appeal to youth culture, in effect, to be more hip. As Oppenheimer describes it, the “uptight establishmentarians were proving their hipness, looking for chances to take a walk on the wild side.”<sup>7</sup>

Whether, as Abe Peck and Todd Gitlin have argued, the transformation that occurred in 1968 was the result of capitalistic entrepreneurs taking advantage of the youth market, or as Frank argues, was the result of parallel developments in the history of marketing dating to the late 1950s and early 1960s, by 1968, Americans had already labelled participants in the American counterculture “hippies,” locating them in a historical trajectory of other groups labelled “hipsters”: jazz musicians of the 1920s, artistic and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 13.

bohemian enclaves in Greenwich Village, and the counterculture's most immediate ancestors, the Beat Generation. Media attention on the hippies heightened in the Bay Area in the summer of 1967, known then and now as the Summer of Love. Resisting the attention, Haight-Ashbury residents performed a public funerary procession proclaiming "The Death of the Hippie: Son of Mass Media." Perhaps the result of the increased attention, in 1968 many Americans wanted to be, at least aesthetically, hip. To be hip was to be associated with youth and opposed to the old "square style" of mass consumerism and of the staid religious aesthetics of mainline denominations. In addition to its effects on business and mainline religion, the increased desire to be hip had dramatic effects on the historical trajectories of Native American and Asian traditions in the United States, and ultimately around the world.

#### Native American and Asian Traditions Before the Late 1960s

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the majority of white Americans viewed Native Americans and Asians with hostility. This hostility was expressed legally in the forms of forced relocation and prohibited immigration, and it was expressed religiously through prejudice and assimilationist attitudes.

Many US laws in the first half of the twentieth century reflected the belief that Native Americans were to be assimilated into white culture. When Congress established the state of Oklahoma in 1907, the neighboring Indian Territory was subsumed by the Federal government, and whites began moving onto land formerly reserved for Native Americans. Native Americans would either move or be forced to assimilate to white culture, abiding by all the laws and regulations of federal, state, and local governments.

Similarly reflective of assimilationist perspectives, the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 was intended to combat rampant poverty on reservations by integrating Native Americans into urban life in the United States. Lured to urban areas with financial and professional incentives, thousands of Native Americans relocated to large cities all over America, abandoning reservation communities and thinning historical and cultural ties to their ancestors. Even when acting with compassion, as with the Relocation Act which was intended to help Native Americans, assimilationist approaches characterized the United States' legal relationships with Native Americans and resulted in undesirable cultural effects.

Assimilationist attitudes truncated the presence of Native American traditions in the United States. After a century of policies intending to erase Native American culture, by the first half of the twentieth century, anthropologists were looking to preserve Native American traditions under the belief that their practices were either dying or already dead. John Neihardt published *Black Elk Speaks* (1932), a biography of a well-traveled medicine man. By including Black Elk's descriptions of Lakota myths and rituals, Neihardt believed that he was documenting a "way of life that had vanished forever."<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Black Elk believed that his work with Neihardt was not to eulogize Lakota traditions, but to preserve them for future generations.<sup>9</sup> Neihardt's intentions reflect a certain degree of sympathy, but also reflect the prejudiced attitude that Native American practices were no longer relevant. Despite reflecting pervasive prejudice toward Native American traditions, *Black*

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<sup>8</sup> Amanda Porterfield, "Black Elk's Significance in American Culture," in *The Black Elk Reader*, ed. Clyde Holler (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 40.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

*Elk Speaks* never sold well until after 1970.<sup>10</sup> The poor sales were likely reflective of widespread hostility and disregard toward Native American traditions.

Inspired partly by John Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* (1932), Joseph Epes Brown sought out Black Elk in order to help him catalogue Native American practices and beliefs, but with the added intention of presenting them alongside, and in comparison with, Christianity.<sup>11</sup> Brown shared Neihardt's belief that Lakota traditions were worth preserving in the face of annihilation, and considering the climate of the time period, did them the honor of comparing them with Christianity, but doing this also compromised the uniqueness of Lakota traditions. Even authors like Brown who remained sympathetic to Native American traditions often engaged Native American spirituality with prejudice, either believing it to be of a bygone era or merely one brand of a universal religion.

American films of the first half of the twentieth century like *The Vanishing American* (1925), *Redskin* (1929), and the vast majority of Westerns directed by John Ford also reveal racist opinions that white Americans were culturally superior. Whether Native American traditions were dead, dying or inferior, before the late 1960s, few Americans showed any interest in Native American traditions, and when they did, it was most often with condescension and prejudice. Few believed that Native American traditions were hip.

Whereas racist attitudes toward Native Americans resulted in forced relocation and assimilationist spiritual expressions, racist attitudes against both South and East Asians resulted in the prohibition of immigration and widespread suspicion of Hinduism and

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<sup>10</sup> Suzanne Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 41.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Buddhism. The Federal Government prohibited Chinese immigrants from migrating to the United States in 1882 with passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. They added prohibitive legislation against all Asians in 1924 by passing The Immigration Act of 1924 which prohibited immigration by anybody who could not become a naturalized citizen, effectively anyone not white. As defined by the US Supreme Court, this meant all South and East Asians. For the first half of the twentieth century, relatively small religious communities, as well as a few translators and white converts, preserved Hindu and Buddhist practices in the United States.

Disciple of Hindu revivalist Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda was one of the first Indians to introduce a lasting form of Hinduism to the United States. In 1893, scholars, Theosophists, and upper class Americans responded warmly to his introduction to Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religion and subsequent lectures around the United States.<sup>12</sup> In 1894, Vivekananda established the Vedanta Society in New York, a Hindu organization that emphasized philosophical discussion and mystical experiences. Despite the approval and interest of spiritual seekers and comparative religionists at the turn of the twentieth century, many other Americans viewed Vivekananda's presence with hostility. According to historian Carl T. Jackson, "Articles regularly appeared in the popular press that portrayed Hinduism as synonymous with the horrors of the caste system, child-marriage, and widow burning."<sup>13</sup> Vivekananda combatted these portrayals by making

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<sup>12</sup> Carl T. Jackson, *Vedanta for the West* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

comparisons between his teachings and other traditions with which Americans would have been more familiar, various forms of Christianity and metaphysical religions. According to scholar of religion Andrea R. Jain, Vivekenanda “syncretized ideas and practices from Christian Protestantism, modern science, yoga and other South Asian traditions, and Mind Cure.”<sup>14</sup> Albanese shows Vivekenanda comparing the practice of *raja yoga* with Christian Science.<sup>15</sup> At the same time that these adaptive efforts placed the Vedanta Society within the purview of American metaphysical traditions, the Vedanta Society remained the subject of “subdued hostility” until the 1960s.<sup>16</sup>

Other Hindu-inspired movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were also subjected to hostility. Popular tantric guru Pierre Bernard became the subject of controversy over concerns that his practices consisted of illegal sexual activity. Bernard suffered through three and a half months in a notoriously bad prison and was accused of keeping human slaves. According to Jain, Bernard was not dissimilar from other “nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Indian yogis” who “were also subject to serious and persistent criticisms for their interest in and practice of yoga.”<sup>17</sup> Scholar of religion Hugh Urban writes, “Tantra represented, for both Indian and European authors, mysticism

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<sup>14</sup> Andrea R. Jain, *Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 28.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 354. Vivekananda was also interested spiritualism. See Elisabeth De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism* (London: Continuum, 2004), 94; Joseph Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body Between science and Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 27;

<sup>16</sup> Jain, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

in its most degenerate form: a kind of mysticism that had been corrupted with sensual desire and this-worldly power.”<sup>18</sup> A white convert and popularizer of tantric yoga, Bernard’s practices proved outside the norms of acceptable taste of many Americans.

Despite a surge of interest in Buddhism in the late nineteenth century, Buddhists in the United States were also subjected to prejudice and hostility for most of the first half of the twentieth century. As with Native Americans and other Asians, this hostility was partially race-based. Tweed writes of twelve Japanese Pureland temples established in the United States by 1906, stating that “[t]hese Japanese Buddhists were viewed as alien and treated with hostility because of both their race and religion.”<sup>19</sup> These groups felt pressures to assimilate. According to Tweed, by 1913 these Buddhist groups were emulating Protestants by hosting “Sunday Schools,” by 1920 they were “singing ‘Onward Buddhist Soldiers’ at English-language services,” and in 1944, they officially changed the group’s name to “Buddhist Churches of America.”<sup>20</sup> As with Hinduism and yoga, The Immigration Act of 1924 prohibited Asian Buddhists from immigrating to the United States, and restricted Buddhism’s presence in the United States to these relatively small groups inclined toward assimilation and to white converts and sympathizers. With relatively few sympathetic converts and popularizers, Asian Buddhists were subjected to racial and religious hostilities. Believing that Native American and Asian traditions were unwelcome

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<sup>18</sup> Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912: Victorian Culture & The Limits of Dissent* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 36.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

cultural intrusions, the majority of Americans before the late 1960s believed that these traditions were best assimilated into white culture or opposed altogether, certainly not hip.

Although Asian Buddhists before the late 1960s were subjected to racist policies and attitudes, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Zen Buddhism attracted the attention of a small number of influential, predominantly white artists, philosophers and authors. Before this time, Zen Buddhism remained largely unknown to the majority of Americans. Author Winthrop Sargeant writes that before the 1950s, Zen was “a subject of considerable mystery to the relatively few people in [the United States] who ha[d] heard of it at all.”<sup>21</sup> However, by 1959 Alan Watts writes of an “extraordinary growth of Western interest in Zen.”<sup>22</sup> This period of heightened interest in Zen Buddhism and the proliferation of its influences on American art, music, philosophy and psychology in the late 1950s and early 1960s has become known as the “Zen Boom.”<sup>23</sup>

The work of translator and philosopher D.T. Suzuki was among the explanations provided by Watts for the Zen Boom.<sup>24</sup> Suzuki was a prolific writer who authored numerous texts that introduced English-speaking readers to Zen, Mahayana Buddhism, and Japanese culture. He arrived in the United States for the third time in the early 1950s.<sup>25</sup> As Suzuki wrote and published, he introduced Americans to a particular brand of Zen that

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<sup>21</sup> Winthrop Sargeant, “Profiles: Great Simplicity; Dr. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki,” *New Yorker*, August 31, 1957, 34, quoted in Jane Iwamura, *Virtual Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23.

<sup>22</sup> Alan Watts, “Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen,” *Chicago Review*, Spring 1958, 49.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Hughes Seager, *Buddhism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 113.

<sup>24</sup> Watts, 49.

<sup>25</sup> Iwamura, 23.

emphasized the non-rational and experiential nature of *satori*, comparable to popular existentialist philosophies of the time, and from which, according to Suzuki, “psychologists could learn a lot.”<sup>26</sup> For six years, Suzuki spoke at Columbia University where his lectures were well-attended. Suzuki’s notoriety grew as both he and his work were featured in popular magazines like *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Newsweek*, the *New Yorker*, the *Saturday Review*, and *Time*.<sup>27</sup>

Despite an increasing cultural presence, scholar of religion Jane Iwamura has shown through analysis of an article in *Mademoiselle* magazine that many who were interested in D.T. Suzuki’s brand of Zen remained relatively ignorant of the tradition. Iwamura writes,

Nancy Wilson Ross recounts her conversation with a Zen enthusiast...When asked to explain what Zen really was, this New York woman began: ‘Zen is a kind of Japanese philosophy, vaguely Buddhist in origin.’ She goes on to cite noteworthy individuals who have been influenced by Zen: J.D. Salinger, John Cage, Dizzy Gillespie, Erich Fromm, painters Morris Graves and Mark Tobey.<sup>28</sup>

From this conversation, Iwamura demonstrates that even though there was widespread coverage of Zen in the late 1950s, its influence had been limited primarily to the “realm of artistic culture.”<sup>29</sup> The Zen Boom was not so much a widespread popularization of Zen as it was an aesthetic influence on popular art forms.

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<sup>26</sup> Seager, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Iwamura, 26.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 35.

The Beat Generation of authors were among the artists attracted to Suzuki's lectures.<sup>30</sup> Beat interest in Zen reflected a wider cultural trend that, according to Frank, was beginning to express itself in advertising in the late 1950s and early 1960s: a desire to break free of what were perceived to be the stifling impositions of conformity to mass society. This impulse is reflected especially well in Kerouac's approach to Zen. Historian Richard Seager writes that Kerouac primarily "saw Buddhism as a vehicle to protest conformity."<sup>31</sup> Watts also associates Beat Zen with an impulse opposed to conformity and at the same time differentiates Beat Zen from the "hipster life of New York and San Francisco."<sup>32</sup> Watts writes, "The 'beat' mentality as I am thinking of it is something much more extensive than the hipster life of New York and San Francisco. It is a younger generation's nonparticipation in 'the American Way of Life.'"<sup>33</sup> Although Watts distinguishes hipsters from Beats, that he felt the need to do so was evidence that Beat interest in Zen had created the perception that Zen was hip. Writing of Zen's hipness, *Time* magazine proclaimed that Zen was "growing more chic by the minute."<sup>34</sup>

Despite the Zen Boom and the increasingly popular association of Zen Buddhism with the hipster life, Zen remained confined primarily to cultural expression. The majority of Americans remained largely ignorant of Zen, and in some cases hostile to it because of

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<sup>30</sup> Seager, 40.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>32</sup> Watts, 52.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Seager, 46.

its association with Beat artists. Seager writes, “Prior to and through the 1950s, the dharma had remained more or less confined to bohemian quarters and was the preoccupation of a small handful of spiritual seekers.”<sup>35</sup> In 1958, Herb Cain of the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote derogatively of the Beat Generation. Fusing the label “Beat” with the Russian suffix “nik,” Cain intentionally associated Beats with Soviet communism. The term “Beatnik” became the label for a stereotyped image of a violent artist lacking morals. An advertisement, “run by the Hat Corporation of America in *Life* magazine in 1961, featured a large photograph of a beatnik in a characteristically insouciant slouch, under the headline, ‘There are some men a hat won’t help.’”<sup>36</sup> Frank writes that Beatniks were “figures of consumer horror rather than ideals for consumer emulation.”<sup>37</sup> Zen may have been hip in the late 1950s, but for the majority of Americans, being hip was not yet desirable.

In the early 1960s, yoga was hardly as hip as Zen, but some Americans were beginning to perceive it in new ways. Emphasizing *hatha yoga*’s health benefits, Richard Hittleman hosted and produced a television show titled *Yoga for Health* in 1961.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the teachings of Vivekananda that emphasized religious insights, and also unlike the bodily pleasures offered by Bernard’s tantra, for Hittleman, *hatha yoga* was beneficial as a form of exercise. It was capable of improving the health and flexibility of whoever followed along as they watched the program. By 1963, yoga as a form of exercise was widespread

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>36</sup> Frank, 209.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Jain, 42.

enough that it was the primary subject of an ad for 7-Up Cola published in *Life* magazine. One of the yogis in the ad appears to be performing a leaning tree pose that resembles ballet as much as yoga, and the instructor, dressed in khakis and a blouse, carries a text from which she presumably teaches. This now comical image suggests that even if yoga was gaining popularity before the late 1960s, it was distinct from the romanticized vision of yoga popularized by the 1960s counterculture. As the television program and advertisement suggest, yoga may have been more popular in the early 1960s than in previous decades, but it was also not yet hip.

Despite widespread hostility, the majority of Native American and Asian traditions persisted through the first half of the twentieth century, and in some forms began to flourish. Although most Americans operated under the assumption that Native Americans, Asians, and their spiritual and cultural traditions ought to have been assimilated to white culture, health-oriented *hatha yoga* and Zen Buddhism were exceptional cases in which attitudes toward these traditions began changing before the cultural and aesthetic shift of the late 1960s. Although attitudes were changing toward both traditions, in the case of Zen, being associated with the hip youth culture came with its own stigmas, and in the case of yoga, the youth-centered counterculture had not yet developed interest. As popular as these traditions might have been, or were becoming, they, as with other Asian practices and Native American traditions, were about to endure dramatic changes. The counterculture was about to make Native American and Asian traditions hip in ways that they had never been before and with lasting effects.

## Underground Engagement with Native American and Asian Traditions

In the fall semester of 1970, a group of scholars and graduate students at UC Berkeley and the Graduate Theological Union began bi-weekly meetings to discuss the religious changes that had been initiated by the counterculture.<sup>39</sup> Although they perceived countercultural participation to be waning, these scholars wondered if the religious changes initiated by the counterculture were “epiphenomenal,” having only temporary effects, or if the changes were of “more profound” significance.<sup>40</sup> Led by senior scholars Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah, the group set out to determine if a “major cultural transformation was under way.”<sup>41</sup>

The group of scholars took as their subjects “movements whose inspiration [came] from Eastern philosophies, movements that ha[d] their roots in Western religious traditions, as well as movements whose origins [were] essentially old American.”<sup>42</sup> Emphasizing the counterculture’s engagement with various forms of Buddhism and Hinduism, the first section of their volume includes studies on “New Religious Movements in the Asian Tradition.” Glock and Bellah write, “One of the most striking characteristics of the counterculture and of the movements growing out of it is the influence of Asian

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<sup>39</sup> Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah eds., *The New Religious Consciousness* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), xii.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

religions.”<sup>43</sup> They add, “Perhaps never before have themes from Asian religion penetrated mass culture as they did in the psychedelic explosion of the late 1960s.”<sup>44</sup>

Since Glock and Bellah’s study group, more scholars have acknowledged the importance of countercultural engagement with Asian traditions. Richard Seager writes, “‘The Sixties,’ a phrase that generally refers to a period from about 1963 to the mid-‘70s, are likely to be looked back upon for some time as the most important turning point in American Buddhist history.”<sup>45</sup> Distinguishing the late 1960s from the Zen Boom of a decade earlier, Seager adds that “convert Buddhism in this country grew from a small community of seekers preoccupied primarily with Zen to a far larger and more differentiated community.”<sup>46</sup>

As with Buddhism, recent scholarship of Hindu-inspired movements in the United States also acknowledges the significance of countercultural interest. Scholar of religion Lola Williamson suggests that countercultural interest in consciousness expansion contributed to the popularity of Hindu-inspired meditation movements in the 1970s.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Jain identifies the late 1960s as seminal for the proliferation of yoga. She writes, “It was not until the late 1960s that [yoga] no longer opposed the prevailing cultural norms of Americans and Western Europeans and became readily available to the masses in urban

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 1. On countercultural interest in Asian religions see also: Harvey Cox, *Turning East: The Promise and Peril of the New Orientalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977);

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>45</sup> Seager, 43.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>47</sup> Lola Williamson, *Transcendent in America: Hindu-Inspired Meditation Movements as New Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 45.

areas across the world.”<sup>48</sup> According to scholars active at the time, as well as those who have come later, the late 1960s were a transformative period for many Hindu-inspired movements as well as many forms of Buddhist practice.

At the same time that participants in the counterculture engaged a variety of Asian and Asian-inspired traditions to an unprecedented extent, they also engaged Native American traditions with dramatically different attitudes than the prejudiced, assimilationist attitudes prominent in the first half of the twentieth century. Although unable to include them in the study, Glock and Bellah lament not being able to examine Native American groups. They write that “there has been a great interest particularly in native American religion.”<sup>49</sup> With regard to the majority of Americans’ attitudes toward Native Americans, historian Sherry L. Smith calls the late 1960s “a transformational period” in which Americans came to learn that they “need Indians” and that they “should back that rhetoric with action.”<sup>50</sup> She attributes these changing attitudes primarily to countercultural engagement.<sup>51</sup>

Although countercultural attitudes toward Native Americans initiated less blatantly prejudiced attitudes than the assimilationists of the first half of the twentieth century, engagement with Native American traditions was often problematic in other ways. Describing the countercultural tendency to identify with Native American traditions,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>49</sup> Glock and Bellah, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 7.

historian Philip J. Deloria writes, “[C]ountercultural rebels became Indian to move their identities away from Americanness altogether, to leap outside national boundaries, gesture at repudiating the nation, and offer what seemed a clear-eyed political critique.”<sup>52</sup> Although often sympathetic, many participants in the counterculture adapted and emulated Native American practices for their own purposes, often by perpetuating romanticized and racist stereotypes and cultural ignorance. Nevertheless, as Glock, Bellah, and the group of scholars speculated in the fall of 1971, countercultural engagement with both Asian and Native American traditions has had lasting effects on their presence in the United States. Underground papers facilitated much of this engagement.

Participants in the counterculture engaged Native American and Asian traditions in a variety of ways. Some came to self-identify as Buddhists, Hindus, or even as reborn Native Americans. Many practiced meditation, participated in religious ceremonies and benefits, dedicated themselves to Asian gurus, and attended peyote ceremonies of the Native American Church. Many also created their own Buddhist, Hindu and Native American-inspired religious communities. Countercultural bookstores sold books about these cultures and traditions. Head shops sold items with Hindu, Buddhist and Native American iconography. Attending a countercultural festival or event, one would have heard people chanting mantras and seen others dressed as Native Americans. Countercultural engagement with Asian and Native American traditions was widespread and variegated, however underground papers added both to the amount of countercultural engagement and

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<sup>52</sup> Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 161.

also to the variety of ways by which participants in the counterculture engaged Native American and Asian traditions.

Underground papers facilitated engagement with these traditions by selling ad space to local groups and businesses, by publishing columns that advertised and covered local events, by featuring interviews with Asian and Native American religious leaders, and by publishing manuals for readers to begin to practice various traditions themselves. By advertising for local groups and events and publishing columns, underground papers added to the number of participants in many Asian- and Native American-inspired groups and events. By featuring interviews with religious leaders and by publishing manuals, underground papers were a means for countercultural readers to engage these traditions first hand. Underground papers added to the extent to which participants in the counterculture engaged these traditions, and also to the forms that countercultural engagement could take.

### Advertising

Because many underground papers were central to the countercultural communities in which they were embedded, they proved a valuable resource for Asian- and Asian-inspired groups to engage countercultural readers. Many of these groups advertised their events and services in underground papers. The “Cauldron,” a macrobiotic restaurant, regularly placed ads in the *EVO*.<sup>53</sup> Their ads communicated their Chinese influences by featuring I-Ching hexagrams as well as the yin-yang symbol. Countercultural readers

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<sup>53</sup> *East Village Other*, April 16, 1969, np.

interested in macrobiotic cooking could open the *EVO* and soon find a restaurant to sample the diet and to learn more about it.

In late 1967, the San Francisco Zen Center was raising funds to build a nearby monastery. They published an ad in the *San Francisco Oracle* advertising a “Zenefit” in which popular bands like Big Brother and the Holding Company and Quicksilver Messenger Service were to perform.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, hoping to establish “Yoga Farm,” a “vacation retreat farm where all are welcome to participate and learn the science of Yoga,” the Vishnu Devananda Yoga Center announced their need for funding in the *Barb*.<sup>55</sup> The group suggests a donation of \$20 and offers a free weekend visit to anyone who donates.

The *Freep* advertised a two-day festival in which legislators, university faculty and yogis discussed ways of “cultivating and applying the new consciousness” in education.<sup>56</sup> The festival included “addresses, panel discussion, participation groups, displays, multimedia presentations, and a new consciousness ‘celebration,’” and was promoted with the images of well-known gurus Swami Satchidananda and Yogi Bhaijan.<sup>57</sup> The review of the festival in the *Freep* depicted a person performing an asana in the middle of the Los Angeles Convention Center.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> “Zenefit,” *Oracle* #3, 8.

<sup>55</sup> “Yoga Farm,” *Berkeley Barb*, May 28, 1971, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Art Kunkin, “Cultivating and Applying the New Consciousness,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, January 21, 1972, 5.

<sup>57</sup> “Two Day Festival: Cultivating and Applying the New Consciousness,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, January 7, 1972, cover.

<sup>58</sup> Kunkin, 5.

Asian groups and groups practicing Asian-inspired traditions reached out to countercultural communities by publishing advertisements in underground papers. Many of the participants in these groups were likely readers of underground papers, and so it is not as though advertisements are bridges linking two totally distinct groups of people. Nevertheless, there must have been enough readers and interest that practitioners of Asian and Asian-inspired traditions viewed underground papers as a means to draw attention to their businesses, groups and events.

#### Dedicated Columns

In June 1971, Allen Ginsberg returned to Berkeley to record his poetry. While there, he performed at a benefit for the Tibetan Nyingmapa Meditation Center that had recently been left without a building. An ad in the *Barb* announced the benefit alongside a multi-page interview with Ginsberg conducted by Frank Tedesco.<sup>59</sup> A week later, Frank Tedesco began the column “Open Mind” at Ginsberg’s suggestion. Tedesco intended for the column to introduce readers to local religious groups and events. He writes, “Important events of spiritual impact will be reported – festivals, gatherings, darshans, healings.”<sup>60</sup> Through the column, Tedesco advertised many groups and events that were inspired by Asian traditions. The first entry includes a review of Ginsberg’s poetry reading for the Tibetan center, announces the “Rathayatra Festival” to be hosted by ISKCON, and a “Yoga of Joy”

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<sup>59</sup> Frank Tedesco, “If You See Anything Horrible, Don’t Cling To It,” *Berkeley Barb*, June 4, 1971, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Frank Tedesco, “Open Mind,” *Berkeley Barb*, June 11, 1971, 4.

ceremony to be attended by Yogi Bhañan and Ginsberg.<sup>61</sup> Through the weekly column, the *Barb* dedicated regular space to groups practicing Asian-inspired traditions.

The *Free Press* dedicated a column to yoga specifically. Grethe Saaren's column "What is Yoga?" introduced readers to yoga groups and events local to Los Angeles.<sup>62</sup> The first entry acknowledges the rapid growth of yoga and announces Saaren's intention to help readers understand more about yoga generally as well as where to go to practice in Los Angeles. Saaren writes that "Yoga is a four letter word that is sweeping the country."<sup>63</sup> She calls yoga a "philosophy, a way of life, the road to spiritual regeneration, a method of rejuvenation, a scientific approach to achieving a calm mind in a body, vibrant and healthy, functioning at maximum potential."<sup>64</sup> Through the column, Saaren intended to introduce readers to local yoga groups, to well-known yoga books, and to local leaders. Saaren claims that her column would "bring you everything you've always wanted to know about Yoga and couldn't find the right person to ask."<sup>65</sup> The column ran regularly for at least three months. Through the column, Saaren introduced readers to the Ananda Marga Yoga Society, Satchidananda's Integral Yoga Society, and the diet of Swami Sivananda. In the same way that Frank Tedesco's "Open Mind" facilitated countercultural engagement with local Buddhist and Hindu groups and events, Saaren's "What is Yoga?" facilitated

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Grethe Saaren, "What is Yoga?" *Los Angeles Free Press*, June 16, 1972, 10.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

countercultural engagement with local yoga groups. For the *Barb* and the *Freep*, dedicated column space proved a useful means of engaging local religious groups and events, especially those inspired by Asian religious traditions.

### Interviews

Underground papers also facilitated countercultural engagement with Asian and Native American traditions by featuring interviews with religious and cultural leaders. As with advertisements and dedicated columns, these interviews provided the space for leaders to introduce their ideas and practices to new readers and also provided religious and cultural leaders opportunities to comment on contemporary social and political events. Through interviews with popular Asian and Native American religious leaders, underground papers added to the exposure of Asian and Native American traditions, and provided the means for these groups to express themselves. In doing so they offered readers a more direct encounter with these traditions and ideas than was otherwise available.

Soon after leading the opening invocation at Woodstock, Satchidananda arrived in Los Angeles for a vegetarian banquet to be hosted at the Philosophical Research Society Auditorium. The banquet was a benefit for the Integral Yoga Institute which promoted Satchidananda's teachings and which venerated him as guru. When Satchidananda arrived in Los Angeles, he gave an interview to Edgar Jones of the *Freep*.<sup>66</sup> Jones asked Satchidananda not only about his religious beliefs, but also for proscriptions for family life and for insight into the war. Jones writes, "In this age of conflict the discussion of war and

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<sup>66</sup> Edgar Jones, "Interview with Swami Satchidananda," *Los Angeles Free Press*, January 16, 1970, 35.

peace comes up quite often...Do you have a few words to say on both?"<sup>67</sup> Satchidananda replies that selfishness is the root cause of war and that if people could behave selflessly, then war would cease. The interview provided Satchidananda the opportunity to advertise for the Integral Yoga Institute's benefit, and also to offer his spiritually-inspired take on a contemporary political issue, the war in Vietnam.

The *San Francisco Oracle* dedicated its eighth issue to the topic of "the American Indian Tradition."<sup>68</sup> The issue features an article by prominent Ojibwe medicine man Sun Bear. In the article, Sun Bear introduces readers to Native American traditions like sweat baths as well as the value of living in harmony with nature.<sup>69</sup> Sun Bear instructs readers to "be not like the tourist, but bury your cans and other rubbish, so that the Earth will remain clean to the eye of its keepers...Learn to walk upon the land. Learn a sense of balance and blending with the land. Do not try to conquer it."<sup>70</sup> Sun Bear took his article in the *Oracle* as an opportunity to comment on ecological sensitivity.

The *Oracle* and the *Freep* offered Asian and Native American religious leaders the space to engage countercultural readers. Both Satchidananda and Sun Bear used the underground papers to spread their teachings and practices and also to speak to contemporary issues. In dedicating print space to these leaders, the papers facilitated

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Allen Cohen, "The San Francisco Oracle: A Brief History," *San Francisco Oracle, Facsimile Edition: The Psychedelic Newspaper of the Haight-Ashbury, 1966-1968* (Berkeley, CA: Regent, 1991), xl.

<sup>69</sup> Sun Bear, "Sun Bear Speaks," *Oracle* #8, 10.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 25.

countercultural engagement not only by adding to the numbers of participants at local groups and gatherings, but by giving leaders space to express themselves directly.

### Manuals

Finally, underground papers also facilitated countercultural engagement with Asian traditions by publishing manuals for readers to practice Asian-inspired traditions on their own. Because yoga and macrobiotic cooking were widespread, popular underground papers offered readers practical information, instructions for particular asanas and yogic practices, and macrobiotic recipe columns. Other underground papers also offered practical instruction in Tibetan Buddhism, casting the I-Ching, and introductory Taoism. For readers who took these articles and columns to heart, underground papers were direct sources of spiritual information.

The *Freep* offers yoga instruction in Saaren's "What is Yoga?" column. Saaren instructs readers on the importance of proper breathing when practicing yoga. She writes, "Too many Americans are shallow mouth breathers, using only part of their lung capacity. Yogic breathing is nasal breathing, keeping the mouth closed and inhaling through the nose."<sup>71</sup> Saaren then instructs the reader to "[s]tand erect, spine, neck and head aligned. Inhale through the nose smoothly and quietly. Keep your mouth closed and feel the diaphragm expand...This is the simplest form of YOGA breathing."<sup>72</sup> For readers interested in experimenting with yoga, the 28 July, 1972 edition of the *Freep* provided instructions to begin breathing exercises on their own.

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<sup>71</sup> Grethe Saaren, "What is Yoga?" *Los Angeles Free Press*, July 28, 1972, 6.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

The *San Jose Red Eye* also offered readers instructions in an Asian-inspired practice. The 18 March, 1971 edition includes a multi-page feature on macrobiotic cooking. Inspired by Zen Buddhism, macrobiotic cooking is a philosophy that categorizes foods into two groups: yin and yang. Dieters are encouraged to make sure that they are eating a balanced diet of both yin and yang foods, according to their needs. The *Red Eye* includes a full page interview with a macrobiotic dietitian as well as an accompanying page offering the macrobiotic categorization of a variety of foods. Anyone who kept the paper would have an index of whether many basic foods were categorized as yin or yang. The article begins below the image of a Chinese character and a yin-yang symbol. It reads, “This is a discussion covering some of the basic questions that arise concerning Macrobiotics when people first begin to take an interest. The person answering the questions has been practicing the principles of Macrobiotics with increasing understanding of the Order of the Universe for the past two years.”<sup>73</sup> The author promotes macrobiotic cooking not only on the basis of health, but with the understanding that it will facilitate cosmological understanding. As with Saaren’s instructions on yogic breathing, this article provided the possibility for countercultural engagement with macrobiotic cooking without demanding that the reader ever encounter religious groups, events or leaders.

Glock and Bellah’s research group, Seager, Jain, Williamson, Deloria and Smith have attributed large-scale changes in attitudes about Asian and Native American traditions to countercultural engagement with these traditions. Underground papers facilitated much of that engagement by advertising and reviewing local religious groups, by printing the

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<sup>73</sup> John and Michele Bigler, no title, *San Jose Red Eye*, March 18, 1971, np.

words of Asian and Native American religious leaders, and by publishing manuals for practicing these traditions at home. In addition to facilitating engagement with these traditions, Underground papers also contributed to one of the most significant changes that the counterculture introduced to Asian and Native American traditions. They painted these traditions hip.

### The Hipping of Asian and Native American Traditions

The widespread changes that took place in the late 1960s with regard to the ways in which many Americans perceived and participated in Asian and Native American traditions were, at least in part, the result of countercultural engagement with these traditions. As people, especially young people, increasingly looked to the counterculture to define American tastes, the highly visible countercultural engagement with Asian and Native American traditions added to the numbers of participants and sympathizers of these traditions. In part, these changing attitudes emerged from the perception that engaging these traditions was a way to oppose what many young people viewed as the staid conformity of tri-faith America. However, many participants in the counterculture engaged Asian and Native American traditions because they believed that these traditions shared countercultural interests and values. Participants in the counterculture utilized Asian and Native American traditions to promote more sexually liberated behavior than they believed was possible with Judaism and Christianity, to expand consciousness in ways that they believed were comparable to those effected by drugs, and to help establish an entirely new, less technocratic society. Participants in the counterculture viewed these traditions as hip not just because they were different than the religious practices of the majority, but because

they believed that these traditions were hip to many of the changes that they intended to initiate. In the pages of underground papers, many authors not only engaged Asian and Native American traditions, they emphasized how hip these traditions were.

### “Cool Sex”

Treating sex as natural and enjoyable became an important part of countercultural identity and everyday life. For those interested in sexual liberation, all previous proscriptions for sex were in need of revision. Many underground authors challenged prohibitions against polyamory, homosexuality, group sex, and especially nudity. As scholar of religion Timothy S. Miller writes, “To the hippies, any special character that sex might have did not mean that it should be restricted...Sex was good. Sex was fun. Sex was healthy. And this hip approach to sex helped revolutionize attitudes and practices in the nation as a whole.”<sup>74</sup> As participants in the counterculture opposed the sexual morals of the Christianity of Post-War America, they looked to other cultures for how to have and view sex. For underground papers, Native Americans provided perspectives on sex that were much healthier than the Christian-inspired views of most Americans. Underground authors described various types of yoga that offered readers the practical means for improving their sex lives. Emphasizing, and sometimes embellishing these traditions’ hipness to sex probably did not directly contribute to many Americans’ changing attitudes toward either Native American traditions or yoga. However, emphasizing Native American and Asian traditions’ hipness to sex helped stimulate and sustain countercultural interest in

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<sup>74</sup> Timothy S. Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 25.

these traditions. Because of sustained interest in these groups, the majority of Americans identified the counterculture with them, and eventually came to view them as hip rather than with hostility.

In addition to introducing readers to Native American religious practices and ecological concerns, Sun Bear's article in the *San Francisco Oracle* contrasts Native American views of sex with those of the majority of Americans. He writes, "To the Indian, everything was natural, and because of this, he had no double standard of sex, where one was a holier-than-thou philosophy, where one refused to talk about it and sat with folded hands, and the other, dirty pictures on outhouse walls...To the Indian, sex is a perfectly natural thing."<sup>75</sup> Sun Bear's presentation of Native American views toward sex mirrors the views and rhetoric of the counterculture, while also contrasting them with the square attitudes of the majority of Americans. Similarly, Don H. Somerville of the *Seattle Helix* opposed the hip sexual practices of the Inuit with Christian-influenced America. He writes, "There is no reason why [sex] should not be shared. It not only brings you closer to your friends but it also brings you closer to your wife or husband. The concerned Christian I am sure would not believe this; but consider the Eskimos; they were invariably described as the happiest people on earth until we gave them 'virtue.' Now they too have chastity and adultery and jealousy. Instead of happiness they are as glum as the concerned Christians and with the same hang ups."<sup>76</sup> For readers of the *Oracle* and *Helix*, Native American and Inuit views of sex reflected the hip views of the counterculture and were therefore presented

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<sup>75</sup> Sun Bear, 25.

<sup>76</sup> Don H. Somerville, "Sexology," *Helix* 9.9, 1969, quoted in *Miller*, 25.

as models to which Americans should strive, and in the case of the Inuit, Somerville believed that Christianity was responsible for corrupting their once hip view. When participants in the counterculture modeled themselves after Native Americans, they did so in part because they believed that Native Americans maintained hip views of sex.

Whereas Native Americans' provided a cultural model with a hip view of sex, underground papers often presented yoga as a means for improving one's sex life. Sometimes these presentations emphasized this-worldly sexual benefits, sometimes the possibilities of spiritual ecstasy available through sex, and sometimes both at the same time. Lajpatrai Sharma, an Indian immigrant and former Secretary-General of Yoga International Ashram New Delhi, was teaching yoga in Long Beach in 1972. Sharma's article in the *Freep* emphasizes the sexual benefits of practicing yoga. The author quotes Sharma, "Yoga is a potent aid for sexual youth and vigor...the source[s] of vital power are the sex glands."<sup>77</sup> Sharma then describes how three postures, Goraksh Asan, Sarvang Asan and Hal Asan "bring vitality, energy, vigour, youth, and health to everybody at all ages."<sup>78</sup> He then emphasizes, "And this includes sex power."<sup>79</sup> For Sharma, yoga works through the kundalini energy of the subtle body, however its effects are primarily this-worldly. For the pages of the *Freep*, a paper known for its sex ads and a readership interested in sex, Sharma emphasized yoga's benefit for sexual vitality. Yoga was hip enough to provide its

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<sup>77</sup> Lajpatrai Sharma, "Yoga Logic," *Los Angeles Free Press*, February 4, 1972, 18.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

practitioners a more energized sex life. What Christian church would claim as much in such a medium?

Whereas Sharma emphasized the benefits of yoga for the sake of one's sex life, authors in the *Oracle of Southern California* and the *Berkeley Barb* emphasized the spiritual benefits of practicing tantric yoga. Thad and Rita Ashby were well educated researchers funded with a grant by the Sandoz Corporation – the same group that provided Leary with LSD to conduct his research – “to study the relationship of psychedelic chemicals to creativity.”<sup>80</sup> They published findings of their research in a number of articles in the *Oracle of Southern California* in 1967. One article was titled “Yoga of Sex and the Magic Mushroom,” and it was reprinted in at least two other cities. In addition to this-worldly benefits like “healing” the fights of couples who practice it, as well as “inspir[ing] women with great self-confidence...and cur[ing] her of self-hatred, the feeling of an inferior role that the race has instilled in her through an act of love akin to cave-man rape,” the article condemns square, puritanical attitudes toward sex and describes in detail the spiritual benefits of practicing tantric yoga.<sup>81</sup>

Just as Somerville presented the Inuit, Thad and Rita Ashby criticize what they view as the result of introducing Christian morality to an otherwise hip people. Blaming the British for corrupting the spiritually powerful sex practices of ancient India, they write that “yogis lost the integrity of their sensuality when Hindus adopted British moral values. The British condemned the great Tantric Temple of Konarak by calling it ‘the obscene

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<sup>80</sup> Thad and Rita Ashby, “Did Jesus Turn On?” *Berkeley Barb*, December 30, 1966, 5.

<sup>81</sup> Thad and Rita Ashby, “Yoga of Sex and the Magic Mushroom,” *Oracle of Southern California*, November, 1967, 12.

pagoda.”<sup>82</sup> Comparing tantric yoga to “Maithuna,” the ritual of the Palanese described by Aldous Huxley in *Island*, Thad and Rita Ashby criticize Puritan morality, “The Palanese withstand the temptations of the Game/Time world, not because they’re a self-denying people, sticking to some puritan conspiracy against the body. They can resist because they have something much sexier: they practice Tantra Yoga – in Rita’s phrase, Cool Sex.”<sup>83</sup>

With strikingly metaphysical language, Thad and Rita Ashby go on to describe in detail how to perform the “yabyum” pose. Artist D.A. Levy introduced the article in the *Third Class Buddhist Oracle* with a qualification, “Due to the sick, abnormal moral? laws in the state of Ohio, this article is not recommended for anyone under the age of 18.”<sup>84</sup> They open the article with the metaphysical proclamation: “All energy is sexual energy...sex is electro magnetism. In Tantra Yoga we are liberated through sex into Eros: All Energy.”<sup>85</sup> According to Thad and Rita Ashby,

After practicing Tantra every day for six weeks you’ll change profoundly. You’ll find yourself looking children and dogs deeply in the eye and feeling as biologically with it as they. You will look strangers in the eye, guiltless, and so feel compassion for them. You will begin to hear the sound of your own music. After Tantra your tree will bear fruit.<sup>86</sup>

For Thad and Rita Ashby’s readers, in addition to having the practical benefits of healing relationships and anxiety, tantric yoga was a means of “liberation into Eros,” of becoming

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> D.A. Levy, “Maithuna,” *Buddhist Third Class Junkmail Oracle of the Midwest*, volume 1, number 10, np.

<sup>85</sup> Thad and Rita Ashby, “Yoga of Sex and the Magic Mushroom,” Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

with another person, of a profound spiritual experience. Although corrupted by the colonial British, tantric yoga was a means of sexual liberation; it represented the sexually hip teachings of ancient yogis.

A little more than a month after Allan Coult purchased the *Berkeley Barb*, he authored a feature article printed in two installments titled, “Yoga and Orgasm.”<sup>87</sup> Like Thad and Rita Ashby, Coult criticizes sexual hang-ups that he says are the result of the proliferation of Christianity, and argues that through “hatha and laya yoga” one can attain “Nirvana, or Satori, or whatever one chooses to call the dissolution of the psyche.”<sup>88</sup> Emphasizing the relationship between sex and religion, Coult writes “Orgasm and God consciousness are in fact identical.”<sup>89</sup>

In the article, Coult compares the insights of yoga with Reichian therapy, arguing that both have come to the same discovery although through different avenues, and that both can repair the damage of being socialized in a predominantly Christian context. According to Coult, psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich’s theory of orgone energy was a scientific discovery of prana. Independently of the practice of yoga, Reich developed a method for relaxing tension that is stored in the body so that orgone energy could flow more freely. When one sufficiently broke down the “armor” of anxiety, one’s orgasms became peak religious experiences described by practitioners of Asian traditions. Hatha and Laya yoga were, like Reichian therapy, means for working on the “muscular armoring”

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<sup>87</sup> Allan Coult, “Yoga and Orgasm,” *Berkeley Barb*, September 5, 1969, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Allan Coult, “Yoga and Orgasm,” *Berkeley Barb*, September 12, 1969, 9.

<sup>89</sup> Allan Coult, “Yoga and Orgasm,” September 5, 1969, 8.

prohibitive of spiritually enlightening orgasms. Coult writes of the orgasms produced by yoga and Reichian therapy, “The complete orgasm reunited man with nature. It is the ultimate religious experience and the ultimate bliss.”<sup>90</sup> He goes so far as to say that, “Armored man never achieves an orgasm. He never experiences Nirvana; he never knows religion.”<sup>91</sup>

Like Somerville and Thad and Rita Ashby, for Coult, Christianity is largely responsible for the majority of Americans’ anxious and agonistic orgasms. He explains that

it is no wonder that Western man worships the bloody man on the cross who must experience terrible muscular agonies of crucifixion before his resurrection. Christ’s tortured body represents man’s struggle against muscular tension and his fear of the orgasmic pulsations which thus come to have the dual character of God and the devil. The crucifixion symbolizes man’s struggle against nature, against sexuality.<sup>92</sup>

Coult recommended a sexually liberating view of yoga to his readers. The practice, he claimed, was “antisocial” and could potentially “destroy” square society. By Coult’s framing, yoga was counterculturally hip.

Whereas Lajpatrai Sharma, Thad and Rita Ashby, and Allan Coult emphasized the sexual benefits and possibilities of established yogic practices, others in the counterculture innovated their own sexually hip forms of yoga that underground papers were swift to document. Richard Thorne, having recently changed his name from William Brumfield,

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

was a charismatic African-American who, in 1962, lived near Oakland City College.<sup>93</sup> Roommates with Huey Newton, Thorne would soon introduce Newton to Bobby Seale. Seale and Newton would go on to found the Black Panther party. Thorne, however, was drawn more to sexual liberation. He was known for keeping “a small stable of adoring and attractive females and college coeds around the house at all hours.”<sup>94</sup> Intending to write three books on philosophy, Thorne advocated free love and believed that women and men had no need to possess one another. After working toward civil rights at Florida State University, Jefferson Poland moved to the Bay Area and soon began the East Bay Sexual Freedom League (SFL). The SFL sponsored nude protests and hosted well-attended nude parties. In early 1966, Thorne was its acting president, however he soon moved to San Blas, Mexico where he “serv[ed] ungrateful hippies,” and after “fasting, and living alone, and sitting in the cold on a mountain” discovered that he “was the truth.”<sup>95</sup>

On 2 June, 1970, Thorne’s arrival was announced by three “Lovers of OM” who marched nude on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley. Calling himself “OM, the greatest of the Possible Great, the highest of the possible High, God of gods,” Thorne proclaimed at the march, “We do not announce the ‘Sex Orgy.’ We announce the true spirit of the high holy act of fucking. People must be free to fuck without molestation, without fear, without guilt.”<sup>96</sup> Although the nude march apparently drew little attention, the *Berkeley Barb* pasted

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<sup>93</sup> David Hilliard, Keith Zimmerman, Kent Zimmerman, *Huey: Spirit of the Panther* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006), 5.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Phil Pukas, “Omigod, Bankommerica,” *Berkeley Barb*, June 12, 1970, 7.

<sup>96</sup> “Omm,” *Berkeley Barb*, June 5, 1970, 7.

a full-page cover photo of the trio of Pat, Nancy and Larry OM as they marched along Telegraph Avenue from Durant to Bancroft.

The *Barb's* coverage of OM and his group added to their visibility, and because of the group's unique form of yoga, to the perception that yoga was hip to liberated sexuality. In addition to the front page announcement with two nude women and a little man, the *Barb* printed two feature articles on the OM group and advertised the group's yoga practice. The 17 and 31 May editions of the *Barb* contain a classified ad for the group. It reads, "OM Beyond Yoga – holy copulation for the exceptionally erotic open-minded and open-hearted, or for those who want to become so through the highest Yoga there is – which embraces All of Life itself, given by OM Lovers, instructing as OM instructed them."<sup>97</sup> A week after the nude march, the *Barb* featured an article in which author Phil Pukas visited the OM temple located in a room in a building that seemed to Pukas intended for business.<sup>98</sup> Pukas describes OM's enlightening trip to Mexico and some of OM's religious views. Pukas writes, "OM is also offering classes in 'Sacred Eroticism.' We intend to help the guilt-ridden individual discover his eternal self, which is the source of Godhead,' he said. 'We will teach them how to reach the eternal Bliss, with a capital 'B.'"<sup>99</sup> According to Pukas, Max Scherr "noted that it was thru an ad in BARB that Richard [Thorne] was able to get his first group together."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Berkeley Barb*, May 31, 1968, 16.

<sup>98</sup> Pukas, May 12, 1970, 7.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

In trouble with the law for failing to properly identify themselves and for skipping bail, the OM group “gave up their North Oakland storefront church, and disappeared from view, leaving behind only sidewalks stenciled ‘Go Nude Today.’”<sup>101</sup> The group emerged two years later, publishing a monthly newspaper and functioning as a commune in Berkeley. The *Barb* ran another feature called “Om Love,” this time describing in detail the unusual yoga practices referred to by the group as “Temple Games.” Author of the article Jomo Kabuter writes

While inspirational music plays, the participating devotees are blessed by the bishop. Then the female lovers take the Prayer Position (hands and knees on the floor, head down). The male lovers then advance and, with mind prayerfully fixed on OM, and emitting audibly the Sound of the Most Holy NAME, they enter the females from the rear (vaginal entrance). It is the part of the females not to let their minds be anyway distracted, but to keep focused on that Meditation which is simultaneously perfectly sacred and erotic...As for the males, properly concentrating their attention on OM, they do not think that it is a ‘body’ which they are entering, but rather an entire new dimension of being, endless in depth. By this religious ritual, called a ‘Temple Game,’ the inner circle of the OM Lovers worship their deity.<sup>102</sup>

OM’s sexually-charged adaptation of yoga was in some ways an extension of his life as Sexual Freedom League President Richard Thorne. Whereas for Thorne, sexual liberation was a philosophical expression, for OM, sex was a sacred religious right, capable of bringing psychological healing, the realization that one is god, and in the words of OM himself, ‘eternal Bliss.’<sup>103</sup> The *Barb* played an important role for OM’s yoga. It advertised

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<sup>101</sup> Jomo Kabuter, “Om Love,” *Berkeley Barb*, March 24, 1972, 12.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Pukas, May 12, 1970, 12.

the group and its literature, it documented the group's public presence and introduced readers to OM's sexually liberated, and therefore hip, version of yoga.

As the previous examples show, underground papers presented Native American and Asian traditions as hip to sexual liberation. Native American cultures were upheld as models of societies with healthy attitudes toward sex, and yoga was presented as a means for both a healthy sex life and tantric yoga as a means for spiritual liberation. By emphasizing the differences between these traditions and the predominately square attitudes of the majority of Americans toward sex, authors in underground papers presented Native American and Asian traditions as hip to the sexual values prevalent in the counterculture. The counterculture may not have popularized the 'cool sex' of tantric yoga or caused the majority of Americans to adopt Native American views of sex. However, liberated attitudes toward sex fueled countercultural interest in Native American traditions and yoga, and that interest in turn contributed to many Americans' changing attitudes toward both Native American and Asian traditions. Sex was hip; Native American and Asian traditions knew sex and were therefore also hip.

#### "Psychedelic Yoga"

Just as authors in underground papers emphasized and embellished the degree to which Native American and Asian traditions valued sexual liberation, they also emphasized Native American and Asian meditative and entheogenic practices. As with their emphases on sexual liberation, underground papers presented Native American traditions as models for incorporating the use of consciousness expanding drugs and looked to Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism as means of producing and understanding expanded

states of consciousness. For many underground authors, Native American and Asian traditions were hip to the joy and importance of expanding consciousness.

In addition to presenting Native American views toward sex as models that could remedy social and psychological damage incurred by square sexual morality, many underground authors also presented Native American ritualized uses of consciousness expanding drugs as evidence that Native Americans were more hip than the assimilationists of the 1950s had realized. The eighth edition of the *Oracle* dedicated to Native Americans includes the article, “Indians, Herbs, & Religion” by Gene Grimm. Grimm describes the roles that consciousness expanding substances like the mescal bean, *Datura*, psilocybin mushrooms and morning-glories played in Native American religious rituals. Grimm writes, “The ceremonial use of these herbs was essential to religious practice, providing the context for an individual or group to celebrate his religion according to the traditions of the tribe.”<sup>104</sup> Grimm argues that these herbs contributed to the socialist and ecologically-minded culture that, according to him, all Native American cultures shared. He writes of Native Americans that “all had in common a focus on duty toward the Supernatural, including basic beliefs and practices that united them: “common world property, the use of wonder-working objects such as tokens and amulets and the propitiation of animals and plants to be used.”<sup>105</sup> Grimm then describes the various ritualistic uses of tobacco and of the consciousness expanding substances mentioned above. Grimm’s article attributes the more socially and ecologically desirable cultures of Native Americans in part to the

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<sup>104</sup> Gene Grimm, “Indians, Herbs, & Religion,” *Oracle* #8, 27.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

important religious role of consciousness expanding substances. For Grimm, Native American traditions were storehouses of knowledge of consciousness expanding substances and also cultural models that, if emulated, could improve American society both socially and ecologically. For Grimm's readers, Native Americans appeared hip to the benefits of consciousness expanding drugs.

As with their sexual emphases and embellishments of various forms of yoga, underground authors also presented yoga as hip to the benefits of consciousness expansion. The articles on tantric yoga mentioned above present tantric yoga practices as a means for consciousness expansion. Other authors believed that yoga philosophy and practice was a means for guiding one's experience with consciousness expanding drugs. Allen Cohen writes, "Applying the teachings of the Eastern religions in meditation, yoga, chanting, etc. to the extraordinary transcendental experiences with LSD was an essential concern of the *Oracle*."<sup>106</sup> The *Oracle* printed three articles explaining the relationship between yoga and consciousness expansion. Two of them suggest that yoga philosophy offers a means for understanding and guiding experiences of consciousness expansion. The third contrasts experiences of consciousness expansion facilitated by drugs with those incurred through yogic practice, suggesting that yogic ones are preferable. In the cases of all three, yoga is presented as a philosophy capable of understanding and transcending experiences with LSD, psilocybin, and other consciousness expanding substances.

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<sup>106</sup> Cohen, xxxix.

Bob Simmons, “a yoga teacher, painter, poet, and world traveler” wrote the first article printed by the *Oracle* on yoga and consciousness expanding drugs.<sup>107</sup> The article includes Simmons’ criticisms of a psychological model of his time, his first experience with consciousness expansion, and then the effects yoga had on subsequent experiences of consciousness expansion. Simmons writes, “Consciousness as described by current psychology is composed of three levels of awareness...yet this description doesn’t satisfy anyone who has taken acid or tripped out on deep meditation.”<sup>108</sup> For Simmons, both taking acid and “tripp[ing] out on deep meditation” reveal the weakness of contemporary psychology. He adds, “Yoga and Hindu mythology on the other hand does. They provide a framework, a topographical sketch of the labyrinths of consciousness, and have been doing so for the past three thousand years.”<sup>109</sup> Revealing his preference for yoga as a means for understanding consciousness expansion, Simmons describes his first hallucinogenic trip in Tangier in 1963 where he experienced a “breakthrough, as if [he] were standing on the edge of a new continent, or peering for the first time into the vast reaches of some infinite and unknown being.”<sup>110</sup> Upon returning, Simmons writes that he “naturally” began “reading and practicing Yoga.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., xxix.

<sup>108</sup> Bob Simmons, “Yoga and the Psychedelic Mind,” *Oracle* #4, 7.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

The study and practice of yoga added to Simmons' understanding of what was happening in these experiences, and also added to the quality of the experiences. Simmons proclaims that "After months of Hatha and Raja yoga practice I was able to experience not only the reaches, depth and power of my own BEING, but to tune into all the subtle astral planes of thought waves that had ever been projected within this universe and thereby have access to infinite knowledge, joy, beauty, horror and bliss."<sup>112</sup> He adds, "By psychological standards this is megalomania, polymorphous perversion or schizophrenia. To Yoga psychology it is quite simply the process, in which extrasensory perception, astral projections, and clairvoyance are unfolding psychic experiences leading towards consciousness, unique powers not to get hung up on, or use for selfish ends."<sup>113</sup> For Simmons, Yoga provides consciousness expanders a model of consciousness more refined than the one provided by psychologists as well as a means for qualitatively affecting one's experience of consciousness. That yogis had been, according to Simmons, practicing consciousness expansion for three thousand years and the fact that he fell 'naturally' into yoga upon his return from Tangier is evidence that for Simmons, hatha and raja yoga were hip to consciousness expansion.

The *Oracle's* second article on yoga and consciousness expanding drugs was titled "Psychedelic Yoga" by Sri Brahmarishi Narad. In much greater detail than in Simmons' article, Narad provides readers eight meditation techniques to experiment with while using consciousness expanding drugs. According to Narad, yogic techniques could help

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

consciousness expanders understand the things that were happening to their consciousness. Narad writes, “The fact that psychedelic drugs induce a greater sensitivity to subtle spiritual and psychic energies and speeds up the influx of impressions from deeper levels of consciousness raises the immediate question of how these energies can be properly understood and handled...The application of traditional Yoga meditation techniques while under psychedelic experiences provides a constructive solution to this problem.”<sup>114</sup> Narad describes eight forms of meditation as well as a detailed description of the chakra system of Kundalini yoga. According to Narad, yogic meditations were useful practices for expanding consciousness because they enhance practitioners control of their attention. Narad writes, “It becomes clear that the key to remaining in control of a psychedelic experience is in controlling the flow of attention. Distractive experiences can be avoided in the first place and the flow of attention can be properly directed by the use of Raja Yoga techniques of meditation.”<sup>115</sup> Whereas Simmons’ article simply pointed out that yogic techniques could improve experiences with consciousness expanding drugs, Narad’s article provides detailed descriptions of meditative practices that he claims will allow practitioners to enhance and direct their consciousness expansion.

In opposition to Simmon’s and Narad’s endorsement of yoga as a means for enhancing and understanding consciousness expansion, the *Oracle* printed an interview with Chinmayananda, “Vendatist teacher visiting the United States.”<sup>116</sup> Although the

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<sup>114</sup> Sri Brahmarishi Narad, “Psychedelic Yoga,” *Oracle* #8, 11.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>116</sup> Chinmayananda, “Chinmayananda,” *Oracle* #10, 7.

interviewer suggested that many people had come to a path of spirituality because they had used consciousness expanding drugs, Chinmayananda warns readers against taking consciousness expanding drugs like LSD because he believed that they gave users a “shock to the nervous system” and were “dangerously addictive.”<sup>117</sup>

Chinmayananda’s warning mirrors the views of other conservatively-minded religious leaders. Allen Ginsberg describes in the *Barb* visiting Maharishi Mahesh Yogi where he made the same challenge to Maharishi as the interviewer of the *Oracle* made to Chinmayananda. Ginsberg writes of Maharishi, “As he’d put down drugs I said there wouldn’t have been anybody to see him if it hadn’t been for LSD. Devotees gasped. He said, well, LSD has done its thing, now forget it...He said his meditation was stronger.”<sup>118</sup> Maharishi claimed that “‘acid’ damaged Hippies nervous systems,” on account of the fact that “he had six hippies visit him in a room in LA and had to take them into the garden, they smelled so bad.”<sup>119</sup>

The *Freep* printed an address by disciple of Meher Baba and English professor Bruce Hoffman. Like Chinmayananda and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Hoffman describes the spiritual dangers of taking LSD, suggesting that it leads one to be enamored with illusory worlds, away from the spiritual path. He writes, “I don’t object to drugs as a No-No, because my Master has taught me that everything that happens is part of the Cosmic Dance, but that some things in the Cosmic Dance lead to greater illusions and other things

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<sup>117</sup> Cohen, xlvii.

<sup>118</sup> Allen Ginsberg, “The Maharishi and Me,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, April 19, 1968, 6.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

to waking up from the dream.”<sup>120</sup> Even in these cases where religious leaders condemn the use of consciousness expanding drugs, they do so on the basis that yoga, or their other spiritual practices, offer healthier and more effective means of spiritual achievement. That the interviewer of the *Oracle* and Ginsberg attributed interest in yoga and spirituality to consciousness expanding drugs evidences the degree to which many in the counterculture perceived a connection between Asian traditions and consciousness expansion. Perhaps out of their commitment to a democratic ethos, the *Oracle*, the *Barb*, and the *Freep* printed perspectives contrary to many participants in the counterculture’s view that Asian traditions were hip to consciousness expanding drugs. And still, even in these articles that condemned the use of consciousness expanding drugs, the counterculture’s myopic focus on consciousness expansion made it seem that yogis and gurus offered spiritual practices that could expand consciousness more safely and effectively than consciousness expanding drugs. Even when these traditions were not hip to consciousness expanding drugs, they were hip to consciousness expansion.

Similar to the ways that Richard Thorne developed his own, sexually-charged form of yoga, other participants in the counterculture innovated Asian-inspired practices with consciousness expanding drugs. As with the OM group, the *Barb* covered the meetings of Shiva Fellowship, a Hindu-inspired religious movement centered around the religious and public use of marijuana. Haight-Ashbury resident Willie Minzey began the Shiva Fellowship after returning from a three-month stay in India where he claimed to witness

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<sup>120</sup> Bruce Hoffman, “Yogi hits weed for binding users to ‘valley of illusions’,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, October 3, 1969, 11.

Shiva-worshippers consume cannabis and LSD. Associated with the Neo-American church, Minzey's group began hosting religious services in Golden Gate Park where practitioners used marijuana and LSD, sometimes experimenting with nudity and public sexuality. The *Barb* advertised the group's "pray-ins" at Golden Gate Park, covered the group's activities, and supported Minzey when he ran into legal troubles for distributing marijuana to minors. Minzey apparently took his group's spiritual intentions seriously. JFP of the *Barb* describes Minzey's reaction to the police's monitoring of nudity and sexual activity. He writes, "Rev. Minzey angrily complained at the repeated interruptions of the religious services and asked that his meditation not be disturbed again unless there was some serious reason."<sup>121</sup> Whether Minzey's intentions were purely spiritual or not, the *Barb*'s regular coverage of Minzey for more than six years contributed to the perception that Hinduism, at least Minzey's version of it, was hip to consciousness expansion.

As with sexual liberation, underground papers contributed to the perception that Native American and Asian traditions were hip to consciousness expansion. Underground authors looked to Native American traditions as cultural models that revealed the social and ecological benefits of consciousness expansion, and looked to various forms of yoga as means for understanding and improving experiences with consciousness expanding drugs. By contrasting these Native American, Asian, and Asian-inspired traditions with the most prevalent psychological and religious views of consciousness expansion, authors in underground papers presented Native American and Asian traditions as though they were

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<sup>121</sup> JFP, "Shiverin' Shiva," *Berkeley Barb*, June 28, 1968, 7.

hip to consciousness expansion, even if the article suggested that they were not hip to consciousness expanding drugs.

Underground papers were hardly the only countercultural medium responsible for emphasizing the ways in which Native American and Asian traditions were hip to consciousness expansion. The association between Asian traditions and consciousness expansion was visible especially in the teachings of countercultural leaders. Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg, and Alan Watts engaged both psychedelic drugs and varying forms of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism. Leary, Ginsberg, and Watts were already well-known by 1967 when the UPS was created, having already been well-published and having made known their belief in a connection between consciousness expanding drugs and Buddhist, Hindu, and Taoist traditions. Collectively, these countercultural leaders' publications helped make the association between the counterculture, Asian traditions and consciousness expanding drugs abundantly clear to the majority of Americans. However, the role of underground papers in contributing to the association between consciousness expanding drugs and Asian traditions should not be so easily dismissed. As leaders of the counterculture, underground papers published scores of articles by and about each of these thinkers. Leary, Ginsberg, and Watts came to be symbols of countercultural engagement with both Asian religious traditions as well as consciousness expanding drugs. Underground papers added to the celebrity and symbolic importance of Leary, Ginsberg, and Watts, often representing them romantically and emphasizing their countercultural positions on consciousness expanding drugs and Asian traditions. Underground papers therefore contributed to the perception that these traditions were hip by printing feature

articles emphasizing their hipness to consciousness expansion, and by contributing to the celebrity of countercultural leaders who shared that perspective.

#### “Buddhist Anarchism”

In addition to associating Native American and Asian traditions with liberated sexuality and consciousness expansion, underground authors often presented these traditions as though they could help initiate and sustain a cultural revolution. For many underground authors blamed Christianity for the technocratic society responsible for wars, ecological destruction, and sexual neuroses. They presented Native American and Asian traditions not only as hip to countercultural attitudes, but as means to bring about a revolution of the majority of Americans’ values, culture and political structures. Inspired by Native Americans, many underground authors presented tribal living as a viable alternative to living in the United States while not supporting technocratic society. For many underground authors, yoga and other Asian traditions could help bring about the new tribal society. Buddhist and the inspiration for Kerouac’s Japhy Ryder, Gary Snyder relied on underground papers to publish poetry and articles on Buddhism’s role in the revolution. As they were presented in underground papers, Native American and Asian traditions were hip to cultural revolution.

Participants in the counterculture looked especially to Native American traditions for political inspiration. Inspired by Native American cultures, those especially committed to the counterculture and to a cultural and political revolution organized themselves into what they called “tribes,” which were often communes of people living together and sharing property. The Red Mountain Tribe that boycotted the *Barb* is just one example of

a tribal group. When countercultural groups planned public events, they often advertised these events as “Gathering[s] of the tribes.” The *San Francisco Oracle* advertised the first Human Be-In as both a “Pow-wow” and a “Gathering of the Tribes.”<sup>122</sup> The advertisement features images of a Tipi and Native Americans. It reads, “Twenty to fifty thousand people are expected to gather for a joyful Pow-wow and Peace Dance to be celebrated with leaders, guides, and heroes of our generation.”<sup>123</sup> The revolutionary intention is also made clear in the advertisement,

Now in the evolving generation of America’s young the humanization of the American man and woman can begin in joy and embrace without fear, dogma, suspicion, or dialectical righteousness. A new concert of human relations being developed within the youthful underground must emerge, become conscious, and be shared so that a revolution of form can be filled with a Renaissance of compassion, awareness, and love in the Revelation of the unity of all mankind.<sup>124</sup>

Authors in the *Oracle* were modelling the form of the revolution after Native American traditions. The *San Jose Red Eye* reprinted an essay from Gary Snyder’s *Earth House Hold* (1969) titled “Why Tribe” in which he explains the revolutionary potential of tribal living and associates the social organization strategy with Native Americans.<sup>125</sup> Snyder writes, “We use the term Tribe because it suggests the type of new society now emerging within the industrial nations. In America of course the word has association with the American

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<sup>122</sup> “The Gathering of the Tribes,” *Oracle* #5, 2.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Gary Snyder, “Why Tribe,” *San Jose Red Eye*, February 26, 1970, 4.

Indians, which we like.”<sup>126</sup> Contrasting tribal society with the ills of technocratic society, Snyder adds, “The Tribe proposes personal responsibilities rather than abstract centralized government, taxes and advertising-agency-plus-Mafia type international brainwashing corporations...The Revolution has ceased to be an ideological concern.”<sup>127</sup> Peter Bergman of the *Oracle of Southern California* writes, “We’ve dropped out of the system itself, and are creating in a sense our own system which will hopefully go the way of the Hopi. They are a living example. Not only are they doing it, but they’re doing it in America.”<sup>128</sup> Many in the counterculture modelled their revolutionary designs after what they believed was the social organization of Native Americans. Underground papers like the *San Francisco Oracle*, the *Oracle of Southern California*, and the *San Jose Red Eye* contributed to these efforts by printing and supporting the work of authors who intentionally adapted Native American traditions toward revolutionary ends.

Many underground authors also believed that Asian and Asian-inspired traditions could contribute to the coming revolution. Simmons’ article on yoga concludes, “I see Yoga as a positive and meaningful way of effecting social change; Ashrams replacing hospitals and sanitariums...It’s up to the young people, the new Aquarians, to manifest that change. Love, service, beauty, Yoga seem to fit. Meet with friends, find council, sing together, chant.”<sup>129</sup> Allan Coult describes revolutionary potential in “Yoga and Orgasm”

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Bergman, “On the Hopi Indian,” *Oracle of Southern California*, 1967, np.

<sup>129</sup> Simmons, 23.

when he explains the effects of a healthy orgasm, achievable through yoga: “Orgasm is antisocial; it destroys society.”<sup>130</sup> Phil Pukas of the *Barb* asked Richard Thorne if the “OM lovers [were] political.”<sup>131</sup> They replied, ““We are most political, because we are holding the new world right here in the old one. We can solve all of man’s economic problems, all of his sexual problems. We’re more radical than the radicals.”<sup>132</sup> For these authors discussed above, yoga was not only hip to sexual liberation, it was to be an important part of the cultural revolution.

For Gary Snyder, Buddhism offered Americans the means to revolutionize technocratic society and to implement an ecologically-minded global society hip to sexual liberation and consciousness expansion. Like Leary, Ginsberg, and Watts, underground papers printed scores of articles by and about Gary Snyder. Snyder’s article titled “Buddhism and the Coming Revolution,” or alternatively, “Buddhist Anarchism” was reproduced through syndication in underground papers in Seattle, Berkeley, San Francisco, Topeka, and Cleveland. In the article, Snyder criticizes institutional Buddhism for ignoring “the inequalities and tyrannies of whatever political system it found itself under,” however he suggests that Buddhist meditation and concepts could facilitate the kind of revolution hoped for by many in the counterculture. Snyder writes, “The joyous and voluntary poverty of Buddhism becomes a positive force. The traditional harmlessness and refusal to take life in any form has nation-shaking implications. The practice of meditation, for which one

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<sup>130</sup> Coult, September 5, 1969, 8.

<sup>131</sup> Pukas, June 11, 1970, 6.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

needs ‘only the ground beneath one’s feet’ wipes out mountains of junk being pumped into the mind by the mass media and universities.”<sup>133</sup> Snyder describes the potential hipness of a revolution informed by Buddhist-inspired understandings of wisdom, meditation, and morality. He writes,

Wisdom is intuitive knowledge of the mind of love and clarity that lies beneath one’s ego-driven anxieties and aggressions. Meditation is going into the mind to see this for yourself – over and over again, until it becomes the mind you live in. Morality is bringing it back out in the way you live, through personal example and responsible action, ultimately toward the true community (sangha) of ‘all beings.’ This last aspect means, for me, supporting any cultural and economic revolution that moves clearly toward a free, international, classless world...It means affirming the widest possible spectrum of non-harmful individual behavior – defending the right of individuals to smoke hemp, eat peyote, be polygynous, polyandrous, or homosexual. Worlds of behavior and custom long banned by the Judeo-Capitalist-Christian-Marxist West.<sup>134</sup>

For Snyder, Buddhism, in spite of its institutional failings, provided the concepts and practices necessary for a cultural revolution hip to the values and interests of the counterculture. Because of his notoriety as a member of the Beat generation, underground papers eagerly printed Snyder’s revolutionary take on Buddhism.

As with sexual liberation and consciousness expansion, underground papers presented Asian and Native American traditions as hip to cultural revolution. Inspired by Native American traditions, participants in the counterculture believed that they were living the revolution by modelling themselves as a tribal society. Underground papers printed articles and advertisements that supported and reinforced the idea that a cultural

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<sup>133</sup> Gary Snyder, “Buddhism and the Coming Revolution,” *Oracle* #3, np.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

revolution through tribal living was possible. Underground authors also presented Asian and Asian-inspired traditions like yoga and Buddhism as means for bringing about the desired cultural revolution, especially with regard to sexual liberation and consciousness expansion. In the pages of underground papers, Native American and Asian traditions were hip to the cultural revolution that so many fought for and believed was happening at the time.

### Aesthetic Adaptation

In addition to emphasizing the hipness of Native American and Asian traditions through articles and advertisements, underground papers contributed to the impression that these traditions were hip artistically. Through visual images and poetry, underground artists often incorporated Native American, Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist symbols in their work. Often, the artwork suggested that these traditions were hip by adapting these traditions' symbols into work that also demonstrated countercultural interests in sexual liberation, consciousness expansion, and revolution. Some publishers, like those of the *San Francisco Oracle*, understood their papers as an artistic medium and printed entire pages filled with these types of images and poetry designed specifically for the paper. For other underground papers, art was peripheral to the rest of the paper's information, however Native American- and Asian-inspired images found their way even into these papers, sometimes as cover art, other times as supplements to the paper's other content. In all cases, the prolific use of Native American- and Asian-inspired art in underground papers contributed to the perception that these traditions were hip and further solidified the rest of society's association between the counterculture and these traditions.

Many head-oriented papers like the *San Francisco Oracle*, the *Oracle of Southern California*, and the *San Jose Red Eye* featured images and poetry inspired by Native American, Buddhist, and Indian traditions. Many of these images and poems appear alongside and incorporate nude bodies, imply consciousness expansion, and suggest revolution. These images and poems demonstrate that many participants in the counterculture believed these traditions were hip themselves, and were also hip to countercultural interests and values.

Publishers of the *San Francisco Oracle* emphasized the artistic value of the paper to a greater degree than most other papers. The types of images and poems that they printed often incorporated Native American and Asian-inspired symbols and imagery. The eighth edition's cover, dedicated to the topic of Native Americans, includes an image of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce superimposed over UFOs visiting Mt. Shasta.<sup>135</sup> The centerfold of the same issue is of a poem titled "Who is an Indian" by anthropologist John Collier Jr.<sup>136</sup> Characteristically of the *Oracle*, the poem is surrounded by artwork reminiscent of the text, in this case the surrounding image is of an eagle and feathers drawn in a Native American style. In Sun Bear's article the blocks of text are intentionally laid out in the forms of arrowheads.<sup>137</sup>

Many images in the *Oracle* visually communicated that Asian and Native American traditions were hip to sexual liberation and consciousness expansion. The seventh edition

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<sup>135</sup> *Oracle* #8, 1.

<sup>136</sup> John Collier Jr., "Who is an Indian," *Oracle* #8, 20.

<sup>137</sup> Cohen, xlii.

of the *Oracle* featuring the Houseboat Summit with Leary, Ginsberg, Snyder, and Watts includes a centerfold featuring the *Prajna Paramita Sutra* – a well-known and widely used Mahayana sutra.<sup>138</sup> In the middle of the image is a nude woman with butterfly wings. According to Cohen, the added sexuality of the nude woman angered conservative Buddhists. He writes, “Some of the conservative elements of the Buddhist community weren’t too pleased with the naked butterfly lady standing in the middle of the highest perfect wisdom.”<sup>139</sup> The same issue also features an image communicating Indian and Native American hipness to consciousness expansion. Titled “Bom Bom Mahadev” or “Hail, hail great god,” a book review of a text extolling the benefits of marijuana use appears below the image of a Native American smoking a peace pipe back to back with an Indian smoking out of a water pipe.<sup>140</sup> Above them is an intricate design featuring an Eagle flanked by Native American and Hindu symbols. The article reads, “I have not the slightest reservation in saying that this much maligned plant has powers that elevate the human condition from a purely material plane to the spiritual. If this is opinion, it is one shared with four hundred million others in the world.”<sup>141</sup> As much as through its content, the imagery of the *Oracle* incorporated images and symbols from Native American and Asian traditions, often associating and reinforcing the perception that these traditions were hip to liberated sexuality, consciousness expansion and cultural revolution.

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<sup>138</sup> “Prajna Paramita Sutra,” *Oracle* #7, 17.

<sup>139</sup> Cohen, xxxix.

<sup>140</sup> Harry Monroe, “Bom Bom Mahadev: A Mantra for Marijuana,” *Oracle* #7, 4.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

Often inspired by the *Oracle*, other underground papers also incorporated Native American- and Asian-inspired images into their papers. The designs of the *San Jose Red Eye* reflect countercultural interest in both Native American and Asian traditions. The cover of the 29 October, 1970 edition of the *Red Eye* features a drawing of a forward-facing Native American in front of a landscape. Below the image is a peace pipe and the words “Free the Land.”<sup>142</sup> The 25 February, 1972 edition includes a spiraling chart of Yin and Yang foods according to macrobiotics.<sup>143</sup> Twice in the same year, the *Red Eye* included a version of Gary Snyder’s “Smokey the Bear Sutra,” a poem in which “the Great Sun Buddha” takes the form of Smokey the Bear to effect ecological change. The sutra reads,

And SMOKEY THE BEAR will surely appear to put the enemy out with  
his Vajra-shovel.  
Now those who recite this Sutra and then try to put it in practice will  
accumulate merit as countless as the sands of Arizona and Nevada.  
Will help save the planet Earth from total oil slick.  
Will enter the age of harmony of man and nature.  
Will win the tender love and caresses of men, women, and beasts.  
Will always have ripened blackberries to eat and a sunny spot under a pine  
tree to sit at.

AND IN THE END WILL WIN HIGHEST PERFECT  
ENLIGHTENMENT<sup>144</sup>

Although an artistic emphasis was not as central to the publishers of the *Red Eye* as it was for the *Oracle*, the paper still included countercultural art that adapted Native American- and Asian-inspired poems and imagery.

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<sup>142</sup> *San Jose Red Eye*, October 29, 1970, cover.

<sup>143</sup> Butterfly, “Food Rushes,” *San Jose Red Eye*, February 25, 1972, 13.

<sup>144</sup> Gary Snyder, “Smokey the Bear Sutra,” *San Jose Red Eye*, January 29, 1970, 2.

Countercultural interest in Native American and Asian traditions even found its way into the images of papers where countercultural art was secondary to the paper's function as a source of information. The countercultural obsession with the *I-Ching* is prevalent not only into the images of the *Oracles* and other head-oriented papers, but also into papers that were more fist-oriented. The cover of the 31 August, 1970 edition of the *Rag* prominently features an *I-Ching* hexagram with a brief description of what it represents.<sup>145</sup> The 18 December, 1970 edition of the *Freep* features a full page advertisement for a Christmas Day celebration in Laguna Beach put on by the "One World Family" commune.<sup>146</sup> The image combines *I-Ching* hexagrams with Christian, Astrological, and Hindu symbols at the same time that it announces the dawning of the Aquarian Age. In the *Barb*, a feature article covering California governor Ronald Reagan's attempt at shutting down "people's park," an area that had been established for students to exercise their freedom of speech, appears beneath a half-page design of *I-Ching* hexagram 49, "revolution."<sup>147</sup> Printed within the lines of the hexagram, the image reads, "We are building the new society in the vacant lots of the old."<sup>148</sup> Like the *Oracle*, the *Barb* adapted Asian-inspired symbols to countercultural interest in cultural revolution. Interest in Asian and Native American traditions contributed to the widespread use of Asian- and Native American-inspired symbols and images even in underground papers that included art as

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<sup>145</sup> *The Rag*, August 31, 1970, cover.

<sup>146</sup> "What Would Jesus Like to See on His Birthday?" *Los Angeles Free Press*, December 18, 1970, 26.

<sup>147</sup> Paul Glusman, "Berkeley: What Does It Mean?" *Berkeley Barb*, May 30, 1969, 6.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

secondary to its information, and in fist-oriented papers. Through art and poetry, underground papers contributed to the perception that these traditions were hip.

By emphasizing the degree to which Asian and Native American traditions were hip to sexual liberation, consciousness expansion and revolution and by providing media in which imagery and symbols inspired by these traditions were prominent, underground papers initiated and sustained countercultural interest in these traditions. As highly visible media produced by the counterculture, underground papers reinforced the views of the majority of Americans that associated the counterculture with these traditions. By the time advertisers and many Americans began looking to the counterculture to define American taste, countercultural interest in Asian and Native American traditions had already been well-established. Participants in the counterculture may have been interested in these traditions because they believed that they were hip to sex, drugs, and revolution, but for the rest of society, countercultural interest made these traditions simply hip, and after 1968, being hip had become a widespread obsession.

#### From Hostility to Hipness

By the early 1970s, many Americans were looking at Asian and Native American traditions differently than they had in the past. Asian and Native American cultural influences were prominent in American fashion, television, and advertising. The widespread practice of dressing up in stereotypical Native American garb for countercultural festivals and gatherings of the tribes became a fashion trend advertised in popular magazines like *Teen* magazine. The November 1970 edition features a cover image of a young woman wearing a dress with Native American-inspired colors and geometric

designs, a headband, and feather. It advertises an article on “The Pow Wow Look.”<sup>149</sup>

Miriam Hahn describes a print advertisement by Clairol from 1971 using Native American imagery to sell products. Hahn writes,

In the ad, a blue-eyed model peers out at viewers from underneath a massive mane of free-flowing platinum blonde hair. Feathers and beads are braided into her hair, and she also wears a buckskin dress and colorful face paint. Under the bold trademarked caption, ‘When you go blonde go all the way,’ the advertisement promises that Clairol’s ‘Born Blonde’ hair dye can help a young woman to achieve the bold look she really wants, whether she aspires to be a ‘blonde Pocahontas or a gypsy moonchild’. ‘When you feel like playing Native,’ the ad encourages readers subtextually, ‘don’t let brunettes have all the fun!’”<sup>150</sup>

Although Philip J. Deloria has shown that “Playing Indian” has been a pervasive practice among European settlers and their descendants in America, these advertisements demonstrate the countercultural impulse to “play Indian” became more widespread than it ever had before. The counterculture made playing Indian hip.

The hipness of Native Americans had permeated American television and films as well as fashion and advertising. Although critical of the changed attitude, scholar of Native American studies Ted Jojola points to a shift in the way Native Americans were depicted in film in 1968. He writes, “However, beginning in 1968, with the establishment of the American Indian Movement (AIM), much of [Native American] misrepresentation was to change...Such activism did not escape the big screen. Hollywood scriptwriters jumped

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<sup>149</sup> *Teen*, November 1970, cover.

<sup>150</sup> Miriam Hahn, “Playing Hippies and Indians: Acts of Cultural Colonization in the Theatre of the American Counterculture,” (Dissertation, Bowling Green State University, 2014), 55.

onto the bandwagon.”<sup>151</sup> Jojola lists seven films from 1969 to 1982 that depicted “three-dimensional character portrayal” of Native Americans. He describes the importance of one scene in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1975) as seminal. He writes,

When McMurphy...prods a mute Indian Chief (played by Indian actor Will Sampson) into pronouncing ‘ahh juicyfruit,’ what the audience heard was far removed from the stereotypical ‘hows,’ ‘ughs,’ and ‘kemosabes’ of tinsel moviedom. ‘Well goddamn, Chief,’ counters McMurphy. ‘And they all think you’re deaf and dumb. Jesus Christ, you fooled them Chief, you fooled them...You fooled ‘em all!’ In that simple and fleeting scene, a new generation of hope and anticipation was heralded among Native American moviegoers. Long the downtrodden victims of escapist shoot-‘em and bang-‘em up Westerns, Native Americans were ready for a new cinematic treatment – one that was real and contemporary.<sup>152</sup>

Although the films described by Jojola presented Native Americans with greater sophistication and sympathy than the vast majority of films before the late 1960s, Jojola argues that these portrayals gave way to romanticized stereotypes that denigrated Native American representations differently. Jojola points to “the famous ‘Keep America Beautiful’ teary Indian (Cherokee actor Iron Eyes Cody) and the Mazola Margarine corn maiden (Chiricahua Apache actress Tenaya Torrez) commercials” which aired on national television.<sup>153</sup> He adds, “The ‘trashless wilderness’ and ‘corn, or what us Indians call maize’ became the forerunners of the New Age ecology movement.”<sup>154</sup> Together, the print ads, the changes in filmmaking and in television reveal that the late 1960s marked a change in

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<sup>151</sup> Ted Jojola, “Absurd Reality II: Hollywood Goes to the Indian,” in *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*, Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor eds. (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 13.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

how many Americans viewed Native Americans. Even if these views were still problematic, the perception that Native American practices were dead or dying, or that Native Americans were best assimilated into Euro-American culture had, by many Americans, been left in the past.

Similarly, before the late 1960s, the majority of Americans treated Asians and Asian-inspired traditions with suspicion and hostility. The Federal Government effectively prohibited Asian immigration in 1924, and the Hindu and Buddhist traditions that had already established themselves in the United States (the Vedanta society, Indian-inspired Theosophical groups, and Hindu-inspired meditation movements) remained relatively small groups that faced cultural opposition. Even Zen Buddhism and hatha yoga, which had made inroads into American culture, were viewed in the case of Zen with hostility for association with the Beat Generation of writers and artists, and in the case of hatha yoga as little more than a health fad. However, after the late 1960s, Buddhist and Hindu-inspired religions began expanding. Scholars Jain, Seager, Tweed, Williamson, and Wilson have described the late 1960s as a turning point in which many Americans began practicing Buddhist- and Hindu-inspired traditions to a greater extent than ever before. Advertisements and television shows reflect changing attitudes as well. The 8 December, 1972 edition of *Life* Magazine features a two-page ad by General Electric advertising its “Beauty – and Home – makers” lines of products. It reads, “Gifts for someone who cooks and irons but with a lifestyle all her own. You do your own hair, too. And you want to look great every minute. Whether you’re into yoga or Chinese cooking. We’re with you all the

way.”<sup>155</sup> In the same year, ABC aired the pilot episode of *Kung Fu* (1972) starring David Carradine. The show’s hero was a half-Asian Shaolin monk named Caine who applied Buddhist- and Taoist-inspired philosophies to navigate his adventures in the American West. Author Jon Shirota of *Black Belt* magazine attributes part of the show’s success to moments of philosophical insight inspired by Asian religions. He writes in the May 1973 edition, “*Kung-Fu* continues to prosper in TV-land as American audiences embrace the concepts of Oriental philosophy.”<sup>156</sup> The increased popularity of Asian-inspired traditions and the increased presence in popular culture reveal the extent to which many Americans were viewing Asian traditions differently than they had in the past. They were no longer the fringe religious traditions of a few seekers or the indulgence of countercultural groups and artists; they had become hip.

In speaking of the transformed attitudes that many Americans had taken to yoga after the late 1960s, Jain asks, “What changes made [this] possible?”<sup>157</sup> In the following chapter, she attributes the change to three developments: increased global mobility (partially the result of the Immigration Act of 1965), the American counterculture, and the emergence of global consumer culture.<sup>158</sup> According to Jain, many in the counterculture looked to yoga to provide “pop culture criticism,” as well as “religious insights and

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<sup>155</sup> *Life*, December, 8, 1972, 20.

<sup>156</sup> John Shirota, “Peace in Violent Times,” *Black Belt*, May 1973, 22.

<sup>157</sup> Jain, 41.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

techniques.”<sup>159</sup> However, as Wuthnow and Oppenheimer have shown, pointing to countercultural interest does not well-explain the proliferation of Asian religions after the late 1960s. According to Wuthnow’s sociological research conducted in Berkeley in 1971, only three out of ten people claimed to know anything at all about Zen Buddhism, and only one out of two claimed to know anything about yoga.<sup>160</sup> As Oppenheimer writes, “Most new religious movements had few adherents and shrank quickly or even disappeared...the vast majority of Americans who practiced a religion continued to do so within the organizational structures of the Roman Catholic Church, Judaism, or long-established branches of Protestantism.”<sup>161</sup> He adds, “The counterculture changed American religion through its insinuations into traditional denominations.”<sup>162</sup> Although the counterculture never established Buddhism, Hinduism, or Native American practices as widespread religious traditions with large percentages of self-identified practitioners, the changes initiated by the counterculture were just as meaningful for these traditions and for the future of American religion generally as they were for mainstream religions. Wuthnow’s survey reveals that even if only three out of ten claimed to know anything about Zen Buddhism and one out of two knew something about yoga, only *one* out of ten claimed to be “turned

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Robert Wuthnow, “The New Religions in Social Context,” *The New Religious Consciousness*, Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah eds. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 270.

<sup>161</sup> Oppenheimer, 2.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

off” by the traditions.<sup>163</sup> Ninety percent of those surveyed were either indifferent towards or interested in learning more about the traditions.

Although there are no surveys from before the late 1960s gauging general attitudes toward these traditions, legal and cultural evidence suggests that many more would have been “turned off” by Asian and Native American traditions. In the late 1960s, the majority of Americans were not actively practicing these traditions, however the vast majority was also not opposing them, and many were interested in learning more. So in reply to Jain’s question of what changes made the proliferation of yoga possible, Jain is correct in identifying the importance of the counterculture, however not because participants in the counterculture constituted widespread interest, but because a small surge of interest transformed the way that the majority of Americans viewed these traditions.

The counterculture, in many ways through and because of underground papers, branded both Asian and Native American traditions hip, and, as Thomas Frank has argued, being hip soon became the obsession of a generation of young people outside of the counterculture, and of many other Americans as well. The stigmas with which the majority of Americans viewed these traditions were being shed, and without the stigmas, Asian and Native American traditions were poised to make more pronounced cultural impacts in the United States than they ever had before. Although their engagement with these traditions was often naïve and defined by countercultural interest and values, underground papers effected countercultural engagement with Asian and Native American traditions, and by extension this engagement transformed the views of many Americans. No longer viewed

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<sup>163</sup> Wuthnow, 270.

with hostility, Asian and Native American traditions were, quite suddenly, hip. This hipness set the stage for the proliferation of these traditions that would ensue over the coming decades.

## CONCLUSION – STRIPPING THE VENEER OF TRI-FAITH AMERICA

In July 1969, Trans-Love Energies Unlimited, a commune operating out of Ann Arbor, Michigan, hosted a four-day conference for the Underground Press Syndicate.<sup>1</sup> By this time, five hundred underground papers “distributed anywhere from 2 million copies (*Newsweek*’s estimate) to 4.5 million copies (UPS).”<sup>2</sup> Six months before the conference, J. Edgar Hoover had sent a memo to FBI offices nationwide instructing them to monitor the activities of underground papers and to force the papers to “fold and cease publication.”<sup>3</sup> With the intention of adding to the paranoia of underground staffers, FBI agents conspicuously surveilled the activities of underground papers. According to an underground author and co-founder of the College Press Service, “the FBI made it so obvious that they were watching you that it affected your ability to function. And there are FBI documents that say, ‘let us encourage this idea that there is an agent behind every tree.’”<sup>4</sup> Rife with paranoia, the conference in Ann Arbor was held at a farm on a hill from where all avenues of access were easily visible. A White Panther guarded the meeting at the bottom of the hill with a firearm.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John McMillan, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 121.

<sup>2</sup> Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 183.

<sup>3</sup> Rodger Streitmatter, *Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 215.

<sup>4</sup> Peck, 270.

<sup>5</sup> McMillan, 121.

Describing the conference, Abe Peck writes that “as people arrived, a cloud hovered over the conference...it was hard to sort out reality from paranoia.”<sup>6</sup> At the meeting, underground staffers discussed the activities of member newspapers. They discussed the then recent boycott of the *Berkeley Barb*. Female staffers demanded that underground papers stop printing sexist ads, that they run articles about the oppression of women, and that they be treated more fairly.<sup>7</sup> Conference attendees complained about Columbia Records’ infamous “But The Man Can’t Bust Our Music” advertisement that allegedly co-opted the hip movement, and how Columbia Records then “suddenly cancel[ed] its substantial ad buys in the underground press.”<sup>8</sup> Under the influence of the rampant paranoia, underground staffers raised questions over “whether it was wise for UPS to tape-record the proceedings.”<sup>9</sup>

The paranoia of the meeting was legitimated when at least thirty Washtenaw County deputies and Ann Arbor police armed with shotguns and bulletproof vests surrounded the clearing of the farm.<sup>10</sup> They claimed to be looking for a young woman from the *Chicago Seed* who had been arrested earlier for possession of marijuana.<sup>11</sup> The scene escalated when police kicked in doors, destroyed a camera, and jammed their shotguns at

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<sup>6</sup> Peck, 185.

<sup>7</sup> McMillan, 122.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>10</sup> Peck, 185.

<sup>11</sup> McMillan, 122.

people's heads.<sup>12</sup> According to Peck, "Art Kunkin and some vegetarians from Santa Cruz split after seeing White Panthers go for guns;" women were lined up and searched, and a "*Rat* writer saw 'visions of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre.'" <sup>13</sup> Officers left after about thirty minutes, but the incident validated the paranoia that was rampant among underground staffers. An author from the *Rat* said that after the incident, "everyone realized how vulnerable we are."<sup>14</sup>

One of the results of the conference was that Tom Forcade was made UPS director, and after the conference, he went to New York to meet with Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, Paul Krassner and other countercultural leaders.<sup>15</sup> Soon after Forcade arrived, White Panther leader John Sinclair was sentenced to ten years in prison "for passing two marijuana joints to an undercover policewoman."<sup>16</sup> The excessive sentencing attracted much attention from the counterculture which led to a public rally attended by 15,000 people including Allen Ginsberg, Ed Sanders, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Bobby Seale.<sup>17</sup> Sinclair was released from prison in 1972, but the excessive sentence sent a clear message to those involved in the counterculture and in underground papers – they were

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>13</sup> Peck, 185.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> McMillan, 123.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Agis Salpukas, "15,000 Attend Michigan U. Rally to Protest Jailing of Radical Poet," *New York Times*, December 12, 1971, 76.

under attack. Beginning in 1968, the FBI “used infiltrators, provocateurs, wiretaps, forged letters and documents, and smear campaigns” against underground newspapers.<sup>18</sup>

The efforts of the FBI, as well as the CIA, army intelligence, and local police departments contributed to the transformation and demise of underground papers all over the United States. Based on documents later released by the FBI, cultural historian Roger Streitmatter attributes to the FBI: the ransacking of the offices of the *Washington Free Press*, “firebombings of the offices of the *Helix* in Seattle, *SpaceCity* in Houston, *Orpheus* in Phoenix, *Great Speckled Bird* in Atlanta, and *Free Press* in Los Angeles,” and also a sustained attack on John Koise of the Milwaukee *Kaleidoscope* whose car was firebombed and shot at, and whose office windows were shattered by gunfire.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to violent intimidation, the FBI also worked to shut down underground papers by sowing dissension among the underground press. One FBI agent fabricated a letter intended to further alienate two groups that had split the national underground news provider, *Liberation News Service*.<sup>20</sup> Marshall Bloom and Ray Mungo, the founders of the syndicate who believed their organization had been over-run with Marxists, clandestinely took the LNS’s printing press and address list from its New York office and moved them to a farm in Massachusetts. For a brief period of time, two groups published LNS, one from a farm in Massachusetts, the other from an office in New York. Describing the split, an FBI memo explains, “The New Left press has contained considerable charges and

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<sup>18</sup> McMillan, 115.

<sup>19</sup> Streitmatter, 216.

<sup>20</sup> McMillan, 268.

countercharges... We are attempting to use this situation to further split the New Left.”<sup>21</sup> A forged letter from the FBI’s office in New York was sent to the political faction of LNS and subsequently published. It questioned Marshall Bloom’s mental health and accused him of “making hysterical accusations, ripping off the Movement, and destroying LNS.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, FBI agents in Texas forged letters from students’ parents, leading to the banning of the *Rag* at the University of Texas and *Dallas Notes* at Southern Methodist University.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the most effective strategy of the FBI was the extent to which they put pressure on underground newspapers’ advertisers. In 1969, an FBI agent in San Francisco urged “top FBI officials to use their high-level contacts to persuade Columbia and other major record companies to sever their relationships with the counterculture press.”<sup>24</sup> Without record companies’ advertisements, papers like the Madison *Kaleidoscope*, the *Great Speckled Bird* and the *Berkeley Tribe* lost what Lionel Haines of the *Berkeley Tribe* called their “economic base,” and they soon folded.<sup>25</sup> When the music ads were pulled from the *Berkeley Barb*, Max Scherr became “desperate to find a new source of revenue.”<sup>26</sup> Despite pressure from women in the counterculture to rid underground papers of latent sexism, the *Barb* survived by leaning heavily on pornographers and sex ads. According to

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Streitmatter, 215.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>25</sup> McMillan, 130.

<sup>26</sup> Streitmatter, 218.

Streitmatter, “By the mid-1970s, the *Barb* was known not as a counterculture paper but as a vulgar and sexist one.”<sup>27</sup>

Local police also proved effective opponents of the underground press. The 1967 case *Roth v. the United States* had established that for something to be considered legally “obscene,” it had to have no social value. Although broadly political and therefore seen in the eyes of most courts as having social value, underground papers faced numerous charges for printing and distributing obscene material. Local police and district attorneys charged underground papers with obscenity trials hoping to bleed the papers through expensive court fees. Jerry Powers, the editor of the *Miami Daily Planet*, was arrested twenty-nine times “on charges of selling obscene material.”<sup>28</sup> He was acquitted all but once, but the fees cost him \$93,000 in bond money. The *NOLA Express* in New Orleans faced two obscenity trials, and although acquitted in both cases, the fees forced the paper out of business. Forcade was quick to point to the hypocritical behavior of government officials as magazines like *Playboy* whose content included more explicit images were left alone.<sup>29</sup> Art Kunkin and Jerry Applebaum of the *Los Angeles Free Press* were criminally charged for publishing a list of local undercover narcotics agents. Local printers subsequently refused to print the *Freep* for fear of being charged themselves. Kunkin was forced to print the paper from the Bay Area before investing in his own printing press. The press he purchased turned out to be costly and inefficient, and in addition to his legal fees, Kunkin

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> McMillan, 128.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 137.

was forced to sell the paper to local pornographers who regularly purchased ads in the paper. No longer the owner, Kunkin stayed on as the editor until 1973, when the owners of the paper fired him after refusing to let him print anything about Watergate and asking him to withdraw from the UPS.<sup>30</sup> The paper that had started the underground press became an altogether different kind of publication.

The combined efforts of Federal agents and local police contributed to the destabilization, demise and transformation of many underground papers. Streitmatter wonders what underground papers like the *Barb* would “have been able to accomplish *if* the nation’s law enforcement officials had not harassed, intimidated, and beaten the staff members or committed acts of domestic terrorism.”<sup>31</sup> However much government officials contributed to the demise and transformation of these papers, so too did the ebbing of the countercultural movement more generally. By 1973, the majority of the first generation of underground papers had folded, some the result of harassment, others because the energy and cohesiveness of the counterculture was fading. A CIA document described the situation of the underground press in 1973, “The underground press is now in decline...It would appear that the vitality of the ‘alternative’ press was directly proportional to the health of the radical movement in general.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Peck, 288.

<sup>31</sup> Streitmatter, 219.

<sup>32</sup> Peck, 284.

The final meeting of the UPS took place in Boulder, Colorado hosted by the *Straight Creek Journal*.<sup>33</sup> The difference between two generations and styles of papers that had grown up in the UPS became apparent. A month before being fired from the *Freep*, Art Kunkin addressed the conference. He “spoke about how the papers filled the vacuum created by the lack of a mass political party.”<sup>34</sup> Others discussed the prison rebellion at Attica, a recent clash at Wounded Knee, and the activities of the American Indian Movement.<sup>35</sup> However, many in attendance were less interested in political mobilization than effective journalism. The tide had changed from when underground papers were being published by revolutionaries with a printer. According to the *New Yorker*’s Calvin Trillin, the majority of underground authors at this conference were trying to become “journalists rather than revolutionaries.”<sup>36</sup> Conference organizer Stephen Foehr described the divide, “We are the second generation alternative press as opposed to the first generation underground press...The second generation is trying to establish itself on a more stable footing by dropping the rhetoric and getting involved in their communities at the neighborhood level.”<sup>37</sup> Chip Berlet of the *Straight Creek Journal* took the microphone on the third day of the conference announcing, “The underground press is dead. Long live the alternative press!”<sup>38</sup> According to Peck, one cantankerous author of the *Berkeley Barb*,

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<sup>33</sup> McMillan, 176.

<sup>34</sup> Peck, 289.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> McMillan, 176.

<sup>38</sup> Peck, 290.

“unable to let an era end without at least a whimper, posted a note announcing a new organization called OFUP – Old Farts of the Underground Press.”<sup>39</sup> One person signed up.

The underground press that had helped establish and maintain the American counterculture was no more. The *San Francisco Oracle* had ceased publication in early 1968. The *East Village Other* faced financial difficulties and ceased publication in early 1972.<sup>40</sup> The *Los Angeles Free Press*, then controlled by pornographers, had lost Kunkin’s editorial vision. It ceased publication five years after the conference in Boulder. The *Berkeley Barb* folded two years after that, although it too had become primarily devoted to sex ads. The issue of the *Underground Press Review* following the conference in Boulder included a proposal that the UPS change its name from the *Underground Press Syndicate* to the *Alternative Press Syndicate*.<sup>41</sup> Along with the story was a ballot. The proposal passed with a vote of 20 to 1. The underground press, like the counterculture in which it had been embedded, was petering out.

Although the original generation of underground papers had all but died out in the matter of a decade, and although few underground papers made any money or attracted much literary attention, many authors have described them as successful. Peck writes that, in part because of underground papers, “DDT was banned, abortions were legalized, the draft ended, U.S. troops finally left Vietnam, the American Psychiatric Association ‘de-

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Patrick Rosenkranz, *Rebel Visions: The Underground Comix Revolution, 1963-1975* (Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics Books, 2008), 164.

<sup>41</sup> Peck, 290.

diseased' homosexuality, and draconian sentences for smoking plants were reduced.”<sup>42</sup> Streitmatter claims that the papers “certainly succeeded in helping America become more liberated about sexual activities and recreational drugs,” and that “with regard to social justice, the counterculture press clearly helped the anti-war press hasten the end of the Vietnam War, assisted in expanding the Civil Rights Movement to college campuses, and became a catalyst for many of the rights now enjoyed by American college students.”<sup>43</sup> McMillan calls underground papers the “New Left’s greatest organizational achievement,” adding that they “were inspiring and stimulating” and that “they helped to frame social relations within the Movement.”<sup>44</sup> As Bob Ostertag points out, longevity, profitability, and circulation are not effective measures of papers embedded in social movements.<sup>45</sup> To measure the success of a movement press, one ought to investigate the degree to which they helped things change.

The American counterculture and underground papers may not have toppled Washington or established the Age of Aquarius in the shell of the old technocracy, but many of their values and tastes became normalized, even hip. Peck writes,

The papers had grown by being in synch with “outsider” products desired by a coherent, self-identified audience: rock records, rolling papers, hip clothing, incense, sex ads, and Movement, hip, and occult books. Now even daily newspaper critics spread the musical word to a wider audience without

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>43</sup> Streitmatter, 219.

<sup>44</sup> McMillan, 189.

<sup>45</sup> Bob Ostertag, *People’s Movements, People’s Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 4.

automatically denouncing corporations that talked about “product” instead of songs.<sup>46</sup>

Describing the closure of abolitionist and woman suffrage papers, Ostertag writes that their “demise was a consequence of the movements’ concerns moving to the front page of the mainstream press. Here again, was the termination of so many publications a sign of the journals’ failure or of their success?”<sup>47</sup> One could ask the same of underground papers. They were “Movement” papers, and they most certainly helped the counterculture change America. A columnist for the San Francisco *Chronicle* wrote in 1975, “If you think you are the same person you were a decade ago, you are deluding yourself, or you are a fool.”<sup>48</sup>

In addition to all of the transformed tastes and attitudes, underground papers also transformed the religious landscape of the United States. They provided the means for consciousness expanders to express themselves politically; they democratized occult ideas and practices; and they helped make Native American and Asian religious traditions hip. As Albanese and others have shown, the majority of these traditions had been a part of America’s religious landscape for centuries before the counterculture began looking to them for religious expression, and these traditions had often been practiced together – “begging, borrowing, and stealing” from one another (and also from more widespread forms of Judaism and Christianity).<sup>49</sup> This dissertation has emphasized the effects the

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<sup>46</sup> Peck, 268.

<sup>47</sup> Ostertag, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Peck, 293.

<sup>49</sup> Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 515.

underground press had on these traditions by separating them out from one another and by focusing on the effects that underground papers had on specific ideas and practices. However, these traditions had, by the time of the underground press, already been inextricably combined in centuries of American metaphysical practices.

The specific effects that underground papers had on consciousness expansion, occultism, and Asian and Native American traditions individually, they also had on all of the others. Underground papers made occult, Asian and Native American traditions political in ways that they had not been for decades and maybe ever. They democratized the ideas of consciousness expansion as well as those of Asian and Native American traditions, and they made consciousness expansion and occultism hip in ways that they had not been before. If, as Albanese has argued, these traditions had coalesced into a metaphysical type of religiosity by the middle of the nineteenth century, underground papers politicized, democratized, and normalized them in the middle of the twentieth.

Many of the consciousness expanders who used underground papers to express themselves politically did so using metaphysical ideas and symbols. The exorcism of the Pentagon took the form of an occult-inspired exorcism, drawing on esoteric symbols and ideas. The idea of the Age of Aquarius that was prominent in underground papers was a utopian ideal that became widespread in part because it was also an implicit criticism of the American government. For Beat poet Gary Snyder, underground papers were a means for expressing the political ramifications of revolutionary Buddhism and the importance of tribal living inspired by Native Americans. Consciousness expanders like William James and Aldous Huxley may have feared that the use of entheogens would result in inactivity,

so the political effects that underground papers had on this tradition was especially pronounced, but it was not unique: underground papers opened up avenues of political expression for all metaphysicals.

Similarly, underground papers subjected not only occultism, but consciousness expansion as well as Native American and Asian traditions to public discourse and practice, effectively democratizing some of their ideas as well. No cultural evidence reveals the democratization of consciousness expansion better than the popularization of the phrase, “Turn on, tune in, and drop out,” popularized by Timothy Leary. Although clearly the phrase was intended to encourage hearers to experiment with consciousness expanding drugs, what exactly Leary meant by “dropping out” became a matter of public discourse. For some, it meant dropping out of social and professional obligations, finding a commune, and settling into a less hectic, less technocratic way of life. For others, it meant dropping out of one’s psychological games, temporarily, only to drop back in when the trip was over, although with new insight and healthier perspectives. Debates over the meaning of “Turn on, tune in, and drop out,” occurred all over the country, and especially in the pages of underground papers. Three issues of the *San Francisco Oracle* featured interviews with Timothy Leary, each of them discussing the meaning of the phrase. It became an especially visible topic of public discourse when the *Oracle* published the transcript of the Houseboat Summit in its seventh issue. Countercultural leaders Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Alan Watts, and Timothy Leary debated, among other countercultural ideas and interests, exactly what Leary meant by “Turn on, tune in and drop out,” and whether it was possible at all. Ginsberg asks Leary, “Precisely what do you mean by drop out, then...again for the

millionth time?”<sup>50</sup> Regardless of what Leary meant, the phrase took on a meaning for American culture more generally. An advertisement for Wolfschmidte vodka demonstrates the extent to which the phrase had become a part of the wider culture. Drawing clear parallel’s to Leary’s phrase, the ad “invite[s] readers to ‘turn on, tune in.’”<sup>51</sup>

Underground papers also contributed to public discourse surrounding Asian religious traditions. When Rennie Davis, one of the eight organizers originally charged with conspiracy to incite a riot at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, devoted himself to the boy guru Maharaj Ji, underground authors debated the meaning of his conversion. Dancing Bear of the *Berkeley Barb* interviewed Davis shortly after his conversion. After listening to Davis’ description of his experiences and beliefs about Maharaj Ji, Dancing Bear challenged Davis, “You know, Rennie, there are a lot of people out here in the movement who are really pissed. They consider you to be a cop-out on the ‘revolution.’”<sup>52</sup> A few months later, the *Free Aquarian* covered a public event in which Davis appeared on stage with Maharaj Ji. Author Bruce Jorgensen describes the claims made by Davis and Maharaj Ji’s followers that the guru offered experiences of enlightenment to all who would receive it, but Jorgensen also describes an angry group of attendees who hassled Davis because of his endorsement of the guru. Two men threw a pie at Davis. Others heckled Davis for “selling out the movement, using his notoriety as a

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<sup>50</sup> Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Gary Snyder, Alan Watts, “Houseboat Summit Meeting,” *Oracle* #7, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 135.

<sup>52</sup> Dancing Bear, “Rennie’s Rap: How He Found God,” *Berkeley Barb*, April 6, 1973, 7.

radical to push the guru, and generally not believing precisely what they believed.”<sup>53</sup> In response to Davis’ claim that he was not part of a religion, but that instead his decision to follow Maharaj Ji was based on “fact” rather than “faith,” Jorgensen writes, “The rads said, ‘You believe this shit, Rennie?’”<sup>54</sup> Jorgensen called the incident a “raging moral debate.”<sup>55</sup> As the war in Vietnam was coming to a close, Davis’ conversion to a metaphysical group was not unusual among countercultural activists. In papers like the *Barb* and the *Free Aquarian*, Davis’ conversion became the topic of a public discourse about revolutionary intentions, further exacerbating the differences between heads and fists.

Perhaps nothing better expresses the democratization of Asian religions, though, than the way in which underground papers contributed to the proliferation of words and symbols inspired by Asian traditions. Words like *Karma*, and *Dharma* regularly appeared in underground papers, often in articles that had little to do with Asian religions. The *Rag* titled a warning against heroin use, “Smack: Bad Karma.”<sup>56</sup> An announcement endorsing McGovern for the 1972 presidential election was printed in the *Barb* titled “Karma Alarma – Instant Karma: Alarm! Alarm!”<sup>57</sup> Signed by Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Jerry Rubin, John and Leni Sinclair among others, the endorsement criticized the Nixon Administration’s war policy and budget, without ever mentioning Buddhism or Hinduism.

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<sup>53</sup> Bruce Jorgensen, “Rennie Davis & God,” *The Free Aquarian*, June 1973, 6.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> A. Nomaly, “Smack: Bad Karma,” *The Rag*, August 2, 1971, 2.

<sup>57</sup> “Karma Alarma,” *Berkeley Barb*, November 3, 1972, 2.

An unattributed article in the September 19, 1969 edition of the *Barb* was featured on its cover announcing “Gautama wants you. Dharma Dodgers. For Escape plans see page 4.”<sup>58</sup> The title borders an image of a pig wearing a robe touching a similarly sized peace-symbol made of small human bodies. The article on page four is titled “Dharma Dodgers Device,” and describes how to build a Reichian Orgone accumulator, recommends five books by psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, and never mentions Hinduism or Buddhism.<sup>59</sup> Although the Beat generation of writers might have contributed as much to the democratization of words like *karma* and *dharma*, underground papers added to these terms’ democratization by using them in application to events and ideas that were far afield from Hinduism and Buddhism.

Underground papers were especially proficient at creating public discourse by and about Native Americans. Like the article by Sun Bear in the *San Francisco Oracle*, the *Illustrated Paper* included an article titled “Hopi Way” which was a two-page excerpt from Blue-bird Chief Andrew Hermequaftewa’s recorded version of Hopi history and existence, *The Hopi Way of Life is the Way of Peace* (1953).<sup>60</sup> That underground papers were a means for Native Americans to participate in public discourse is perhaps most clearly evident in the *Barb*’s interview with Cree poet and singer Buffy St.-Marie. John Bryan of the *Barb* introduces the topic of the interview, writing, “We talked about the new hippie fad of

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<sup>58</sup> “Gautama Wants You,” *Berkeley Barb*, September 19, 1969, cover.

<sup>59</sup> “Dharma Dodgers’ Device:,” *Berkeley Barb*, September 19, 1969, 4.

<sup>60</sup> James Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era: A Narrative Map of the Indian Ecumenical Conference* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 18.

studying and identifying with Indians and Indian customs. Buffy was a bit amused.”<sup>61</sup> St.-Marie replies, “It’s the weirdest vampire idea. It’s very perverted...I mean they won’t even let the Indians have a soul...I don’t care how many books they read or mushrooms they eat – they’ll never become Indians.”<sup>62</sup> St.-Marie’s criticism of countercultural imitation of Native American customs and dress is evident that underground papers were, among other things, places for public discourse. In addition to sympathetically covering the Native American occupation of Alcatraz and the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973, underground papers like the *Oracle* and the *Barb* provided the means for Native Americans to participate in public discourse that is still relevant in 2016 as imitating Native Americans continues to be controversial. The democratization of occultism was particularly transformative because of the degree to which it had been previously embedded in Theosophical institutions as well as the extent to which the idea of the Aquarian Age penetrated American culture, however underground papers also democratized ideas from other metaphysical traditions as well.

In addition to providing means of political expression for people interested in occultism and Asian and Native American traditions, and in addition to democratizing words and ideas from consciousness expanders as well as Asian and Native American traditions, underground papers also helped make consciousness expansion and occultism hip. The psychedelic art of underground papers reflects interest in consciousness expansion. The images often include occult symbols and aesthetically communicate ideas

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<sup>61</sup> John Bryan, “Buffy on Hippies – ‘They’ll Never Be Indians,’” *Berkeley Barb*, June 30, 1967, 10.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

of cosmic correspondence, energy, and unusual states of consciousness. For the *Oracle*, psychedelic art was part of the purpose of the paper. It was produced in states of expanded consciousness, and it was intended to help readers achieve a comparable state.<sup>63</sup> The prevalence of psychedelic art in the late 1960s and early 1970s evidences the degree to which consciousness expansion had become hip. Thomas Frank describes admen in the 1960s who endorsed the use of LSD when producing advertisements.<sup>64</sup> He points to a 1970 Smirnoff Vodka ad campaign that equated the beverage with LSD.<sup>65</sup> As the counterculture became hip, so too did consciousness expansion.

Similarly, astrological images became a marker of hip identity. The *Freep* printed ads for identification cards featuring the holder's astrological symbol, and a brief synopsis of characteristics associated with that sign.<sup>66</sup> The ad reads, "NOW...from the people who believe this is the age of ASTROLOGY and personally carry proof of it, offer the same opportunity with your own...PERSONALIZED ASTROLOGICAL ID CARD."<sup>67</sup> Two-sided plastic cards were available for two dollars each. The prevalence of the democratized idea of the Age of Aquarius in the musical *Hair* and in McCloskey's article on the "peacock revolution" demonstrate the degree to which occult ideas and practices had become hip. With few exceptions, before the late 1960s, the majority of Americans viewed Asian and

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<sup>63</sup> Allen Cohen, "The San Francisco Oracle: A Brief History," *San Francisco Oracle, Facsimile Edition: The Psychedelic Newspaper of the Haight-Ashbury, 1966-1968* (Berkeley, CA: Regent, 1991), xxxi.

<sup>64</sup> Frank, 114.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>66</sup> *Los Angeles Free Press*, August 22, 1969, 22.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

Native American traditions with hostility. That the counterculture, in part through the underground press, helped them become hip represented a dramatic shift of opinion, but underground papers also facilitated the hipness of consciousness expansion and occultism.

Together, the metaphysical religions of the counterculture (consciousness expanders, occultists, and many converts and sympathizers to Asian and Native American traditions), constitute part of a historical trajectory of metaphysical religion in the United States. They each have storied pasts and demonstrate remarkably-well the four categories of metaphysical traditions that Albanese describes. Consciousness expanders demonstrated a particular fascination with the human mind, self-consciously linking their practices to Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, and William James; occult interest in astrology and the procession of the equinoxes reveals a worldview incorporating a profound sense of cosmic correspondence that is blatantly dependent on the works of Levi Dowling and Alice Bailey; underground descriptions of yoga and Hinduism regularly include language about kundalini energy, often drawing on Theosophical teachings; finally, many participants in the counterculture engaged these traditions for salvation in the form of solace, seeking psychological health, healthier bodies, and ecological balance. Together, these religious expressions, so commonly found in underground papers, demonstrate the extent to which countercultural religious expression was distinctly metaphysical.

The proximity and hybridity of these traditions in the counterculture, and in the pages of the underground press, also reflects the extent to which countercultural religions were of the metaphysical type of religiosity. Many participants in one tradition often incorporated beliefs and practices from other metaphysical traditions. In the *Astral*

*Projection*, a Swami Sivananda of Washington DC describes for readers what they should have expected as the Age of Aquarius was about to begin.<sup>68</sup> After visiting Europe, Timothy Leary, who had popularized Hinduism and Buddhism as religious traditions hip to consciousness expansion, became interested in Crowleyian magic.<sup>69</sup> Richard Alpert, Leary's fellow-researcher at Harvard and then at Millbrook, visited India in 1967 and took on the identity of a Hindu-inspired guru, identifying afterward as Baba Ram Das and publishing the well-known book *Be Here Now* (1971). The proximity of these traditions is further evidenced by occult-themed bookstores that advertised not only astrological, tarot and alchemical texts, but also books on yoga, Buddhism, Hinduism, and consciousness expansion. Underground papers had a similar effect, often publishing articles about and inspired-by all of these traditions alongside one another, and just as often comparing them with one another. Although it has been clarifying to disentangle these separate traditions to make sense of the effects of underground papers, in reality, they had been entangled with one another before the late 1960s, and they continued to be entangled with one another during the late 1960s. In fact, participants in the counterculture added to the hybridity of metaphysical religion by incorporating consciousness expansion and Native American traditions in ways that most metaphysicals over the course of American history had not.

Altogether, the effects that underground papers had on metaphysical religions altered the trajectory of metaphysical religion in the United States. By popularizing beliefs in the coming Aquarian Age, by adding to the popularity of thinkers and religious leaders,

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<sup>68</sup> Swami Sivananda, "Enlightenment and the Guru," *The Astral Projection*, June 1969, 19.

<sup>69</sup> Timothy Leary, *Flashbacks: A Personal and Cultural History of an Era: An Autobiography* (New York: Putnam, 1990), 53.

and by contributing to the creation of a market in which consciousness expansion, occultism, and Asian and Native American traditions were advertised alongside one another, underground papers laid much of the groundwork for what would become New Age religion.<sup>70</sup>

Many underground publishers and authors became participants in the New Age movement themselves. After swiping the printer and mailing list of the *Liberation News Service*, Marshall Bloom believed that the LNS should “signify the New Age, a new way for journalists, artists, and photographers to share, grow, and create together.”<sup>71</sup> According to McMillan, as early as 1969 Bloom “began talking about plans to create a magazine out of the ashes of LNS, which he would call the *Journal of the New Age*.”<sup>72</sup> Walter Bowart of the *East Village Other* moved to Arizona where he started a metaphysical publishing house called *Omen* which published the early New Age title, *This is the New Age in Person* (1972).<sup>73</sup> Allen Cohen of the *San Francisco Oracle* moved to a Mendocino community intended to emulate the lives of “so-called primitive peoples.”<sup>74</sup> He directly attributes the

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<sup>70</sup> Wouter Hanegraaff distinguishes between two types of New Age religion, *sensu stricto* and *sensu lato*. In the *sensu stricto* mode, New Age practitioners emphasize their belief in a coming New Age, usually understood as the Age of Aquarius. In the *sensu lato* mode, New Age refers more generally to the pastiche of practices that have been embraced more widely as New Age religion became something of an identifiable market. It is New Age religion in a more general sense. Underground papers laid the groundwork for *sensu stricto* by democratizing belief in the Age of Aquarius, and they laid the groundwork for both *sensu stricto* and *sensu lato* by fueling interest in consciousness expansion and by contributing to the perception that Native American, Asian and occult traditions were hip. See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 94.

<sup>71</sup> McMillan, 158.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>73</sup> Peck, 304.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 307.

New Age movement to the counterculture and to underground papers especially. He writes, “The New Age Movement was born in the sixties. The creativity of the underground press launched many of our writers and artists.”<sup>75</sup> Steve Diamond of the *Liberation News Service* moved to Ojai, California where he helped organize the activities of the Harmonic Convergence.<sup>76</sup> After leaving the *East Village Other*, Allen Katzman hoped to start a “magazine of New Age consciousness.”<sup>77</sup> Art Kunkin, the founder of the first underground paper, began studying Alchemy with Manly Palmer Hall in Los Angeles, and later Frater Albertus in Colorado. Kunkin expressed to Abe Peck that he was “scientifically research[ing] ancient alchemical and herbal methods for life extension.”<sup>78</sup> New Age thinking is part of a long history of metaphysical practice that had begun centuries before the 1960s.<sup>79</sup> Still, careful scrutiny of underground papers reveals that metaphysical religion was coalescing into specifically New Age beliefs and practices in significant ways in the counterculture, and that underground papers nurtured this emerging style of practices, beliefs and organization.

For all of the underground press’s hyperbolic language of revolution, for all their irreverent attitudes, sex ads, and amateurish style of journalism, they also constituted a transformational institution of metaphysical religion that changed the face of American

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>79</sup> J. Gordon Melton, “History of the New Age Movement” in *New Age Encyclopedia* eds. J. Gordon Melton, Jerome Clark, Aidan A. Kelly (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1990).

religiosity from the staid veneer of tri-faith America to one of eclectic diversity and increased religious hybridity. Because of underground papers, metaphysical religions took on political importance, were diffused throughout American culture, and became hip in ways that they had never been before. Although metaphysical religions had been popular in America before the late 1960s, participants in the counterculture stripped off the veneer of tri-faith America that had been cultivated in the peak of the Cold War. They did so in and through underground papers, and American religion has never been the same since.

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