

## Introduction

Suddenly, in 1966 there were hippies, thousands of them, then tens of thousands, and within a couple of years, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of long-haired youth of both sexes dressed in tight-fitting jeans or bright-colored pants accompanied by colorful tie-dyed T-shirts with or without printed slogans, or, in the case of a goodly number of women, wearing Victorian “granny dresses” either out of the attic or from a chic store. The clothing, by contemporary standards, was outrageous. For men, slender pants flaunted sexuality in a traditionally repressed culture, while hip-swinging bejeaned women turned men on by wearing low-cut blouses and going braless. Hippie men and their “chicks” gave heightened display to the body from the red bandannas they wrapped around the forehead, to beads or Indian jewelry draped around the neck, to thick homemade leather belts with gigantic steel buckles, to sockless sandals made cheaply from recycled tires and imported from Mexico. As visibly different from mainstream culture as possible, they could not be ignored.<sup>1</sup>

The hippie counterculture is historically important for several reasons. First, this counterculture was a significant part of the

<sup>1</sup> Gene Anthony, *Magic of the Sixties* (Salt Lake City, UT, 2004), 12, 86–7, 98–102, 178–83; Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury* (New York, 1984), 6.

massive upheavals of the 1960s, which included civil rights, Black Power, feminism, and gay liberation, as well as looser sexual mores, the end of censorship, street protests, political radicalism, and environmentalism. Collectively, these movements profoundly changed the United States. Second, the hippie counterculture was large. Hundreds of thousands of young Americans were, at least for a time, hippies, and millions adopted some if not all hippie beliefs and practices. The numbers mattered. Third, hippie values represented a generational break with traditional middle-class culture. When hordes of people concentrated in a single youth generation simultaneously adopted new thoughts and behaviors, mainstream culture was forced to pay attention. In the long run, hippies played a significant role in transforming American society.

Why did the hippie counterculture emerge in the late Sixties? That is one main question that this book addresses. Related questions also need to be answered. What antecedent subcultures or countercultures shaped the hippie counterculture? Hippies both emerged from and were in opposition to mainstream society. They were young, white, and middle class, but they were never a majority of young Americans. Nonwhites rejected being hippies. The emergence of this counterculture during the 1960s owed a great deal to the large size of the “baby boomer” generation, as well as sharp generational differences between boomers and their parents, and the decade’s economic prosperity. The bulk of this book, however, is about what might be called the counterculture’s internal dynamics. Drugs, rock music, and a spiritual quest played a big role in the rise of hippies. So did new sexual attitudes and practices that were spreading throughout the society. The hippie relationship to politics was complicated and tangled. Eventually, many hippies settled in communes. Finally, the hippie legacy flowed in many directions.

Before exploring these issues, it is necessary to define a few terms. Every modern complex society has a *mainstream culture* that includes huge numbers of people, probably a majority, and that dominates the overall society to such an extent that those who adhere to different values and ways of living are said to

belong to a *subculture*. Members of a subculture may choose to keep particular beliefs or practices that are outside the mainstream but otherwise participate in mainstream culture either wholly or in part. For example, Italian immigrants might have a strong devotion to opera that sets them apart from other Americans, but attending operas does not impede subscribing to mainstream practices. However, when members of a subculture hold beliefs or engage in practices that are opposed to or radically different from mainstream values or practices, so that adherents to the subculture either cannot or do not wish to function inside the mainstream, then the subculture can be called a *counterculture*.<sup>2</sup>

Hippies, like other counterculture followers, rejected mainstream society and its culture. Hostile to the norms that the establishment tried to impose through public opinion and legal sanctions, hippies particularly resented pressure to conform concerning hair, dress, sex, drugs, and work. They celebrated non-conformity. In this sense, hippies expressed an anarchistic or even libertarian view. Such an attitude was consistent with hedonism, which was another hippie value. Mainstream authority was perceived to be the source of virtually all social, political, and economic ills, ranging from racism to the Vietnam War, corporate power, and oppression of hippies and their lifestyle. Hippies looked askance at the nation-state, its gargantuan size, its use of brutal force, and its enthusiastic militarism, as evidenced by Vietnam. This was no way, hippies concluded, to run any society.

During the past century several prominent countercultures appeared in the United States, beginning with Greenwich Village in New York during the early 1900s. These bohemians, as they were called after the characters in Puccini's opera, *La Boheme*, rejected ordinary jobs, marriage, and social norms. In the 1940s Harlem's black jazz musicians defied mainstream norms

<sup>2</sup> In 1960 Milton Yinger invented the idea of contraculture, which quickly became counterculture. Fred Davis, *On Youth Subcultures: The Hippie Variant* (New York, 1971). See also Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (Garden City, NY, 1969).

by using illegal drugs, especially heroin. At the same time, the Beat writers, primarily Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and their friends, created another counterculture. After the war, poets who had been interned in Oregon as conscientious objectors in World War II gathered in North Beach in San Francisco. During the 1950s, Kerouac and Ginsberg bridged the Beat communities in San Francisco and New York. Smaller oases developed in the French Quarter in New Orleans, in Venice in Los Angeles, and in a few other places. As late as the mid-1950s, only a few thousand bohemians lived in the United States. What differentiated the hippie counterculture of the 1960s from these earlier groups, more than any other aspect, was sheer numbers.<sup>3</sup>

To understand the sudden emergence of “hippies,” it is helpful to trace the origin of this somewhat enigmatic word. The fact that the singular was spelled both “hippy” and “hippie” in the Sixties suggests complex origins. Virginia Pope, the fashion editor of the *New York Times*, promoted the “hippy” look in high fashion from 1945 into the Fifties. Pope applauded postwar skirts worn low on the hips to accentuate hyperfemininity. One of the traits of the period was to make women look more womanly, which hippy skirts did. This use of the word *hippy* within haute couture continued sporadically throughout the 1950s; the main effect was to give the public familiarity with the sound of the word. Any connection to the Sixties counterculture was merely coincidental.<sup>4</sup>

A few scholars have suggested an African origin for the word *hippie*, but the evidence is thin. What is certain is that *hippie* is related to *hip* and *hep*. Both terms appear in the jazz musician Cab Calloway’s *Cat-ologue: A Hepster’s Dictionary*, a pamphlet on Harlem jive talk first published in the late 1930s. Calloway defined *hip* as “wise, sophisticated” and “hep cat” as “a guy who knows all the answers, understands jive.” According

<sup>3</sup> Gerald W. McFarland, *Inside Greenwich Village* (Amherst, MA, 2001); Phil Ford, *Dig* (New York, 2013); John Tytell, *Naked Angels* (New York, 1986; orig. 1976).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Virginia Pope, “From the Big Six,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1945, 103.

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to the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, jazz musicians, especially bebop artists, called themselves “hipsters” during the 1940s, either because they swung their hips to the music, or because they kept drug stashes on the hip under the belt. In the Forties *hipster*, *hip*, and *hep* all circulated among whites in New York, originally applied to black jazz performers and then later to jazz artists and fans of all races. African American musicians used *hippie* as a putdown for young white followers who startled performers by unexpectedly attending all-black clubs and copying jive talk. The *Autobiography* became a bestseller in late 1965 and helps explain the media’s sudden interest in the term.<sup>5</sup>

Some additional evidence about “hippies” dates from the late 1950s and early 1960s. Most of the references are elliptical, clearly refer to a counterculture, and primarily suggest a small group of misfits. In 1957 the *New York Times* published a list of current jazz hipster slang. *Hippy* meant, “Generic for a character who is super-cool, over-blasé, so far out that he appears to be asleep when he’s digging something the most.” The next year *Playboy* dropped a mention. The comedy album *How to Speak Hip* (1959) included a booklet defining a *hippy* as “a junior member of Hip society, who may know the words, but hasn’t fully assimilated the proper attitude.” In 1960 the entertainment columnist Earl Wilson referred to the pop singer Bobby Darin as “a hippie from New York City” who had “conquered all the New York hippies.” When Darin sang, girls swung hips in their seats. In 1961 the *New York Times Magazine* ran an article complaining that Greenwich Village was being overrun by “hippies from Forest Hills and South Orange,” that is, by middle-class tourists who pretended to be bohemians on the weekend.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> David Roediger, “Guineas, Wiggers, and the Dramas of Racialized Culture,” *American Literary History* 7:4 (Winter 1995), 663–4; Cab Calloway, *Cab Calloway’s Cat-ologue: A Hepster’s Dictionary* (N.p., circa 1938); Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1965), 95. See also Perry, *Haight-Ashbury*, 5; Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip* (New York, 1968), 28; Davis, *On Youth Subcultures*, 14, note 7.

<sup>6</sup> Elliot Horne, “For Cool Cats and Far-Out Chicks,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 18, 1957, 14; Herbert Gold, “What It Is – Whence It Came,” *Playboy*, February 1958, 84; *How to Speak Hip* (1959), booklet accompanying the

In 1963 the white Philadelphia rock singer Freddy Cannon, a regular on the afternoon television dance show *American Bandstand*, released “Do What the Hippies Do.” Cannon’s hippies swung hips and danced. Around the same time the pop culture columnist Dorothy Kilgallen wrote, “New York hippies have a new kick – baking marijuana in cookies.” In 1964 the *Village Voice* referred to “baby beatniks” as hippies, and *Time* reported on “hard-shell hippies” living improbably in Darien, Connecticut, a wealthy suburb. Jean Shepherd, a bearded radio talk show host on WOR, broadcast from a Village coffee house on Saturday nights. Off-air, he mused, “And the little old grandmother from Circleville [Ohio] can really be a hippie.” The dance teacher Killer Joe Piro, who taught café society the frug, the watusi, and other fast rock dances, said that New Yorkers wanted to be “hippies” and never “square.”<sup>7</sup>

When *The Rolling Stones, Now!* (1965) was released in the United States in February, Andrew Loog Oldham’s notes on the back cover observed the “hippy” presence in London and then described the Stones: “Their music is Berry-Chuck and all the Chicago hippies.” Oldham, who served as the band’s manager, was acknowledging his group’s debt to the black rock ‘n’ roll artist Chuck Berry, but the inverted name had a double meaning. By using a technique common in African American jive talk, Oldham suggested a close familiarity with the black hipster world. At the same time, the jive inversion could be read as a putdown of Berry’s influence on the Stones, because an inversion suggested that the opposite was true. The cited Chicago hippies were whites who liked black music, or more accurately grooved

album; Earl Wilson column, Colonial Heights, VA, *Progress-Index*, June 8, 1960, 4; David Boroff, “An Appeal to Save the Village,” *New York Times Magazine*, May 7, 1961, 77.

<sup>7</sup> Freddy Cannon, “Do What the Hippies Do” (1963); Dorothy Kilgallen, “The Voice of Broadway,” New Castle, PA, *News*, June 15, 1963, 20; Sally Kempton, “Baby Beatniks Spark Bar Boom on East Side,” *Village Voice*, September 10, 1964, 6; “Darien’s Dolce Vita,” *Time*, November 27, 1964, 60; Bernard Weinraub, “Jean Shepherd Leads His Flock on a Search for Truth,” *New York Times*, December 6, 1964, X17; Gay Talese, “Killer Joe Piro,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1964, 88.

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on rock, including the Stones. In effect, Oldham redefined hippies: youthful whites opposed to mainstream values, hippies pursued casual sex, took drugs, especially psychedelics, and listened to rock music.<sup>8</sup>

Hollywood was one of the first places to identify hippies, which became a term used inside the trade as early as 1964 to describe a new category of young filmgoers. Hippies liked arty foreign-language films, watched the French New Wave, were intrigued by Britain's angry young men, and admired the comedy *Tom Jones* (1963), the first non-American film to win the Oscar for best picture. They flocked to see Peters Sellers in *A Shot in the Dark* (1964). By 1966 hippies were being noticed more widely. When the black entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. promoted his new television variety show, he vowed, "The show won't be for hippies only." That same year the folksinger Joan Baez did a concert in which she sang her brother-in-law Richard Farina's ballad, "The House Un-American Blues Activities Dream," which contained a "hippy, hoppy" reference in its lyrics. Shortly afterward, a *New York Times* reporter denounced "hippie dippies" who were "lispering, prancing, cursing" on Macdougall Street in Greenwich Village. The *Times* also found hippies in Los Angeles and Berkeley.<sup>9</sup>

There is a related but alternative explanation for how the word *hippie* developed on the West Coast. In the late 1950s San Francisco's North Beach and New York's Greenwich Village were the nation's only important counterculture communities. They remained relatively isolated from each other. The Beats came of age during or just after World War II, and by the late Fifties a

<sup>8</sup> Rolling Stones, *The Rolling Stones, Now!* (1965), back cover notes by Andrew Loog Oldham.

<sup>9</sup> Philip K. Scheuer, "Film Audience Hippy, Hooray," *Los Angeles Times*, September 27, 1964, B1, B4; Bernhard Weinraub, "A Long Day's Journey with Davis," *New York Times*, January 2, 1966, 91; "Joan Baez Success at Philharmonic," *New York Times*, March 14, 1966, 37; "City Cleanup of Macdougall Street Is Called a Failure," *New York Times*, May 30, 1966, 24; Peter Bart, "Bohemian Newspapers Spread across Country," *New York Times*, August 1, 1966, 30; Ben A. Franklin, "A Showdown Is Expected in Strike at Berkeley," *New York Times*, December 4, 1966, 85.

new, younger counterculture generation became visible. The *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Herb Caen called the Beats' young followers "beatniks." Caen played upon audience familiarity with "sputnik," but he was also drawing upon Yiddish, where the -nik ending meant the diminutive, that is, beatniks were little Beats, which referred to their youthful status. Interestingly enough, Caen in 1958 described a hip teenager as a "hippie." Beatnik, however, became the standard term, probably because beatniks faithfully copied Beat clothes, slang, and love of jazz.<sup>10</sup>

A new word was needed when the hip young dropped jazz for rock. In 1959 an Australian rock musician produced a single, "Hippy Hippy Shake," which became a local hit. The song urged dancers to shake their hips. Although the recording was sold only in Australia, a traveling Australian disc jockey later gave a copy of the record to a San Francisco disc jockey. Never heard on the radio, the record was played at parties, which promoted the word *hippy* in San Francisco. In 1961 the local critic Kenneth Rexroth alluded to youthful "hippies." By the mid-1960s, a younger rock-loving counterculture generation had to be distinguished from the jazz-oriented beatniks. The musical switch was connected to the rise of the psychedelic drug lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). Michael Fallon, a reporter for the *San Francisco Examiner*, used the words *hippie* or *hippies* twelve times in a four-part series in September 1965. Focusing on the Haight-Ashbury, he defined hippies as "the outer fringe of the bohemian fringe" and noted connections to the arts, homosexuals, and marijuana. "Hippies" gained broader notice in 1966, when Caen used the word in his *Chronicle* column, which had more than one hundred thousand daily readers.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> W. J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War* (New York, 1989), 133; Herb Caen column, *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 17, 1958, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Neville, *Hippie Hippy Shake* (London, 1995), 10; Kenneth Rexroth, "What's Wrong with the Clubs" (1961), in *World Outside the Window* (New York, 1987), 194; Michael Fallon in *San Francisco Examiner*: "A New Paradise for Beatniks," September 5, 1965, sec. 1, 5 (quote); "A New Hip Hangout," September 6, 1965, 14; "Bohemia's New Haven," September 7, 1965, 1, 8; "Are Beats Good Business?" September 8, 1965, 17; Herb Caen column, *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 22, 1966, 27; William



Except for the *Chronicle* and the *New York Times*, mainstream newspapers barely mentioned hippies until 1967, which produced frenzy. From 1967 to 1970, newspapers ran hundreds of stories about the counterculture, but the slant depended upon the paper. The *Chicago Tribune* linked hippies to crime with such headlines as “2 Hippie Types Rob Brink’s.” In reality, the robbers, who may or may not have been hippies, were identified as such because they were longhairs. The *Los Angeles Times* tied hippies to drugs, and most drug references included the word *addict*. The *Seattle Times* sent reporters to talk to hippies about why they believed and acted as they did. So did the *Washington Post*, which published Nicholas von Hoffman’s thoughtful fifteen-part series. The establishment *New York Times* rarely interviewed hippies. Instead, the paper’s reporters discussed hippies with psychiatrists and sociologists, a method that stressed deviance. The *San Francisco Chronicle* was unique in employing hippie sympathizers, notably the columnist Ralph Gleason.<sup>12</sup>

Hippies looked to the new underground press weeklies for information about their own communities. The *Berkeley Barb*, founded by political radicals in 1965, gradually shifted toward hippiedom. Its youthful reporters routinely talked to San Francisco’s numerous hippies. The *San Francisco Oracle*, an avowedly hippie newspaper, appeared sporadically and only published twelve issues in seventeen months (1966–8) before disappearing. Like other hippie publications, its LSD-influenced graphics and typography became distorted and bizarre. In New York, the *Village Voice*, founded in 1955, covered the counterculture, but its vision was not youthful. Hippies preferred the *East Village Other*, which never matched the *Barb*’s vigor. Other important counterculture papers included the *Los Angeles Free Press*, which covered cultural events extremely well; the Boston

Hedgepeth, *The Alternative* (New York, 1970), 17; Barney Hoskyns, *Beneath the Diamond Sky* (New York, 1997), 37.

<sup>12</sup> “2 Hippie Types Rob Brink’s of \$29,000 in Cash,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 8, 1968, B2; Nicholas von Hoffman series, *Washington Post*, October 15–29, 1967. Online searches were conducted for all of the newspapers except the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which was read on microfilm.

*Avatar*, which was swept into the Mel Lyman cult; the salty and sardonic Austin *Rag*; and the militantly radical Detroit *Fifth Estate*.<sup>13</sup>

The hippie social movement is not always easy to document. Sources are a problem. Hippies were not very articulate and often spoke in vague terms, for example, “groovy” or “far out.” This counterculture was about the expression of feelings; it was openly anti-intellectual. Hippies blamed reason and linear thought for most of the world’s troubles. Unlike the Surrealists of the 1920s, no hippie Andre Breton issued a guiding manifesto. There were no hippie membership organizations. The hippie counterculture lacked the philosophical underpinnings that Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre gave to the French Existentialists. Whereas the Beat writers in the Fifties had critiqued existing society and offered a literary vision for the future, hippies produced no significant literature. They did produce some art and impressive rock music. In addition to the music, the main sources for studying hippies are statements by older gurus such as Ken Kesey and Timothy Leary, media coverage, social science field research, medical reports (which often stress deviance), and later hippie memoirs. A vast secondary literature is crucial.<sup>14</sup>

Ironically, hippies disliked being called hippies, which both the public and the media used derogatorily. Long-haired protesters and criminals were called “hippies,” which conflated all young male longhairs, whether or not they shared hippie values. When the press queried the public, interviewees often spat out the phrase “dirty hippie.” Counterculture adherents preferred to be called the “love generation,” “heads,” or “freaks” and contrasted the “freak” and “straight” worlds. (In this book “freak” and “hippie” are used interchangeably.) Or they used “flower children,” which evoked nature and peacefulness, a benign phrase that separated hippies from violent thugs or political radicals.

<sup>13</sup> John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters* (New York, 2011). The microfilm of the Underground Newspaper Collection remains indispensable.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Conlin, *The Troubles* (New York, 1982), 229–30; Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces* (Cambridge, MA, 1989).