

# Self-Invention in the Realm of Production: Craft, Beauty, and Community in the American Counterculture, 1964–1978

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*In the 1960s and 1970s, self-avowed members of the counterculture, often based on the west coast and in the Rocky Mountain West, eschewed critics' stereotypical notions of stoned and indolent hippies and struggled to build an alternative economic system. While rejecting corporate capitalism and consumer acquisitiveness, they built new enterprises, new institutions, new organizational forms, and new practices that gave proof of the possibility of creating economically sustainable, alternative lives. Do-it-yourself practices, especially building one's own home or repairing one's own vehicle, promised to free practitioners from working for wages in order to afford consumer goods—even as DIY culture often promoted traditional gender roles. While many of the counterculture's attempts at escaping the employee-consumer nexus failed or were short-lived, it did succeed in outlining an alternative approach to both production and consumption that has had a continuing impact on American capitalist development.*

**Key words:** *Counterculture, capitalism, Whole Earth Catalog, Do It Yourself, vernacular architecture, hippies*

People committed to the Sixties-era counterculture, often labeled hippies, were reputed then, and often remembered in the decades that followed, to be indolent, work-adverse, stoned drop-outs. Popularizers and publicists of the counterculture, such as Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, gave credence to such stereotypes. Hoffman, in his late 1960s and early 1970s campus lecture tours, lambasted the American work ethic: “Work, work, work, work, work,

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Special thanks to my fellow scholars of the counterculture for all their critical support: Josh Clark Davis, Michael Kramer, Maria McGrath, and Nick Meriwether. Thanks, as well, to the editors and article referees at the *PHR*. As always, Beth Bailey was there from the beginning to the end.

*Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 85, No. 3, pages 408–442. ISSN 0030-8684, eISSN 1533-8584  
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work, work! It's a dirty four letter word!"<sup>1</sup> Hippies, seemingly by definition, were averse to holding down a job, building careers, and to any sort of disciplined hard work. In the mid-1960s, when the Haight-Ashbury was just coming together as a haven for young rebels, the image of the stoned, indolent, work-averse hippie had some real-life credibility. But that image hid as much as it revealed. Many young people who believed they were part of an alternative culture, especially by the late 1960s, wanted to do more than reject the consumer capitalist world they were poised to inherit. They wanted to create an alternative economic system, and they were willing to work hard to achieve it, though on their own terms.

Within the permeable bounds of the counterculture, young people in the late 1960s and early 1970s struggled to craft everyday economic practices that would allow them to build new lives and new communities. As much as possible, they wanted to create what one practitioner called "handmade lives."<sup>2</sup> Peter Coyote, one of the most heralded members of the counterculture, in part for the lucidity of his thoughts, observed: "Many people dissatisfied to the point of despair with the available options of being either a 'consumer' or an 'employee,' were searching for new and more liberating social structures."<sup>3</sup> At the cusp of the Sixties and Seventies, many of these men and women who self-identified with the counterculture wanted to produce, not consume; they wanted to work, not simply lay about or "drop out," but wanted to work hard on projects of their own devising. Counterculture men and women imagined a different relationship to the making and getting of goods and services and to the labor process itself. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, some of those young people began to build new enterprises, new institutions, new organizational forms, and new practices that gave proof of the possibility of creating sustainable, alternative lives. Contrary to prevalent

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1. Abbie Hoffman, speech at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, April 7, 1970, FOIA-HQ file 176-34, section 7 of 10, p. 140, FBI Records: The Vault, <http://vault.fbi.gov/abbie-hoffman>.

2. See Anabelle Williams, ed. and comp., *Handmade Lives: A Collective Memoir* (San Francisco: Firefall Editions, 2002), which includes the life stories of some of the two hundred or so people who settled in the small Northern California community of Canyon in the 1960s and 1970s, almost all of whom built their own homes. In recent years a multitude of memoirs, often published by small regional presses, and websites dedicated to Sixties-era countercultural lives have begun appearing. They are a fruitful source for personal accounts of the felt experience of self-identified members of the counterculture.

3. Peter Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1999), xiii.

myths and common historical accounts, these searchers argued for cultural, even spiritual, redemption through work: hard and creative work that fostered both self-sufficiency and communitarianism.<sup>4</sup> They struggled to gain relative autonomy from the money-intensive economic imperatives of late twentieth-century American-style consumer capitalism even as they sought economic and institutional sustainability.

Some of these people developed sites of human-scale production that were intended to make money while others simply wanted to make things on their own and in their own way, outside the money economy.<sup>5</sup> These countercultural practitioners were dedicated to building communities focused on human-scale production that valued artisanal competency and community utility. The values and practices these self-conscious cultural rebels developed in their sometimes wayward pursuit of an alternative way of life drew deliberately on a long tradition of similar undertakings, some developed out of material necessity and others from a dedication to aesthetic and spiritual values.<sup>6</sup>

The ethos of self-production championed by some Sixties-era individuals and groups gave shape to an array of enterprises and sensibilities that continued to affect American society long after the

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4. The two best known contemporary accounts of the counterculture by academics, Charles Reich's *The Greening of America* (New York: Random House, 1970) and Theodore Roszak's *The Making of the Counterculture* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), argue that the counterculture represents a change of consciousness among a segment of young people. Roszak argues that the counterculture was inherently anti-technology and anti-science, positions that a great many scholars have since rejected or, at the least, complicated. See for example the outstanding edited collection, David Kaiser and Patrick McCray, eds., *Groovy Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2016). Reich attempts to channel the feelings of young rebels to explain why America needs a "Revolution by Consciousness" (322). Both authors spend hardly any time explaining or analyzing what young people aligned with the counterculture were doing to live out their changed consciousness or how they attempted to enact their dreams in the material world. Both are mostly invested in convincing non-young readers that the young rebels are onto something important and are likely to be a formidable force for good.

5. For a scholarly account of the role of money-making and "right livelihoods" in the counterculture see David Farber, "Building the Counterculture, Creating Right Livelihoods," *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture* 6, no. 1 (May 2013): 1–24.

6. In this article I will not develop the "wayward" aspect of many a young rebel's search for useful skills and proper tools, but the path was far from linear and the promiscuous use of mind drugs and pursuit of new systems of belief did not always lead to practical results. For a powerful narrative of the wayward aspect of the search see Peter Coyote's account of the communards at Black Bear Ranch. Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, 143–52.

chronological Sixties ended. In particular, this fraction of the counterculture rejected atomized, individualistic consumerism. They created communities of inquiry aimed at developing technical mastery that made it possible for individuals to create, maintain, and manage the goods and services that made their everyday lives rich and productive. Rarely was this mastery seen as solely self-serving; instead, these particular sorts of counterculture rebels worked within a communitarian ethos in which knowledge and authority were shared and a commitment to community and solidarity often trumped individual advancement and material gain.

Some of these practitioners sought to escape capitalism and acquisitive individualism altogether, but most made a kind of separate peace with both capitalism and the pleasures of material comfort and consumption. They were often less concerned with overthrowing an economic system and far more concerned, as Coyote argued, with creating a more communitarian, egalitarian, and cooperative scene. Mollie Katzen, in explaining the origins of the iconic countercultural enterprise that she co-founded, the Moosewood Restaurant in Ithaca, states the matter straightforwardly. She and her friends “wanted to engage in a community project” in which everyone would “participate in all aspects of running the restaurant, from deciding policy to planning menus to changing light bulbs.” There would be no bosses and no employees, but there would be, hopefully, profits, which would be shared by everyone involved.<sup>7</sup> These men and women were not generally invested in overthrowing capitalism but in reimagining it.<sup>8</sup>

Often, the people driving these social and cultural developments were directed more by intuition and impulse than by a fully realized strategy or long-term plan. As a result, many of the more economically successful practices of the counterculture were coopted by profit-maximizing individuals and corporations. Not surprisingly, less economically sustainable practices often disappeared rather quickly. Nonetheless, the cultural rebels of the long Sixties did bring a forthright mindfulness to the practices of consumer capitalism, and they

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7. Mollie Katzen, *Moosewood Cookbook* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1977), VIII.

8. For an excellent analysis of how men and women who identified with the counterculture struggled with the logic and morality of capitalism, see Maria McGrath, “‘That’s Capitalism, Not a Co-Op’: Countercultural Idealism and Business Realism in 1970s U.S. Food Co-Ops,” *Business and Economic History On-Line* 2 (2004), [www.thebhc.org/publications/BEHonline/2004/McGrath.pdf](http://www.thebhc.org/publications/BEHonline/2004/McGrath.pdf).

did so by honoring the dignity and redemptive power of collaboration, cooperation, and competency in service to human scale production and artisanal practices. They did not fundamentally change the world, but they altered the possibilities of everyday life in the decades that followed the long Sixties.

Many scholars who have written about the anti-consumerist and anti-corporate capitalist rebels of the Sixties-era, such as Thomas Frank and Grace Hale, have dismissed both the utility and the seriousness of those young whites who insisted that they were rebelling against the profit-maximizing dictates of capitalism and the corporate forces that governed the free market. Frank, for example, derides the counterculture as “a stage in the development of the values of the American middle class, a colorful installment in the twentieth century drama of consumer subjectivity.”<sup>9</sup> These rebels, he argues, were really nothing more than stooges in the production of new “hip” styles that were good for Big Business. Hale is equally scornful of so-called members of the counterculture: “Freedom meant not working. It meant having lots of sex. It meant taking drugs . . . [T]hey remade their own privilege by asserting their innocence.”<sup>10</sup> Hale sees counterculture adherents as self-indulgent pseudo-rebels, white middle-class wastrels who accomplished nothing and then quietly returned to the bourgeois lives that awaited them.

The disdain many on the academic Left had and continue to have for the Sixties-era counterculture, in particular, comes from the obvious displacement the overwhelmingly white, primarily middle-class, cultural rebels’ search for individual freedom had on their concern for the broad cause of social and economic equity. David Harvey writes: “The worldwide political upheavals of 1968 . . . were strongly inflected with the desire for greater personal freedoms . . . But the ’68 movement also had social justice as a primary political objective. Values of individual freedom and social justice are not, however, necessarily compatible.”<sup>11</sup> Far too often, Harvey and other critics note, the white cultural rebels of the Sixties era made individual freedom and not social justice their primary

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9. Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 29.

10. Grace Elizabeth Hale, *A Nation of Outsiders: How the White Middle Class Fell in Love with Rebellion in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 228.

11. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 41.

goal. Their complaints against the “poverty of abundance” had, according to these critics, little to do with the needs of actual poor people who had been and would continue to be mired in material poverty.<sup>12</sup>

Far more useful and meritorious, in this view, was the kind of work the Black Panther Party pursued in its militant rejection of capitalist structures in service to the Black community. The Panthers, as historian Alondra Nelson writes in *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination*, eschewed any concern over capitalist economic sustainability and sought instead to create a communitarian system of social provision.<sup>13</sup> While such related institutions as free medical clinics were, in fact, pursued by elements of the counterculture—and indeed helped to inspire the Panthers—it is true that these egalitarian efforts were not at the heart of the counterculture’s re-thinking of corporate consumer capitalism. As a result, Leftist critics make the hard claim that the overwhelmingly white counterculture pursued a rebellion without radical purpose and, thus, with little significance.<sup>14</sup> This political critique has merit, but it fails to address how and why the counterculture would challenge and change work and consumption in the United States and what those disruptions meant, if not for the poor, then for a good many other everyday people who were also struggling for a good life.

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12. The historian John Patrick Diggins makes the point with his usual pithiness: “The historical context of the Old Left was the abundance of poverty; that of the New Left, the poverty of abundance.” John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: Norton, 1992), 232.

13. Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

14. Without a doubt, many young people who thought of themselves as cultural rebels and participants in the counterculture were little more than consumer-oriented “day-trippers” who emulated their rock star heroes through store-bought outfits (white Levis), watched youth-oriented entertainers on TV (“Let’s spend *some time* together”), and maybe scored the occasional “lid” of Mexican grass. For many young people, such consumerist adventures were the sum total of their cultural rebellion and even those modest forays were taken cautiously to assure that their return to the mainstream remained viable. In Todd Gitlin’s seminal account of the Sixties, he observes: “There were many more weekend dope-smokers than hard-core ‘heads’; many more readers of the *Oracle* than writers for it; many more cohabitators than orgiasts; many more turners-on than droppers out.” Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 214. But some self-identified cultural rebels—a hard to calculate number—saw themselves and their project of collective rebellion as much more than a recreational dip into the self-indulgent, Dionysian cheap thrills of the moment, and those are the people I will be writing about in this article.

Critically, the counterculture rebels who put into practice alternative models of economic sustainability and economic cooperation in the late 1960s and 1970s were not operating in a historical or cultural vacuum. Rather they were expressive of a broader discontent with consumer acquisitiveness and corporate work, a discontent that they, unlike many others, acted upon. Sixties rebels' critique of the fruits of post–World War II corporate consumer capitalism, in general, grew less out of their immediate experiences as workers—few gained their consciousness at the point of production—than it did out of their experiences as TV-bred consumers and from the cultural criticism that filled college classrooms, bestseller lists, popular movies, and the writings of well-publicized outsiders in the 1950s and early 1960s. These sources fueled the desire of young people who affiliated with the counterculture to do more than lament the obdurate realities of a consumer capitalist society; they meant to challenge its tenets.

In the 1950s, a host of best-selling texts by authors such as Vance Packard, John Kenneth Gailbraith, Sloan Wilson, and William Whyte critiqued the cultural and political virtues of what the historian Lizabeth Cohen has called the “consumer’s republic.”<sup>15</sup> Packard, in his immensely popular, vaguely conspiratorial books, warned of the “hidden persuaders” implanted by advertisers into the new TV commercials that tricked people into mindless consumption and, echoing Thorstein Veblen, inveighed against the multitude of “status seekers” who sought to demonstrate through their vainglorious consumer choices their superiority to those they deemed below them in social rank.<sup>16</sup> Like-minded criticism came from Hollywood films, such as the movie version of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1956) and in the portrayal of feckless white-collar fathers in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955).

Deploying a great deal more intellectual firepower, though at the cost of far less popular attention, Daniel Bell published a book-length essay in 1956 titled “Work and Its Discontents.” He warned of the costs corporate rationality and efficiency were having not on worker’s paychecks but on their “spirit” and their “appetite for work.”<sup>17</sup>

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15. Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2004).

16. Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957; New York: Ig Publishing, 2007); *Ibid.*, *The Status Seekers* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1959).

17. “Work and Its Discontents” was first published in 1956 by Beacon Press. The quote here comes from Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (New York: The Free Press, 1962), 262. The essay was republished as part of Bell’s longer and better-known work.

In *Growing Up Absurd* (1960), a surprise bestseller, social critic Paul Goodman wrote in a similar vein: “It is hard to grow up when there isn’t enough man’s work. There is ‘nearly full employment’ (with highly significant exceptions), but there get to be fewer jobs that are necessary or unquestionably useful; that require energy and draw on some of one’s best capacities; and that can be done keeping one’s honor and dignity.”<sup>18</sup> Goodman’s unthinking focus on “man’s work” and disregard of women’s place in the workplace was typical of the genre; this normative sexism—with its focus on a renewed sense of masculinity—would be an issue members of the counterculture themselves would confront in the late 1960s. Regardless of such narrowness of vision, books by Goodman, Bell, Gailbraith, and other serious scholars were avidly read by young people and regularly assigned in college courses.

Working at an oblique angle from the academic and pop critics of corporate consumer capitalism, a group of self-described outsiders, the Beats, took an even harder line on the poverty of abundance. As many historians of the Sixties have noted, Beat writers produced a slew of texts that percolated throughout the Sixties, at least among more literary and artistic young people.<sup>19</sup> Coyote and his circle, operating in San Francisco, were all deeply invested in Beat culture, and the California underground press in the 1960s treated the best-known of the Beat writers as avatars of a new consciousness to which they aspired.

Beats spoke openly and often of their disdain for the employee-consumer nexus. Lawrence Lipton, author of *The Holy Barbarians* (1959), the best known contemporary chronicle of the Beats, titled Chapter 7 of his classic work “Down with the Rat Race: The New Poverty.” He explains: “It is only after a long process of diseducation and re-education that one sees clearly and sees it whole—the price-wage shell game, the speed-up treadmill, the Save!-Spend! contradictions dunned into our ears night and day. . . . The Rat Race. A rat race that offers only two alternatives: to run with the hare or run with the hounds.”<sup>20</sup> The Beats rejected the lure of the consumer marketplace, choosing instead, as Lipton noted, “the new poverty.”

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18. Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd* (New York: Vintage, 1960), 17.

19. See for example, David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 171–74.

20. Lawrence Lipton, *The Holy Barbarians* (New York: Black Cat, 1962), 149. The book was first published in 1959.



Jack Kerouac, in *The Dharma Bums* (1959), offers a paean to the virtues of shopping—not at the mall for the latest fashions—but at the Salvation Army store: “we were foraging with bemused countenances among all kinds of dusty old bins filled with the washed and mended shirts of all the old bums in the Skid Row universe. I bought socks, one pair of old woolen Scotch socks that go way up over your knees, which would be useful on a cold night meditating in the frost.”<sup>21</sup>

Members of the counterculture would take heed of the anti-consumerist sentiments of the Beats and of their disregard for the corporate Rat Race. Especially in the mid-1960s, the Beat underground sensibility—the wish to simply live outside the dictates of the marketplace and to focus instead on artistic expression and spiritual discovery—was fundamental to the cultural rebels of the Sixties era, too. But especially by the late 1960s, people who affiliated with the counterculture began to ponder how they could do more than simply meditate “in the frost” in a pair of second-hand socks.

Beginning in the late 1960s, a variety of writers, artists, technologists, and designers, many of them based in Northern California, began to give form to this collective project and then disseminated their vision in practical terms. In part, people in this productive wing of the counterculture acted self-consciously as a public counterweight to more indolent and inward-obsessed elements that had gained so much attention both inside and outside the counterculture in 1966 and early 1967. In particular, they abhorred the effect Timothy Leary’s catchy slogan, “Turn on, tune in, drop out” was having in the epicenter of the early counterculture, San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury, and more generally in the national media. To give voice to these concerns, the publishers of the most influential countercultural newspaper, the San Francisco *Oracle*, brought Leary together with well-respected elder statesmen of the counterculture, all of whom had deep roots in the Beat movement: the mystical theologian Alan Watts, the poet and activist Allen Ginsberg, and the poet and ecological visionary Gary Snyder. The *Oracle* titled this epic meeting “The Houseboat Summit” (the group met in Watts’s moored ferry-boat home) and then published the lengthy transcript of their conversation in the paper.

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21. Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (New York: New American Library, 1959), 84–85.

Ginsberg, Watts, and Snyder hoped to outline a more positive vision of a productive, economically viable counterculture life. Ginsberg began by taking Leary to task. He told Leary: “Everybody in Berkeley is all bugged out because they think, one: the drop-out thing doesn’t really mean anything, that what you’re gonna cultivate is a lot of freak-out hippies goofing around and throwing bottles through windows when they flip out on LSD. . . . So they think you mean like, drop out, like go live on Haight-Ashbury and do nothing at all. Even if you can do something like build furniture and sell it, or give it away in barter with somebody else.” Gary Snyder gently joined in, “Drop out throws me a little bit, Tim.” Snyder, more than anyone else, articulated a more productive understanding of what a countercultural life could be: “What is very important here is, besides taking acid, is that people learn the techniques which have been forgotten. That they learn new structures and new techniques. Like, you just can’t go out and grow vegetables, man. You’ve got to learn HOW to do it. Like we’ve gotta learn to do a lot of things we’ve forgotten to do.”<sup>22</sup> The Houseboat Summit set up the terms of the debate, but Snyder, as well as Ginsberg and Watts, only hinted at what should and could come next.

Others took this positive vision further by offering detailed instructions on how to live a productive and alternative life. The most developed and most widely read of the countercultural how-to guides was the *Whole Earth Catalog*. First published in 1968 and then updated and republished throughout the next dozen years, the *Catalog* curated a new way of life framed around self-production, economically sustainable practices, and artisanal skills. The *Catalog*’s compilers, based in Menlo Park, California, looked outside as well as inside mainstream American life for the kinds of tools, practices, and information that would allow counterculture adherents to build their new lives in coordination with other like-minded people. At least according to one celebrated and self-described scion of the counterculture, Steve Jobs, the catalog was “one of the bibles of my generation,” a bible made all the more appealing by the transparency and approachability of its mode of production. The catalog,

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22. All quotations are taken from “The Houseboat Summit,” 1967, featuring Timothy Leary, Gary Snyder, Alan Watts, and Allen Ginsberg, [http://project.unicorn.holtof.com/watts/the\\_houseboat\\_summit1.htm](http://project.unicorn.holtof.com/watts/the_houseboat_summit1.htm), accessed June 30, 2014. The entire transcript appears in *The Oracle* 7 (February 1967). The original is set against a psychedelic background and is a lot harder to read than the clean transcript provided online.

he recalled in 2005, was a handcrafted thing “made with typewriters, scissors and Polaroid cameras.”<sup>23</sup>

The catalog was the brainchild of Stanford-educated Stewart Brand, perhaps the counterculture’s most influential doer.<sup>24</sup> Brand summed up the purpose of the *Catalog* in his pithy introduction to it:

We are as gods, and we might as well get good at it. So far, remotely done power and glory—as via government, big business, formal education, church—has succeeded to the point where gross defects obscure actual gains. In response to this dilemma and to those gains a realm of intimate, personal power is developing—power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment, and share his adventure with whoever is interested. Tools that aid this process are sought and promoted by the *Whole Earth Catalog*.<sup>25</sup>

The *Whole Earth Catalog* offered tools its readers could use to build their own homes, make their own clothes, grow their own food, develop their own communities, and even deliver their own babies. The historian Andrew Kirk sums up the catalog’s pitch and its appeal: “*Whole Earth* offered a simple proposition to readers: Empower yourself in an increasingly homogenized modern culture through access to creative information about alternative paths and good tools to get the job done.”<sup>26</sup> Brand’s intended audience was not indolent “hippies,” nor was it suffused with the Beat mentality that saw work as a drag that only got in the way of artistic expression and hard kicks. *Whole Earth* was aimed at hard-working people who wanted out of the consumer lifestyle. The heroes of the catalog, individuals such as Buckminster Fuller, Jay Baldwin, Steve Baer, and Lloyd Kahn, were people who knew how to design and make useful, relatively inexpensive and easy-to-build things and could

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23. Steve Jobs, “Commencement,” address at Stanford University, June 12, 2005, accessed June 14, 2005: <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2005/june15/jobs-061505.html>.

24. See Andrew Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 2007). As his book title indicates, Kirk argues that Stewart Brand and his cohort played a vital role in changing the trajectory of the environmental movement in the United States by focusing attention on “appropriate technology” and individuals’ ability to live more environmentally sustainable lives.

25. *Whole Earth Catalog*, 1968, 2. Throughout this piece I use the e-book version of the catalog: <http://www.wholeearth.com/issue-electronic-edition.php?iss=1010> (accessed May 7, 2016).

26. Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 3.

communicate information that allowed other people to make useful things, too.

The *Whole Earth Catalog* sold several million copies in its first few years. Obviously, not everyone put the information to material use. A reviewer in the underground press, referencing one of the *Catalog*'s archetypal products—the geodesic dome—wrote of the appeal of a 1970 *Whole Earth* publication: “[It is] so friendly and useful that even if you’re not into domes it may make you feel better just to buy it.”<sup>27</sup> Many readers just enjoyed sussing out what the historian Neil Harris called the “operational aesthetic” behind the products and projects the catalog offered readers.<sup>28</sup> For them, the catalog was a peek inside an alternative culture in which people expected to make the important things in their lives, not buy them in a store. Looking at the tools listed in the catalog, readers could imagine or try to imagine how such tools worked, how they provided utility, and how and why building, making, growing, and learning things on one’s own was better than buying things made by, in Brand’s words, “government, big business, formal education, church.”

Brand and his crew were not just proffering a catalog of do-it-yourself projects. They insisted that the spirit and practice of self-reliant, cooperative production detailed offered people a redemptive way of life that brought people closer together, avoided acquisitive individualism, and provided autonomy from the hierarchical, dictatorial, and money-obsessed workplaces and institutions of the American mainstream. In the 1971 iteration of the catalog, the editors decided to spell out their version of this redemptive ethos of production and self-reliance in a long “fable” that ran a winding path along the borders of the main text. Written by Gurney Norman (who was friends with Ken Kesey—they had been classmates in the creative writing program at Stanford), the tale of “Divine Right’s Trip” is a *bildungsroman*. It features a lazy, drifting, stoned-out hippie who calls himself Divine Right. The main character, D.R. Davenport, drives cross-country to his family’s land in Appalachia where he learns to raise rabbits, chickens, and worms, reclaim farm land damaged by coal mining, construct an animal pen, and, generally, how to work hard to make a good life outside the consumerist corporate grind. D.R. finds pleasure, discipline, and wisdom in a job well done: “There

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27. “Getting into Domes,” *Earth Times*, April–July 1970, 36.

28. See Neil Harris, *Humbug* (Boston: Little Brown, 1973).

are ways to go about certain kinds of work; there are rules in building, and D.R. wanted to learn them. He wanted to do a good job and know something truly useful when he was done.”<sup>29</sup> D.R. learns, quite literally, that getting his hands dirty helps him clean up his life.

This redemptive message appears again and again in key counterculture sources, especially in the underground press. In 1969, a writer for the *Berkeley Tribe* (a “head” paper published as an alternative to the “politico” *Berkeley Barb*), after an extended time living in New Mexico, gave a non-fictional version that mirrored D.R.’s awakening: “‘Out there, you get high from working . . . The energies go directly from you to the earth and return warmth and food. It is hard physically and hard on the head to adjust to it, but it is also very satisfying.”<sup>30</sup> In a long letter to Detroit’s *Fifth Estate*, published at the end of 1968, another writer, Gene Kalin, urges his compatriots to turn away from political protests and invest instead in the hard work of building their own community: “Some of us think the time of demonstrations and confrontations is past . . . The alternative we see is to form coops for the purpose of first, acquiring the skills necessary to build a community . . . Even an outhouse, built by cooperative effort, will stand as a monument! . . . Many have bled for the revolution. Now SWEAT FOR IT!”<sup>31</sup>

Such sentiments were not just spelled out for public view. In a journal entry, a woman working with a crew of friends to build a house in the Huerfano Valley in southern Colorado wrote: “If you’d asked me last year if I knew how to mix cement, I would have stared at you blankly. What takes seconds to build in your dreams takes weeks to make here on earth. But we’re doing it, we’re making it . . . I like lugging bags of cement half my weight down the steep trail.”<sup>32</sup> Another journal writer, a long time communitarian at New Buffalo in northern New Mexico, wrote similarly about cleaning the ditches that supplied water to his commune and to other farmers

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29. Gurney Brown, *Divine Right’s Trip* (New York: Dial Press, 1972), 282. The book version differs in small ways from the original text.

30. Art Gottlieb, “Out There,” *Berkeley Tribe*, August 15–21, 1969, 12. Gottlieb’s article is an essential source on the counterculture in New Mexico; he has a tough-minded understanding of the political tensions produced by mostly white “New Settlers” showing up in the impoverished, mostly Hispano lands of northern New Mexico. He also has some funny things to say about the shortcomings of geodesic domes.

31. Gene Kalin, “Letters,” *Fifth Estate*, November 14–27, 1968, 13.

32. The entry is dated August 5, 1970 and appears in the published memoir of Roberta Price, *Huerfano* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 105.

and ranchers in the area. Using nippers, chain saws, and shovels, he and his neighbors meticulously cleared the three-mile-long waterway: "I know the ditch country well, with its willow thickets and earthen embankments. All the gold in Wall Street can't buy the love of being this close with the earth."<sup>33</sup> Hands-on labor for these counterculture adherents had become an un-alienated and even redemptive form of work in large part through their sense that the work they did was beneficial to their community and because they believed that their efforts were, somehow, more authentic because closer to the earth and less mediated by the capitalist imperatives of maximized profits and machine-driven productivity. This desire to make work a community boon and a form of authentic experience rather than a financial means to some consumerist end took practical shape in the most critical and basic of everyday sites of production. Advocates for a work-oriented, artisanal-based counterculture insisted that people could and should design, build, and maintain the core durable commodities of life, in particular those costly commodities that chained most people to a regular paycheck: one's home and one's vehicle.<sup>34</sup>

For alternative-culture practitioners, especially at the cusp of the 1960s and 1970s, building one's own home was somewhere near the epicenter of their new ethos of self-production. By building one's own home, especially in cooperation with like-minded people, using shared knowledge and pooled resources, one could reduce or even escape the money nexus that many people believed structured so much of American life, even as one strengthened community and gained self-competency, useful artisanal skills, and the ability to craft a material reality attuned to one's (often drug-inspired) aesthetic vision. In late 1967, Neil Smith wrote the first major piece in the

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33. The entry is dated April 8, 1976 and appears in the published and edited journal of Art Kopecky, *Leaving New Buffalo Commune* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 5. I read Kopecky's journal in its entirety, helped edit it, and arranged for it to be published by UNM Press in two volumes.

34. The emphasis on traditionally male vocations such as home building and auto mechanics, as well as truck and car customizing, helped to inscribe traditional gender roles in the counterculture. Women, too, had special areas of expertise in the counterculture, including cooking, cleaning, and childbirth, but these too only further deepened the gender divide and further inscribed traditional gender roles. For a complex look at this turn see Timothy Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), and Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009). I explore the gender dynamics of these issues later in the text.

underground press promoting counterculture home building: “Deep in any human is the builder’s instinct.” He insisted to the readers of the San Francisco *Oracle* that “a renewal of the actual involvement with the design and construction and enhancement of one’s own dwelling” was the next step in the counterculture’s evolution. “This will be a new age of craftsmanship,” he wrote, “for depth involvement in life will replace the watcher-listener mode of today.”<sup>35</sup> The *Oracle* had begun in September 1966 as a “trip” sheet for acid-heads, its multi-colored pages full of homages to the hallucinogenic journey. While by no means rejecting the importance of LSD to the development and shape of the counterculture, *Oracle* writers increasingly pondered how the acid experience could foster further spiritual journeys and be channeled into the material world.<sup>36</sup> They championed new forms of production, not least home building and related craftwork, as means of self-expression and community building.

The first *Whole Earth Catalog* magisterially took up the cause. It featured Buckminster Fuller’s trippy geodesic dome as a mind-altering, low cost, easy way to enclose livable space. “Shelter” editor for the *Catalog*, Lloyd Kahn, had been among the very first to build actual domes—his first was in Big Sur in 1966—and he used the *Catalog* production facilities to publish two spin-off instructional books, *Domebook One* and *Domebook Two*. In each of these books, he meticulously explained how to build one’s own dome. *Domebook Two* sold over 175,000 copies, and in the late 1960s many communards or participants in the back-to-the-land movement erected one or more domes, or sometimes its fraternal twin, the “zome,” out of recycled or repurposed materials. The domes were also popular school projects, especially at the many experimental high schools and colleges that burgeoned in the United States in the early 1970s. Kahn himself helped students and teachers at an alternative high school in California build seventeen domes between 1969 and 1971. But as hippie builders quickly discovered, domes were relatively easy to build but difficult to waterproof and heat. (Kahn jokingly lamented, regarding Fuller’s mathematically driven dome design: “Mamas, don’t let your

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35. Neil Smith, “Environment for Expanded Awareness,” *San Francisco Oracle* 1, no. 11 (1967), 8.

36. For an overview of the importance and contested role of LSD in the counterculture see David Farber, “The Intoxicated State/Illegal Nation: Drugs and the Counterculture,” in *Imagine Nation: American Cultural Radicalism in the 1960s*, eds. Peter Braunstein and Michael Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2001), 17–40.

mathematicians grow up to become builders.”) And even in communities of post-suburbia cultural rebels who prized shared experiences and suspected the privatized nuclear family, daily life in the domes, with their undivided interiors, often seemed just a little too public.<sup>37</sup> The domes remained, not least in memory, as a symbol of counterculture “trippiness,” ingenuity, and community building but as a practical form of housing most people quickly found them impractical.

Kahn, too, had grown tired of domes. “Domes,” he decided, “weren’t practical economically or aesthetically tolerable—at least for my life and sensibilities.”<sup>38</sup> After traveling the world and studying how people in a great variety of cultures built their own homes, he self-published *Shelter* (1973), an encyclopedic, practical how-to-guide to simple, beautiful home-building practices around the world and across time.

Kahn told his readers that his book was about “simple, natural materials, and human resourcefulness. It is about discovery, hard work, the joys of self-sufficiency, and freedom. It is about shelter, which is more than a roof overhead.”<sup>39</sup> The book contained over a thousand images with accompanying text that carefully spelled out different ways to build a roof, frame a wall, use alternative materials, and take on most every aspect of crafting one’s own home, “including heavy timber construction and stud framing, as well as stone bale construction, adobe plaster and bamboo.”<sup>40</sup> In a long chapter on “home-split redwood shakes,” Kahn conveyed the practical ingenuity and sense of adventure that made building your own home appear to some to be far more than a cost-saving gesture: “The last bunch of shakes came from driftwood redwood logs: the logs were about 1/2 mile from truck access so I went down to the beach in a wet suit, with a kayak paddle, levered a log into the water at high

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37. Lloyd Kahn, like many of the founding *Catalog* team, has maintained a strong website presence. On his site, Shelter Online, he has a marvelous piece he first wrote in 1989 that gives a history of his dome and dome-related efforts in the 1960s and 1970s. Lloyd Kahn, “Refried Domes,” Shelter Online, [http://www.shelterpub.com/\\_shelter/refried\\_domes.html](http://www.shelterpub.com/_shelter/refried_domes.html) (accessed May 8, 2016). The site, more generally, contains a range of historical source material on Kahn’s projects and life.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Lloyd Kahn, *Shelter* (Bolinas, Calif.: Shelter Publications, 2000), 3. *Shelter* was originally published in 1973.

40. The quoted material is from the original marketing of the book. See <http://www.shelterpub.com/building/shelter> (accessed on May 7, 2016).



tide, sat on it, and rowed up to the beach road. I floated in as far as I could, left the log, came back at low tide, cut it up, and hauled sections home in my truck, to be split later into shakes.”<sup>41</sup>

Many were enthralled both by Kahn’s ethos and his ingenuity. The naturalist writer and all-around provocateur, Edward Abbey, wrote an illuminating review of *Shelter* for *Natural History Magazine*, the official publication of the American Museum of Natural History. Abbey insisted on the vital, existential importance of Kahn’s offering: “Like falling in love, like raising a baby, like a few nights in the county jail, the construction of a shelter is an experience that has to be known if one is to have a complete and adequate life.” “Shelter,” he intoned, “provides helpful hints, although hardly blueprinted instructions, toward survival with honor.”<sup>42</sup>

Kahn was not the only one offering solid advice on building your own home in accord with a countercultural sensibility. Years before, in the late 1940s, an unlicensed architect named Ken Kern had begun thinking about how people could inexpensively build their own homes. One of the mid-twentieth-century pioneers of “simple living,” Mildred Loomis, through the School of Living family of publications, began disseminating Kern’s ideas in article, pamphlet, and book form. His best-known work was *The Owner-Built Home*.<sup>43</sup> The book was first self-published in 1961 and then reissued in 1970 by a small press in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Kern’s home-building “axioms” were widely disseminated in the *Mother Earth News*, a popular bi-monthly magazine (first published in January 1970), that was widely

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41. See [http://shelterpubcom.nationprotect.net/\\_shelter/shelter\\_shakes.html](http://shelterpubcom.nationprotect.net/_shelter/shelter_shakes.html) (accessed May 7, 2016).

42. Edward Abbey, “Home is Where the Hearth Is,” *Natural History Magazine*, August–September 1974, 72.

43. For a bit of information on Loomis and, more importantly, the School of Living, as well as a history of the back to the land movement more generally, see the informative book by Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011). See also the School of Living website: <http://schoolofliving.org/>. For a broad history of simple living as thought and practice in the United States, see David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). A few members of the counterculture were aware of the long tradition of communitarianism, communalism, and radical experiments in cooperative living; and, especially beginning in the late 1960s, some earnestly explored their antecedents. Members of the burgeoning food coops, for example, often embraced the Rochdale principles that British weavers devised in the 1840s—a well-known co-op in Philadelphia took the name Weaver’s Way, in homage to them. See McGrath, “That’s Capitalism, Not a Co-Op’.”

circulated within the counterculture. The first excerpt, published in the November/December 1970 issue, began with Kern's introduction: "I am intending this to be a how-to-think-it as well as a how-to-do-it book." Kern explained to people that they really could build their own homes and that there was no need to buy overpriced new "manufactured" building materials. Instead, he urged them to use inexpensive "native materials" such as "rock and earth and concrete and timber." Kern, step-by-step, did his best to demystify and simplify home building.<sup>44</sup>

Kern's advice was warmly received by aspiring counterculture homebuilders. One of the more successful of them, Wallace Kaufman, celebrated Kern in his memoir, noting: "The owner-builders of the 1970s had a guru just like the mystics and the political activists."<sup>45</sup> Kaufman, following Kern's general advice, bought up several hundred acres of forest land outside Chapel Hill, North Carolina and offered low-cost home sites for fellow counterculture owner-builders attuned to an ecological consciousness. Thirty-five families (many of them of the non-traditional sort of families), including Kaufman, built homes that included log cabins, geodesic domes, and simple Zen structures. Kaufman saw his countercultural real estate development as "one of many places across America where owner-builders could create a home without exchanging a large portion of life for it."<sup>46</sup>

Kaufman's development was more structured and capital intensive than most. A less organized but equally ambitious home-building adventure took place in the Huerfano Valley in southern Colorado. Roberta Price in her account of life in the Valley in the 1970s, recalls home after home going up, each one devised and built by its cash-strapped owners. One couple built "a house that looks kind of like four joined A-frames . . . a model of a garnet crystal." Another couple built "a frame house . . . kind of a Colorado miner's cabin, only huge." An adventurous couple decided to roof "over the space created by some giant standing rocks." And, of course, a few people got together

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44. For the key publication that brought Ken Kern to the attention of the counterculture see Ken Kern, "The Owner Built Home and Homestead: Introduction to Building," *Mother Earth News*, November/December 1970, available at the Mother Earth News site: <http://www.motherearthnews.com/homesteading-and-livestock/introduction-to-building-zmaz70ndzgoe.aspx?PageId=3#ArticleContent>.

45. Wallace Kaufman, *Coming out of the Woods: The Solitary Life of a Maverick Naturalist* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000), 113.

46. *Ibid.*

to build a “sixty-foot dome.”<sup>47</sup> Typically, people pooled labor and shared resources to build their homes; while most had little money, they did have an abundant supply of social capital. Architecturally, the houses shared little except perhaps what one student of the “hippie vernacular” described as a principled decision to “eschew the right angle as often as possible.”<sup>48</sup> The Huerfano homebuilders, all “new settlers,” many of whom made a living at artisanal trades, became so adept at construction that when their community needed a new school building in the mid-1970s and the local government could not provide construction money, they joined up with “old” Huerfano residents, and built it themselves.

A similar adventure in counterculture homeowner building took place in the Northern California community of Canyon, an unincorporated town on the eastern edge of the Berkeley Hills. The one-time logging community had become nearly a ghost town by the late 1950s; government authorities had begun a concerted effort to tear down the few dozen remaining houses. Then counterculture-oriented settlers began moving in. One after another, often sharing knowledge and labor, they began building their own homes on isolated sites. One of the first owner-builders recalls: “The urge to build our cabin had been huge and had consumed me . . . After 18 years of studying, I craved to create something, something concrete, something I could create with my hands, mind, and spirit.”<sup>49</sup>

The owner-builders in Canyon were not all novices. One of the first builders, Deva Rajan, was a one-time Berkeley grad student who had become an accomplished carpenter by time he moved to Canyon. He built one of the more spectacular homes; much of his construction was done with old, used timbers that were, he remembered, “abundant and cheap in those days.”<sup>50</sup> His house was featured in another of the owner-builder inspirational books of the time: *Handmade Houses: A Guide to the Woodbutcher’s Art* (1973).<sup>51</sup>

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47. Price, *Huerfano*, 68.

48. Jonas Harvest Landes, “Hippie Houses of Redlands Mesa: A Continuation of the Folk Building Tradition” (MA thesis, American Studies Program, University of Wyoming, 2009), 6.

49. “Michael W.,” *Handmade Lives*, 16.

50. “Dave,” *Handmade Lives*, 53. “Dave” became a Hindu in the early 1970s and changed his name. The construction company he founded in 1966 became a highly successful, high-end homebuilder; see <http://www.canyonconstruction.com>.

51. Art Boericke and Barry Shapiro, *Handmade Houses: A Guide to the Woodbutcher’s Art* (San Francisco: Scrimshaw Press, 1973).

A master builder and founder of Canyon Construction in 1966, Rajan freely offered advice and help to less-experienced owner-builders; he also shared building materials leftover from his paid gigs with community residents, many of whom relied on scavenged lumber for their homes. Several of the men who built their own homes in Canyon became contractors and “hippie-carpenters”—a growing vocation in the United States during the 1970s, given emblematic status in Bob Dylan’s haunting song, “Tangled Up in Blue,” written in 1974.<sup>52</sup>

These examples of owner-homebuilding in the counterculture are just a few of the better-documented efforts. In hideaway properties in Marin County, in up-country Maui, on the ridges outside Jemez Springs in New Mexico, and in dozens, if not hundreds of other communities scattered around the United States, countercultural owner-builders in the late 1960s and 1970s created their own vernacular architecture relying on local, recycled, and re-purposed materials and working from published guides, acid visions, and community effort.<sup>53</sup>

These countercultural owner-builders knew they were rarely inventing something new (with the exception of the emblematic geodesic domes). The do-it-yourself building gurus, such as Kahn and Kern, were upfront about their reliance on the many vernacular builders, across space and time, from whom they borrowed methods, means, and designs. New Mexico communards and “new settlers” paid attention to the building styles of their low-income Hispano neighbors and took up low-cost adobe brick making.<sup>54</sup> Norman, in his fictional accounts such as *Divine Right’s Trip*, in his life choices (after his sojourn to the Bay Area he moved back to his home state of Kentucky in the 1970s), and in much of his work as an educator and writer honored the practical wisdom of the long-time residents of Appalachia for their knowledge of building and other practical skills. In *Divine Right’s Trip*, his protagonist learns

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52. A search for “hippie carpenters” in Google Books finds 120 individual book hits.

53. I have walked by such extant homes in the places listed. Thanks, in particular, to the historian of vernacular architecture Chris Wilson and the historian of the U.S. West Virginia Scharff for taking an informative walk with me in the summer of 2013 in the Jemez Mountains.

54. For an iconic photo of collective adobe making in the counterculture lands of northern New Mexico, see the image by Lisa Law in Iris Keltz, *Scrapbook of a Taos Hippie* (El Paso, Tex.: Cinco Puntos Press, 2000), 42.

how to work with his hands and become self-sufficient not from countercultural how-to books but from his Kentucky kin and neighbors. Similarly, the *Whole Earth Catalog* promoted the Foxfire publications, a series of magazines and then books that grew out of a high school project in Georgia that collected the life stories and everyday practices of hill people who lived in southern Appalachia. Inspired by such sources, as well as family and friends' connections, in the 1970s carloads of long hairs turned up in Appalachia, looking to turn deserted shacks and cabins into homesteads (and out-of-the-way places to grow marijuana), often to the bemusement of local residents.<sup>55</sup> Many of the owner-builders self-consciously looked "backwards" into traditional practices for the kind of information and skills that would allow them to go forward on their own terms.<sup>56</sup>

These owner-builders were not simply looking to older practices to save money, though that was a factor. They also wanted to get closer to the work itself, to be physically involved in the construction as a means of honoring the process by being present in it. They rejected time-scaled efficiency. Most of these builders wanted to gain something spiritual in the practical work of building their homes. They celebrated their labor, their craftsmanship, and their ability to build in environmental accord with the site on which they lived. Their work echoed the efforts of their cultural progenitors and fellow critics of capitalist efficiency and profit maximization, ranging from the much quoted and revered Henry Thoreau to Great Depression-era

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55. I take this point from conversations Beth Bailey and I have had with local residents in the mountain communities north of Burnsville, North Carolina. For an outstanding analysis of the relationship between back-to-the landers and long-standing residents of Appalachia, see Jinny A. Turman-Deal, "We Were an Oddity": A Look at the Back-to-the-Land Movement in Appalachia," *West Virginia History* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 1–32.

56. It is important to note that the overwhelmingly white counterculture, while maintaining a sometimes patronizing but also genuine respect and interest in American Indian and other "tribal" people, began turning in the late 1960s to white "folk" in its hunt for authenticity, self-sufficiency, and rooted lives. This turn was reflected—and perhaps inspired—by the move by many iconic 60s musicians from an African-American Blues-based music to a more country, often Southern-inflected style. The Band was perhaps the first and most important rock group that made the move from a Blue's based style to what some have called "country rock." For the relationship between Indians and hippies, see Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, & the Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). For an excellent analysis of the counterculture and the white South see Zach Lechner, "The South of the Mind: American Imaginings of Rural White Southernness, 1960–1980" (PhD diss., Department of History, Temple University, 2012).

decentralist-distributist advocates, such as Peter van Dresser, who actually mentored some of the “new settlers” of New Mexico in the late 1960s, teaching them about solar power and how to make homes out of adobe bricks.<sup>57</sup>

Even if relatively few self-identified members of the counterculture built their own homes, sales of Kahn’s publications, as well as similar texts, show how appealing the idea of an owner-built home was to those seeking a new way of life. The desire for self-sufficiency, relative autonomy from the money economy, and spiritual redemption through self-production evident in the impulse to build one’s own home found other outlets. In particular, self-professed hippies and related kindred souls worked hard to turn the most American of consumer durables—the motor vehicle—away from the car companies’ model of mass-class style choices, planned obsolescence, and dealer-dependent maintenance and repair.<sup>58</sup> Refurbished (or practically resurrected), wildly customized old school buses became a core counterculture symbol. So did erstwhile bread trucks, recycled post office delivery vehicles, aged pick-ups, and an oddball mélange of beat-up step-in vans and pretty much any repurposed, inexpensive vehicle capable of carrying counterculture people on their trips of discovery. Hundreds if not thousands of individuals and groups worked near-miracles of self-sufficiency by crafting artfully designed and meticulously rebuilt trucks or vans that doubled as homes—“handmade homes on wheels,” as one published account of the “home-truckers” put it.<sup>59</sup> Taking care of one’s own vehicle, as well as making that vehicle—be it bus, car, van, or truck—into a recognizable and moving sign of counterculture aesthetics and presence was another key component of shared knowledge, community building, and pride in self-production, at least for one faction of the disorganized counterculture.

Members of the counterculture self-consciously rejected most of America’s social and cultural values, but they did embrace

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57. See Benjamin Klein and David Farber, “El Rito and the Power of Place in Sixties America,” in *Irwin Klein and the New Settlers of New Mexico*, ed. Benjamin Klein (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

58. For the advent and triumph of the General Motors-inspired American auto and light truck industry, which was built around annual model changes, mass-class marketing, and limited mechanical reliability, see David Farber, *Sloan Rules: Alfred P. Sloan and the Triumph of General Motors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

59. For a spectacular photo book of such vehicles see Jane Lidz, *Rolling Homes: Handmade Houses on Wheels* (New York: A&W Visual Library, 1979).

auto-mobility. Motor vehicles were the means by which far-flung communities, or “tribes,” maintained their connections. Vehicles were the means by which music festivals and group rendezvous were reached. Vehicles made possible escape and adventure. Like garb and hair-style, vehicles were also highly visible and recognizable emblems of cultural and aesthetic sensibility both to fellow rebels and to members of “straight” society. And, for some, a vehicle customized with false panels and other clever hideaways was a means to transport contraband, especially marijuana, from one place to another. One counterculture truck adept summed up the appeal: “When we got into the truck trip we really didn’t mean to make it our main trip. We’re traveling people like turtles. We travel a lot and like to have all our stuff in one place.”<sup>60</sup> Hippie buses, vans, and trucks became central symbols and material necessities in the lives of counterculture adherents. For many taking care of one’s own vehicle and the vehicles of one’s compatriots was a critical means to demonstrate a valued form of competency and community building. It was also a straightforward way to stay relatively free of the money economy.

The Diggers, the most celebrated of 1960s counterculture actors, first enacted this moneyless economy through the sharing of resources and skills. When they set up their Free community in and around the Haight-Ashbury in the mid-1960s, they were singularly dedicated to avoiding at all costs the money nexus in everyday affairs. Many of the Diggers, a number of whom came from the middle class and who brought no mechanical knowledge to their new lives, dedicated themselves to learning practical skills so they could avoid perpetuating the cycle of trading hours of paid work to other wage-earning people who then traded their money to other people, all so that some basic aspect of life’s needs could be met.

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60. Jodi Pallidini and Beverly DuBin, *Roll Your Own: The Complete Guide to Living in a Truck, Bus, Van or Camper* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.: 1974), frontpiece. This book is representative of the post-*Whole Earth Catalog* publishing fad, in which a major publishing house worked with genuine members of the counterculture to mass distribute a counterculture book nationally. The authors are very well-connected members of the San Francisco/Northern California scene and they draw on the experiences and knowledge of some of the most inventive people associated with the counterculture. The book has the form and style of the first *Whole Earth Catalogs* with mixed-together images and text that is deliberately made to look like as if real people, not paid professionals in Manhattan, made it. This book, as well as the monumental success of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, opens up the question of “co-option,” a subject for another day.

Open access to competent community auto repair was high on the Diggers' list of operational necessities. In part, they needed such expert mechanical care for the most practical of reasons: the free food that they provided on a daily basis to people in the Haight-Ashbury depended on their ability to keep the old trucks that made the food runs possible running. In accord with the counterculture ethos of competent self-sufficiency, they made a strong case that, at a minimum, their extended community needed people who could fix the vehicles on which the community depended. And the work had to be done right; any community mechanical services had to be, in their words, "free of tripsters who only create more work for the earnest mechanics."<sup>61</sup>

The Digger who charged himself with primary responsibility for this work, Kent Minault (not unlike the fictional D.R.), found great meaning and sense of worth in mastering the requisite skills. In a 1972 letter to his compatriot Emmett Grogan, Minault reminisced fondly about his favorite experiences in the Haight. "Being into trucks," he wrote, was near the top of the list. Among the things that he remembered with most satisfaction was his diligence in keeping the Diggers' 1951 pickup in repair; the time "the universal joint went" on the truck and he "spent all day under the thing fixing it"; as well as the time when he learned "to correctly adjust the valve gap on a Chevy 6."<sup>62</sup> Minault made the Diggers' food runs and distribution possible and he was valued for his competency and discipline. The hippie mechanic, like the hippie carpenter, was a vital and respected player in the counterculture.

For those in or around the counterculture looking to be a do-it-yourself mechanic, there was plenty of help available. Just as owner-homebuilders had their "Gurus," so did the autodidact mechanic. John Muir, a descendent of *the* John Muir, was among the best regarded. He was the author of *How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive: A Manual of Step-by-Step Procedures for the Compleat Idiot* (1969). Muir was a one-time aerospace engineer for Lockheed Corporation who had "dropped out" and moved to New Mexico, where he had

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61. "The Post-Competitive Comparative Game of a Free City," *The Digger Papers*, (August 1968), 15. A digital copy of the *The Digger Papers* is available at Digger Archive, <http://www.diggers.org/digpaps68/postcomp.html>. This site has a wealth of primary source material.

62. "Letter from Kent to Emmett Grogan," ca. 1972, Catalog No. DP021, Digger Archives, [http://www.diggers.org/k\\_to\\_eg.htm](http://www.diggers.org/k_to_eg.htm).



opened up a little garage in Taos. His wedding in 1968 had been one of the grand events of the burgeoning northern New Mexico counterculture scene. His gift to the community was his manual.<sup>63</sup>

The book was in the style of so many related publications; it featured hand-lettered text and cartoonish but exactly crafted drawings, done by another member of the counterculture, the painter Peter Ashwanden, that illustrated every necessary aspect of the repair and maintenance process. There was nothing “hippie-ish” about the technical information provided. It was, as the title suggests, painstakingly clear and presented in an easy-to-follow, step-by-step, meticulous manner. At the same time, Muir advised his readers to think beyond the purely mechanical when attending to their vehicle: “your car operates on a single level and it is up to you to understand its trip . . . Use all your receptive senses . . . the kind of life your car contains differs from yours by time scale, logic level, and conceptual anomalies but is ‘Life’ nonetheless.”<sup>64</sup> While produced for and written in the style of the counterculture, Muir’s do-it-yourself book, like the *Whole Earth Catalog*, found a broad audience; an estimated two million copies of his guide, over its many editions, were sold.<sup>65</sup>

Other counterculture-oriented and styled guides to do-it-yourself auto repair existed, such as *Fixing Cars: A People’s Primer* (1974), but plenty of counterculture folks looking to fix their own cars turned to the same sources used by non-counterculture folks. Coyote learned some of his mechanical skills from a friend, Pete Knell, the president of the San Francisco Hells Angels. Plenty of working-class men in the 1960s and 1970s still attended to their own vehicles and had knowledge to share. Then, too, the counterculture was by no means composed only of middle-class dropouts; the working class was well represented in the counterculture, especially among those who took on the heavier responsibilities and tasks.<sup>66</sup> Coyote, based in part on his own experiences, was quick to remind

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63. I am following the account given in Phil Patton, *Bug: The Strange Mutations of the World’s Most Famous Automobile* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 116–17.

64. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 117.

65. Emily Van Cleve, “Drawings Keep Cars Running,” *Albuquerque Journal*, September 10, 2001, 1.

66. In this era, marijuana smugglers, importers, and dealers, for example, were often white men born and bred in the U.S. working class. For more, see Peter Maguire and Mike Ritter, *Thai Stick: Surfers, Scammers, and the Untold Story of the Marijuana Trade* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2013).

his cohort that the best way to learn how to fix a car or truck was to “ask people who know.” Or as another put it: “Gather knowledge and know-how wherever you can—mostly from people you meet along your travels. You can buy old parts but you can’t buy knowledge.” Coyote also reminded people that there was plenty of published material aimed at professional mechanics readily available in public libraries.<sup>67</sup>

Repairing and maintaining vehicles was important to a good many members of the counterculture but even more exhilarating was the process of turning an old bus, truck, or van into a utilitarian but stylized tool for good living. The psychedelically painted bus or van quickly became an iconic representation of the counterculture.

The first, or at least the first publically identified, psychedelic vehicle appeared in 1964. Fueled by LSD, Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters turned a 1939 International Harvester school bus into a psychedelically painted, customized traveling home complete with internal and external audio speakers rigged to play at an impressive volume. The Pranksters did not do all the work themselves; a previous, quite conventional owner had ripped out the traditional rows of seats and set up the bus as a camping van, complete with bunk beds, for his large family. The Pranksters had also hired a welder to do some of the aggressive metalwork. However, they did take personal charge of the audio system and the paint job. “Further,” they named the bus, was completely covered in swathes and drips of multi-colored (but not day-glo) paint inside and out, with geometric shapes and curvy lines dominating the sheet metal canvas.<sup>68</sup> Their amateurish paint job was often replicated, but so, too, did many in the counterculture turn out far more competent work.<sup>69</sup> Most, like the Merry Pranksters, painted a name on the their vehicle. No

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67. Coyote is quoted in Pallidini and DuBin, *Roll Your Own*, 19. The other quoted passage comes from “Richard,” in *Ibid.*, 23.

68. For great images of the bus and information about it and the Pranksters’ adventures on it, see *Magic Trip*, a film by Alex Gibney and Allison Ellwood (Dallas: Magnolia Pictures, 2011), which is based almost entirely on film shot by Kesey and his crew during their 1964 cross-country trip. Highlights can be seen at the film’s website: <http://www.magpictures.com/magictrip/>.

69. Custom paint jobs and design were not a new thing in the motor vehicle world—GM’s first auto designer, Harley Earl, was discovered in Los Angeles in the early 1920s where he had a business dreaming up custom paint and body jobs for Hollywood stars. By the early 1960s, hot-rodders, motorcycle club members, and other enthusiasts had long been customizing cars, bikes, and vans. Tom Wolfe, who brought Ken Kesey and his bus “Further” to the attention of the reading public in 1968 in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*,

longer were they just Chevies or Fords but instead “The Magic Circus,” “Pancake Conspiracy,” “Overland Freak Transit,” “Rites of Passage,” and “Siva Kalapa.”<sup>70</sup>

At least some members of the counterculture took the custom car culture scene in a new, more ambitious direction. Rather than just painting counterculture symbols or psychedelic finishes on their vehicles they began re-imagining and then rebuilding their vehicles to be fully functional rolling homes. Sometimes the rolling homes were intended to be a long-term answer to both shelter and mobility; sometimes they were just purpose-driven solutions to a particular adventure in counterculture community building.

One of the best known of these rolling adventures began in October 1970 when Stephen Gaskin, who had long been giving open talks in San Francisco on matters of spirit and life, decided to spread the good word of the counterculture ethos nationally; he took off on an extended speaking tour of the United States. At a minimum some 250 people accompanied him in a caravan of thirty-five buses (the number of buses and other vehicles grew as others joined the rolling community). The buses were hand painted in appropriate—but neat—counterculture style, and most everyone joined in fitting out the interiors with beds, tables, food preparation areas, and other necessities of a contained life. Gaskin and his large circle of friends drove some eight thousand miles over eight months. The “Caravan” as they called themselves, took care of their own vehicle maintenance and repair, and they did their polite best to be an autonomous, self-sufficient community as they rolled through sometimes-suspicious towns. In a related vein of self-sufficiency and DIY spirit, a strong group of women began looking after the community’s pregnancies and childbirths. Soon these counterculture women became expert midwives, a vocation to which several made a lifelong commitment.<sup>71</sup>

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had his writing breakthrough in a 1963 article he wrote on car customizers that became the title essay in his 1965 bestseller, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*.

70. All of these names and more can be found in Pallidini and DuBin, *Roll Your Own*.

71. Stephen Gaskin, *The Caravan* (Summertown Tenn.: The Book Publishing Company, 1972); and for an excellent analysis of Gaskin and his followers, as well as a brief account of the Caravan see Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius*, Chapter 4. After returning to San Francisco, several hundred people, with Gaskin in the lead, decided to form a permanent community. In 1971, they began “The Farm” in Tennessee, one of the most successful counterculture communities of the era; it is still very much in existence, though in modified form. For more on the history of midwifery: Laura Ettinger,

Most “rolling home” owners did almost all customizing and maintaining on their own or as part of an extended “family,” in which knowledge, parts, and labor were freely shared. Coyote worked with his “Free Family” compatriots to put together the “Free Family Caravan.” His diary entry for “Sun in Gemini—1971,” reads in part: “After months of labor Dr. Knucklefunky is reincarnated as the Meat and Bone Wagon: ‘49 Chevy one-ton, new brakes, rebuilt steering, suspension, engine, wiring. Everything touched, looked at, rebuilt, or replaced. Wooden sides added to the bed, metal strapping made into bow, supporting a canvas cover, welding tanks chained to the running board.”<sup>72</sup> Coyote, in partnership with his traveling companions, had given his old truck the outward appearance of a covered wagon.

As was true for the owner-builder, *Mother Earth News* provided a lively forum and source for the “Traveling nomad.” The March/April 1971 issue was full of practical advice on low-cost ways to turn a delivery van or truck into a “home on wheels.” Al Fry, an experienced bread van convertor, offered solid and detailed advice on setting up a toilet, a water pump, and a stove. He also assured his comrades that “No matter what your rig is, it will simply be amazing the amount of stuff you’ll be able to cram in, and under, and on it . . . providing the vehicle has the bearings to take it.”<sup>73</sup> Stephen Kovaka detailed how to buy a step-in van cheap; he recommended getting an old mail truck through a Government Services Administration auction. Then, in the DIY spirit, he urged *Mother* readers to learn how to repair and maintain their truck, assuring them that all it would take is “about fifty dollars worth of tools and a *Motor*’s repair manual.”<sup>74</sup>

Two Bay Area counterculture veterans, Jodi Pallidini and Beverly Dubin built on the *Mother Earth News* material and the collective knowledge of some very astute members of the Free Family

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*Nurse-Midwifery: The Birth of a New American Profession* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006).

72. Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, 216.

73. Al Fry, “Living the Good Life,” *Mother Earth News* 8, March/April 1971, <http://www.motherearthnews.com/nature-and-environment/living-the-good-life-zmaz71mazsea.aspx?PageId=1>. I was pointed to this issue of *Mother Earth News* by Pallidini and DuBin, *Roll Your Own*, which has excerpted sections of it.

74. Stephen Kovaka, “Old Delivery Trucks: Keep on Truckin’,” *Mother Earth News* 8, March/April 1971, <http://www.motherearthnews.com/green-transportation/old-delivery-trucks-zmaz71mazsea.aspx?PageId=1>.

and published in 1974 an inspirational and practical guide to “Living in a truck, bus, van, or camper.” The authors neatly divided the work into a step-by-step process beginning with “Buying a Truck” and moving through “Mechanical Checklist,” “Keeping it to Code,” “Space Planning,” and on to “Traveling with Children,” and “Groovy Extras.” By 1974 the “truck trip” was a well-established aspect of life in the counterculture and the authors were able to draw on expert advice and display an extraordinary array of images of well-conceived and elegantly converted rolling homes and the alternative families that lived in them.<sup>75</sup>

An important coda: counterculture adherents’ emphasis on DIY building, repair, and maintenance could and often did underline and reinforce the conventional gender norms that structured much of American society. As the historian Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo details, in many a commune and hippie household, especially in the 1960s, women’s primary place was in the kitchen, while men took care of the manual labor and machinery.<sup>76</sup> At the Farm, for example, the large commune developed by Gaskin and his compatriots in Tennessee, men and women adhered to strict gender norms when it came to work. Women were not hammering nails and rebuilding carburetors; they were taking care of children and developing food- and cooking-related businesses. Sexism and gender normativity were, as Alice Echols has cogently argued in her biography of Janis Joplin, as commonplace in the counterculture in the 1960s as they were in America’s corporations and suburban homes.<sup>77</sup> Many hippie women accepted and promulgated the gender-normed ideal. They embraced the role of “earth mothers,” whose primary calling was to nurture, cook, weave, garden, and pursue other traditional feminine roles.

Such gender normativity was not by any means accepted by all women, especially not by those within the counterculture who had embraced the feminist cause by the early 1970s. Likewise, lesbian women, who played a strong role in the counterculture as it developed in the 1970s, were outspoken about refusing to play the narrow role of “earth mother” or “hippie chick.” The influential underground periodical, *Country Women*, began publishing in 1973 as an

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75. Pallidini and DuBin, *Roll Your Own*.

76. Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius*.

77. Alice Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin* (New York: Holt, 1999). See also Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), especially Chapters 6 and 7.

avowedly feminist counterculture journal. On almost every page, women, both straight and lesbian, made a spirited rejection of narrow gender roles around work and economic duties.

The women's collective that published *Country Women* blasted the sexism and gender normativity that had ruled much of the counterculture, insisting that women could not be free so long as they depended on men to take care of the physical and mechanical aspects of counterculture life: "knowing how to cope with all the details of one's physical life makes for incredible strength. . . . It is as important to us to learn how this culture formed us, bound us, and how we can undo this damage as it is to perfect splitting wood."<sup>78</sup> At least half of all the articles that appeared in *Country Women* shared practical information on such subjects as how to use a chainsaw, fix a tractor, build an outhouse, brew beer, make an effective fire in an old stove, put up a gate, learn self-defense, and become a decent "shade tree mechanic." As the author of a pithy piece on "preventative mechanics" wrote, "the only requirement for becoming a mechanic is the ability to overcome the years and years of being told that women can't fix machines."<sup>79</sup> An entire issue was devoted to home building. At the same time, writers argued that breaking the bounds of sexist practices did not mean that women had to give up, as well, on traditional women's work: "There was a time in my life that I would rather have been caught with a murder weapon in my hand than a needle and thread. These days, eight years later, I am never not found with needle and thread in hand, sewing little pieces of fabric together, secure in my heritage as a woman artist. . . ."<sup>80</sup> Here, as elsewhere in the counterculture, the emphasis was on teaching one another how to become more self-sufficient and to find ways to craft an economically sustainable way of life outside the employee-consumer nexus. The all-woman collective behind *Country Women* deliberately attempted to break the gendered boundaries that had governed much of the counterculture in the late 1960s.

Counterculture women who rejected gender norms did not always have an easy time of it. The pages of *Country Women* are full of women confronting sexism in the counterculture and contemplating what could be done about it. In the June 1973 issue, lesbian

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78. "Country Women," *Country Women*, September 1976, 48.

79. "Preventative Mechanics," *Country Women*, April 1974, 36.

80. "Quilt Making: Reclaiming Our Art," *Country Women*, September 1976, 9.

feminist activist Rita Mae Brown is quoted in support of a separatist women's movement: "Woman-identified collectives are nothing less than the next step towards a women's revolution." In the 1970s, such thoughts did lead to a separatist women's back-to-the-land movement.<sup>81</sup> A segment of women invested in the counterculture organized all-woman collectives to pursue the counterculture's claimed values of autonomy, shared authority, and collective purpose. They started restaurants, opened bookstores, organized music festivals, and set up self-defense programs.<sup>82</sup>

By the mid-1970s, women's feminist critiques of counterculture gender normativity played a powerful role in the evolution of the counterculture and women's roles in it. Judy Wicks, co-owner with her husband of the Free People's Store in Philadelphia wrote, "being perceived as less worthy or capable because I was female became less and less palatable." She was angry that her husband and the other male partner in their store constantly joked "about how the little woman shouldn't worry her little head about business. The tone was lighthearted but it was no joke."<sup>83</sup> She left her husband and the Free People's Store behind and began a more independent adventure, not as a wife but as a person dedicated to creating her own community-oriented enterprises. The counterculture was for some women a stepping-stone to gaining a more autonomous economic life. But even as they split off from the movement, some, including Wicks, deliberately integrated their countercultural faith in community service and shared knowledge into their new enterprises.

Owner-builders, home truckers, "hippie carpenters," and "hippie mechanics" were just a few of the forms the self-sufficiency, artisanal competency, and do-it-yourself ethos of the Sixties-era counterculture took. As briefly noted, home childbirth, usually attended by a midwife was another. The back-to-the-landers of the counterculture put a premium, obviously, on growing their own food and marijuana. Tie-dye clothing, bead and feathers necklaces, and homespun garments belong on the list of DIY craftwork in the

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81. Most of these lands were oriented toward lesbian collectives. See Catherine B. Kleiner, "Doin' It for Themselves: Lesbian Land Communities in Southern Oregon, 1970–1995," (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2003).

82. Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius*.

83. Judy Wicks, *Good Morning Beautiful Business* (White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2013).

counterculture.<sup>84</sup> Some of these hippie products quickly made their way, first as artisan goods and then soon enough as mass market items, to consumer-oriented, “hip” urban commercial districts such as Chicago’s Old Town or Philadelphia’s South Street and then onward to department stores and suburban shopping malls. The commodification of some of these productions does indicate the ease, as Thomas Frank has argued, by which the counterculture could be made into another consumer lifestyle: hip capitalism.

Similarly, those men and women who banded together to form co-ops and collectives to provide their own value-affirming means of production and consumption also faced serious challenges by the late 1970s, especially if they had become economically viable. Increasingly, they faced fierce competition from profit-maximizing businesses that saw market opportunities in popular countercultural wares. These new competitors often provided better prices on the same items and a generally more disciplined and consumer friendly approach to their operations. By the late 1970s, food co-ops, for example, began to lose business both to supermarkets and to for-profit, “hip” businesses. By the late 1970s, traditional supermarkets began carrying some of the organic and health food items that had made co-op shopping appealing to a wider set of consumers. At the same time, commercial healthy eating operations such as Whole Foods Markets, which opened in 1978 with a 10,500 square foot space (much bigger than the average food co-op), also began taking customers away from the more countercultural co-ops. In 1981, the mainstays of the member-run Community Mercantile co-op of Lawrence, Kansas, distributed a newsletter to all their members bemoaning the closing of many well-known co-ops around the country and warned that “the relative position of co-op/collective business in relation to a capital-based economy” demanded that members rethink their seven-year-old operation if they wanted to stay open.<sup>85</sup> The Merc, like a few other co-ops born in the glory days of the counterculture, would choose to become more business-like and to become more professional in all its operations—it survived but

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84. Alexandra Jacopetti, *Native Funk & Flash: An Emerging Folk Art* (Berkeley, Calif.: Scrimshaw Press, 1974).

85. “Co-op Economics and Prevailing Winds,” *Community Mercantile* (Lawrence, Kans.), 1981, Folder 12, Box 11, Shelley Miller Collection, Spencer Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.



only by becoming more like a traditional for-profit business. So, as critics of the counterculture have noted, by the late 1970s a great many of the men and women who had hoped to change the world by crafting an alternative economics had to face the massive competitive power America's traditional capitalist businesses retained and to adapt or be co-opted. But that process of co-option and adaptation does not explain everything.

Serious scholars of the counterculture, in a wide range of works, have argued that key practices and values that grew out of the counterculture's rejection of corporate consumer capitalism had significant and lasting effects. The communications scholar Fred Turner argues that these enacted counterculture values, practices, and loose-but-networked structures of association—exemplified in *Whole Earth Catalog*—were direct precursors to cyberculture: “to visions of peer-to-peer ad-hocracy, a leveled marketplace, and a more authentic self.” The food historian Warren Belasco adds that these same rebels, by rejecting a naturalized marketplace of consumer goods accessed through wage labor, offered an inchoate program of broad social change: “the need to align private action with planetary needs; the distrust of chemicals and technology; the resanctification of nature, community, and tradition . . . the sense that a better society might have to be literally built from the grass roots.”<sup>86</sup> Many food co-ops (as of the mid-2010s, more than three hundred exist) have continued to be sites of political activism where their often progressive middle-class members have maintained, as the social historian Maria McGrath writes, “flexible forums” at which environmental, health, and community justice issues are discussed and actions organized.<sup>87</sup> The environmental historian Andrew Kirk argues that in the *Whole Earth Catalog* and in related publications, as well as in the ethos of the do-it-yourself artisanal competency championed by the counterculture's technologists, designers, and DIY practitioners, people found a practical vision that enabled “American producers and consumers [to see] that there was common ground between capitalism and environmentalism, nature and culture” and that on

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86. Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3; Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 10.

87. McGrath, “That's Capitalism, not a Co-Op,” 13.

this common ground people have had a chance to build a more sustainable economics.<sup>88</sup>

One of the leading practitioners of that sustainable economics within the marketplace, Yvon Chouinard, the founder and owner of Patagonia, speaks directly to many of the issues raised in this piece. He writes: “Like many people who had their formative years in the Sixties in America, I grew up with disdain for big corporations and their lackey governments.” So at the end of the 1960s, when he chose to turn his passion for outdoor activities into a livelihood, he was loathe to become a businessman. But building on what he learned from his countercultural community of Sixties-era rock climbers, he believed he could both thrive economically and maintain his system of beliefs. Writing in 2006, he stated: “Patagonia exists to challenge conventional wisdom and present a new style of responsible business. We believe that the accepted model of capitalism that necessitates endless growth and deserves the blame for the destruction of nature must be displaced.”<sup>89</sup> Writing in 2012, in *The Responsible Company*, he argues that the practice of re-thinking business practices that he and many others began in and around the Sixties-era counterculture remains nascent: “We are still at the early stages of learning how what we do for a living both threatens nature and fails to meet our deepest human needs. The impoverishment of our world and the devaluing of the priceless undermine our physical and economic well-being.”<sup>90</sup> Besides a determined effort to manufacture all their products with minimal harm to the environment, the people who run Patagonia have committed themselves to a massive checklist of best practices that enable them to keep “doing the right thing.”<sup>91</sup> Even if one regards Chouinard’s claims with some skepticism, he speaks for a segment of Americans who came out of the counterculture convinced that business could be practiced more collaboratively, more compassionately, more sustainably, and with greater regard for workers, customers, and suppliers. Within clear limits, Chouinard, at least, has succeeded in creating a different kind of company.

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88. Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 217.

89. Yvon Chouinard, *Let My People Go Surfing: The Education of a Reluctant Businessman* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 3.

90. Yvon Chouinard and Vincent Stanley, *The Responsible Company: What We’ve Learned from Patagonia’s First 40 Years* (Ventura, Calif.: Patagonia Books, 2012), 1.

91. *Ibid.*, 95.

None of these claims fundamentally challenge the hard critique David Harvey makes about the failure of much of this Sixties-based search for a better way of life and a more creative, humane, and human-scale form of producing and consuming. Little discussed here challenges the core economic inequality that structures early twenty-first-century capitalism in the United States. The counterculture practitioners discussed here are guilty of Harvey's charge of prioritizing their own individual freedom rather than broader social justice. Further, it is true that the energy members of this loose counterculture expended on their many trips never allowed many to achieve escape velocity from what Coyote called "the available options of being an employee or a consumer." Yet, they did leave their mark on the cultural flux of late modernity. They maintained and developed the human need to be creative in one's work, to take pleasure in collaboration and the sharing of expertise and knowledge, to produce outside the narrow constraints of maximized profitability and fiercely rationalized systems of productivity. They provided some measure of response to Daniel Bell's "poverty of abundance" *cri de cœur* on "work and its discontents." Hippies and their compatriots, with all their bumbling, stoned illusions about what the good life might be, changed—if only somewhat—the arc of work and labor, production, and consumption in the United States.