

## CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

# THE COUNTERCULTURE AND THE OCCULT

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Perhaps the single most important vector for the popularization of occult spirituality in the twentieth century is the countercultural explosion associated with ‘the Sixties’—an era whose political and culture dynamics hardly fit within the boundaries of that particular decade. A more useful term was coined by the Berkeley social critic Theodore Roszak, who used the word ‘counterculture’ to describe a mass youth culture whose utopianism and hedonic psycho-social experimentation were wedded to a generalized critique of rationalism, technocracy, and established religious and social institutions. As such, the counterculture significantly overlapped, though also sometimes resisted, the parallel rise of the New Left and its ideological and occasionally violent struggle against more-or-less the same ‘System.’ Within a few short years after its emergence in the middle of the 1960s, the counterculture had transformed social forms, creative production, personal lifestyles, and religious experience across the globe. Though the counterculture was a global phenomenon, its origins and many of its essential dynamics lie in America, which will be the focus of this chapter.

Many of the attitudes and practices associated with the counterculture were drawn from earlier and more marginal bohemian scenes. Arguably, the key catalyst for the emergence of a mass counterculture was the widespread availability and use of LSD and other charismatic psychoactive substances. For many, LSD’s extraordinary noetic and emotional affects seemed direct evidence that the individual alteration or expansion of consciousness, coupled with corresponding shifts in the self and its values, could precipitate a new social and cultural order. These experiences were also characterized as early as Aldous Huxley’s foundational 1954 mescaline text *The Doors of Perception* as having a pronounced mystical or religious dimension. Once people began ‘turning on’ *en masse*, an amorphous and visionary spiritual counterculture almost inevitably emerged.

In line with Catherine Albanese’s argument that the American metaphysical tradition is essentially recombinant, the new seekers promiscuously and often superficially comingled Vedantic nondualism, tantric yoga, Zen meditation, Theosophy, Native American symbolism, and other religious discourses and practices. This visionary stew included many ‘profane’ elements as well: pulp fiction, parapsychology, ufology, cybernetic social science, and a Reicheckian hedonism that

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emphasized the erotic freedom from repression and restraint. Indeed, a primary source for counterculture's thirst for spirituality was its only apparently paradoxical embrace of the intensified body. Permissive and experimental sexuality, coupled with the ecstatic and drug-fueled collective rituals of live rock shows, helped forge a Dionysian sensibility that readily looked to and absorbed the imaginal and energetic transports of occult phantasmagoria and the protocols of mysticism.

Over time, this explosion of esoteric novelty opened up the space for the crystallization of more defined religious structures and identities, and helps to explain the rise of new religious movements and 'cults' in the late 1960s and especially the early 1970s. At the same time, the counterculture also hosted a continuously informal cultic—or 'occultic'—milieu that included astrology, witchcraft, the *I Ching*, Tarot, chakras, reincarnation, Theosophical and ethnopharmacological lore. Though many of these ideas, symbols, and practices already circulated in the metaphysical fringes of twentieth-century America, and by no means exclusively among bohemians, the counterculture brought them more or less onto center stage, so that they helped define what we can authentically call a *Zeitgeist*. By the early 1970s, when the counterculture had transformed the engines of popular culture, the West found itself hosting a pervasive and commercialized 'pop occulture' whose long shadow we still live in today, from the New Age to black metal music to personal growth seminars to rave culture.

Needless to say, 'the counterculture,' 'spirituality,' and 'occultism' are all highly complex and multidimensional concepts that describe domains that also feature a high degree of informality and internal diversity—even contradiction. This makes compressed generalizations about their interaction particularly fraught. One particularly significant issue is the question of Easternization. The dominant language of countercultural mysticism in the 1960s was marked by translated Asian concepts and practices; is it right to think of these as part of 'occultism'? Without question, the turn East has been integral to Western occultism since Theosophy and early Crowley; moreover, Tibetan Buddhism, Taoism, yoga, and even Zen have their own forms of 'magic.' Still, while Christopher Partridge has helped to define a conception of 'occulture' broad enough to embrace Asian ingressions alongside Western esoterica, one must resist collapsing the popular emergence of Western Buddhism and non-ethnic Hinduism in the 1960s into the occult *per se*. For these reasons, it is perhaps better to consider a broader 'spiritual counterculture' within which we can identify Asian traditions as well as overlapping but also more specifically characterized occult currents.

### THE BOHEMIAN ANTECEDENTS OF THE OCCULT COUNTERCULTURE

Depending on the angle and depth of approach, one could identify any number of crucial antecedents to the counterculture. One direct ancestor of the back-to-nature hippie is the West Coast 'Nature Boys' health-food scene, a subculture that was directly inspired by ideas and individuals associated with the German *Wandervogel* movement, and therefore with the organicist, neo-Romantic, and 'pagan' sensibility forged in the German-speaking esoteric underground of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the transformative aspirations, Atlantean lore, and Asian-inflected

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mysticism of the Age of Aquarius is inconceivable outside the context of Theosophy's spiritual evolutionism. But to track the specific antecedents for the occult counterculture, we are better off turning to painters, poets, and other bohemian artists of the postwar period. The informality (or incoherence) of later hippie mysticism is in part tied to the fact that the influences closest to hand were not spiritual masters or organized sects, but rather artists whose cultivation of personal idiosyncrasy and singular expression lent their occult and religious explorations an unsystematic, visionary, and often hedonistic dimension.

One early and emblematic figure was Henry Miller, who was already in his 50s when he moved to Big Sur in 1944. Miller had already written the experimental erotic novels that would earn him both fame and infamy, but his influence on Big Sur was pivotal, as the place transformed into a minor mecca of artists, sexual adventurers, and political anarchists. Miller represents a genuine bridge between the generations and the continents. In 1930s Paris, he was already reading Blavatsky, Rudolph Steiner, and Gurdjieff. In California, he continued to study astrology and Eastern and Western spiritual teachers, wrote a book about the utopian mysticism of Brethren of the Free Spirit, and transmuted his earlier pornographic obsessions into what Jeffrey Kripal calls a 'panerotic nature mysticism.' He also visited the baths that would later form the omphalos for the Esalen Institute, whose institutional devotion to mind-body practices would, starting in the 1970s, bring tai chi, tantra, and other esoteric practices of the enlightened body into the mainstream of American psychological culture.

Another singular figure of the postwar proto-counterculture was the polymath, ethnomusicologist, experimental filmmaker, and archivist Harry Smith. Raised by Theosophist parents in the Pacific Northwest, Smith lived in the Bay Area in the 1940s, smoking pot, hanging out in jazz clubs, and making hand-painted abstract animations inspired in part by esoteric color theory. Smith later moved to Manhattan, and in 1952, made his most lasting contribution to the counterculture: the Anthology of American Folk Music, a powerful and uncanny collection of early blues and old time music that became the Rosetta stone for folkies like Bob Dylan and The Fugs; among the obsessive notes Smith included quotations from Robert Fludd and Rudolph Steiner. Smith's films grew more iconographic, and featured animated montages of Tibetan godforms, interlocking Kabbalistic trees, and Amanita muscaria mushrooms. Smith was also a serious student of Aleister Crowley, a then-obscure predilection he shared with Kenneth Anger, a far more influential West Coast experimental filmmaker who started making films in 1947. Anger's shorts, often marked with occult and homo-erotic symbolism, later became mainstays of the midnight movie circuit; though no hippie, Anger saw the counterculture as the fulfillment of Crowley's prophesized Aeon of Horus.

The most direct ancestors of the spiritual counterculture remain the Beat Generation. Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Gary Snyder were all seekers, and their earnest explorations of Buddhism, Scientology, magic, tantra, Zen, psychedelics, and Hinduism came to provide models for readers seeking a path out of America's crushing culture of conformity in the 1950s. That said, their spiritual journeys were divergent, and inflected the rising occult current in different ways. Kerouac, who often identified as a Catholic, started reading the Mahayana sutras in 1954; a year later he met the West Coast poet Snyder, whose deep embrace

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of Zen is immortalized in Kerouac's 1958 *The Dharma Bums*. Kerouac turned to the dharma out of his own painful self-struggle, and was inspired as well by Buddhism's rhetoric of immediacy, which resonated with his own formal practices of spontaneous prose. Wary of Zen, Kerouac found in the classic Mahayana sutras a language of paradox and visionary display that he later emulated in *Mexico City Blues* and *The Scripture of Golden Eternity*, with its 'fantastic magic imagination of the lightning, flash, / plays, dreams...'

Snyder's embrace of Buddhism was at once more formal and more grounded than Kerouac's. He studied for many years at a monastery in Kyoto, and his dharma, like his more hard-edged poetry, side-stepped Kerouac's romantic narcissism for a concrete and uninflected sanctification of the everyday that had little truck with hidden or anomalous powers of mind. In this sense, Snyder helps define the important difference between the spiritual counterculture, which he directly helped foment, and the occult revival, whose esoteric undertow he rejected. Nonetheless, even in its most minimalist forms, Zen did offer Snyder and other bohemian seekers a kind of illuminism, especially as it was articulated in Alan Watts' limpid and enormously influential texts on Zen.

Of all the Beats, Ginsberg performed the most instrumental role in the spiritual counterculture. Partly through his youthful visionary experiences, Ginsberg's work had an expansive, Blakean dimension from the beginning. Like Snyder, his voice also insisted on a transformation rather than an escape from materiality, and his later encounters with Hinduism and Buddhism took place within a solidly Whitman-inspired framework that helped define a more fleshy American dharma. In the early 1960s, after a visit to India with Snyder and others, Ginsberg publicly adopted the trappings of a holy man; appearing at readings or protest gatherings in robes, he would often sing *kirtan*, chant 'Hare Krishna,' and play the harmonium. A mystical and hedonic bard of conscience, Ginsberg also joined Snyder in refusing to honor the divide that many made between the spiritual counterculture and political activism.

The oldest and least humanist of the Beats, William S. Burroughs anticipated the darker and more paranoid dimensions of the occult countercultural. Burroughs distrusted language as a vehicle of self-expression and spontaneity, considering it more as an occult battleground where the forces of control waged war against subversive and even nihilistic attempts to break the spell of conventional signs. Sensitive to the rivalry and paranoia that court magical thinking, Burroughs was, in the early 1950s, already writing to Ginsberg about the use of curses and 'black magic'; he also traveled to South America in a prescient plunge into the serpentine depths of *yage* (*ayahuasca*). In Paris in the late 1950s, when he also studied Scientology, Burroughs developed the cut-up method of artistic composition invented by Brion Gysin, linking the sort of oracular juxtapositions already found in Dada and Surrealism to a postwar model of information processing and media manipulation. Gysin and Ian Sommerville, a crony of Burroughs', also constructed the dream machine in the early 1960s, an inexpensive device whose consciousness-altering flicker effect anticipated the countercultural quest to use drugs and media to, as Burroughs put it in 1964's *Nova Express*, 'storm the reality studio.'

## LSD AS CHEMICAL MYSTERY RELIGION

Along with other psychoactive substances, LSD helped catalyze the transformation of marginal bohemian esotericism into the pop occulture of the late 1960s and 1970s. From the beginnings of its dissemination into youth culture, acid came already 'packaged' with associations linking it to mystical states of consciousness, thanks in part to *The Psychedelic Experience*, a popular 1964 trip guide by Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert, and Ralph Metzger that based its cartography of altered states on Evans-Wentz's Theosophical remix of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. More importantly, the acid experience itself gave immediate evidence of the transnational capacities of consciousness, states that might range from a sense of unitive vibratory fusion with the cosmos to a mythopoetic explosion of religious and supernatural symbolism to a perceptual merry-go-round of trickster synchronicities and paranormal possibilities. Acid undermined the instrumental schemes of individual agency, and it returned many users to baseline with a growing taste for loosely associational thinking, ecstatic states, and spontaneous collective happenings. Unsurprisingly, the use of LSD and other drugs encouraged a kaleidoscopic engagement with spiritual practices, metaphysical systems, and occult arcana, all of which came to supplement, refract, and to some degree substitute for acid's unsustainable noetic raptures.

The paradoxes of a chemical sacrament—whose sacred states were instrumentally catalyzed by a commodity molecule—are very much reflected in the career of Timothy Leary, who was as responsible as anyone for turning on the youth generation. (Ginsberg, to whom Leary first provided psilocybin, also played a vital role.) When Leary took psilocybin mushrooms in 1960, and LSD shortly thereafter, he was a successful professor of psychology who, although rejecting the reigning behaviorism of the day, was no humanist. Though firmly rooted in impersonal social science, his experiments with students and faculty led him toward more esoteric discourses and frameworks. His friend Huston Smith, a professor of religion at MIT, introduced him to the perennialist notions of a core 'mystical experience' lurking beneath the apparent variety of religious phenomenology, a controversial concept that fundamentally shaped subsequent psychedelic thinking. After a breakthrough experience at a local Vedanta temple, Leary's 60s persona was set: after leaving Harvard and becoming a countercultural leader, Leary adopted a snappy guru persona and wove Hindu mystical ideas and other hip esoterica into his rhetoric. But as his ongoing discourse of DNA and social 'games' suggests, he never really abandoned the frameworks of social science or philosophical materialism, and was spiritually most aligned with the sometimes manipulative 'trickster' approach of Gurdjieff, who Leary started reading in 1965.

Leary's elitist East Coast approach to psychedelia is conventionally contrasted with the more informal and carnivalesque West Coast style of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, one of whom memorably referred to Leary's fascination with the Tibetan bardos as a 'crypt trip.' In contrast, the 'spirituality' of the Pranksters can be seen as an anarchic, demotic, and sometimes goofy suspension of the difference between sacred and profane—more of a dodge of conventional rationality than a disciplined transcendence. One key focus for their non-stop happening was synchronicity, the uncanny phenomenon of strikingly meaningful coincidence first described as such by Jung. For the Pranksters and many other heads, synchronicity

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came to be seen as a kind of profane or psychedelic grace—in the fortuitously meaningful conjunction of ordinary events, synchronicity implies a paranormal order of correspondence while retaining a quotidian materiality. The multi-media Acid Tests that the Pranksters staged before California banned LSD in 1966 creatively deployed sound and light technologies along with jams from the young Grateful Dead, and thereby laid down a template for the mass psychedelic culture just around the corner. But the Acid Tests can be understood as social synchronicity machines—an immersive, cybernetic, and McLuhanesque celebration of Burroughs' cut-up war on control.

Synchronicity does not demand explicitly occult interpretations, but it certainly lends itself to them. One traditional esoteric tool that was popular among the Pranksters, and that also saturates bohemian and psychedelic culture in general, is the *I Ching*. First published in the famed Wilhelm/Baynes edition in 1950, the *I Ching*, or the Classic of Change, is an ancient Chinese oracular system which uses the random throw of yarrow stalks (or, more simply, three coins) to generate figures that correspond to one of sixty-four hexagrams, each of which comes festooned with a variety of often enigmatic commentaries. Though presenting a cooler and more philosophical profile than the Tarot, the *I Ching* was still used by many as an occult tool, one that simultaneously rejected conventional notions of 'chance' while embracing an organic system of signs that promised to refigure agency along holistic cosmic powers rather than instrumentalist lines. Another significant divinatory system was astrology, which became a generally available typological framework and lingua franca for the counterculture as well as a tool to harmonize that emerging collective with the cosmic environment. Key astrologers for the counterculture included the Haight resident Gavin Arthur—who contributed to the Haight Street *Oracle*—and Dane Rudhyar, who decisively shaped modern astrology by introducing more humanistic and Jungian interpretative conventions. Though the popularity of astrology was by no means restricted to the youth generation—sun sign columns had been popular in American newspapers since the 1940s—the 'Age of Aquarius' became the most popular tag for that generation's widespread and gripping sense of an immanent and epochal shift.

One important popular vehicle for esoteric and occult symbolism was psychedelic art, particularly as it effloresced through the medium of concert posters, LP designs, and, to a lesser extent, underground comix. Indeed, if Leary's bardo manual and Kesey's Acid Tests can be understood as the development of psychedelic *form*, the semi-commercialized hippie culture they helped engender can be understood more in terms of developing psychedelic *content*. Album covers exploited explicitly occultist and mythopoetic imagery, with the Incredible String Band's *The 5000 Spirits or the Layers of the Onion* and the Jimi Hendrix Experience's *Axis: Bold as Love* being standout examples from 1967. On the other hand, underground comics were saturated with satiric and pornographic obsessions that made most publications considerably less mystical than, say, the Steve Ditko-illustrated exploits of Marvel Comics' *Dr. Strange*, which debuted in 1963 and was loved by many heads. One important exception was Rick Griffin, a comics creator as well as one of the key rock poster designers of the psychedelic era. Though he cut his teeth on surf art in the early 1960s, Griffin's mature style—often associated with the Grateful Dead—presented a heavy and idiosyncratic symbolism that drew from orange crate art, Manly Hall's

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*Secret Teachings of the Ages*, blobular modernism, and his own intense imagination. Griffin remixed Kabbalistic and esoteric Christian imagery for Robert Crumb's *Zap* magazine, while the flying eyeball poster he designed for a Jimi Hendrix Fillmore gig remains perhaps the single most iconic image of the era, an unnerving mix of pop surrealism, eldritch nightmare, and divine invasion. Just as many psychedelic posters played with the tension between two-dimensional patterns and three-dimensional organic forms, so did Griffin's popular work superimpose the depths of esoteric imagery onto the pure surface of commercial design.

### THE MAGICAL REVIVAL

Roszak ends his *The Making of a Counter-Culture* with the invocation of the shaman and the creative magic of the embodied visionary imagination. In religious terms, this spirit is manifested less in hippie interpretations of Zen or Vedantist mysticism than in the rise of explicitly magical religions: witchcraft, Satanism, and Paganism, the latter a self-description that itself emerged from the counterculture. Antecedents for these developments include British Wicca and Victor Anderson's American Feri tradition, but any broad view of magical currents in the 1960s must also consider the pulpier domains of popular culture, which circulated images and atmospheres that would later materialize as spiritual practice. Particularly important was the market in fantasy fiction established by the tremendous popularity of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, which became a campus hit after appearing in an unauthorized paperback edition in 1965. Imprints like Lancer and Ballantine were also repackaging (in often lurid covers) American weird fiction from the previous generation, making Lovecraft's alien necromancy and Robert E. Howard's sword-and-sorcery tales available. Though comics had long trafficked in supernatural powers, they developed a hipper resonance in the early 1960s; Marvel's *Dr. Strange*, whose Western wizard hero nonetheless draws his wisdom from Tibet, has already been mentioned. Supernatural horror films witnessed a sexy Hollywood revamp; examples include Roger Corman's feverish series of Poe adaptations starring Vincent Price.

Indeed, it is an interesting exercise to consider the exact difference between the Satanic rituals staged in, say, Corman's *Masque of the Red Death* and the Satanic 'psychodramas' staged by the most famous American occultist of the 1960s, Anton LaVey. Though too often dismissed as a simple huckster, LaVey mixed his libertarian philosophy of satisfied individualism with a strong sense of subversive showmanship and more than a touch of sleaze. He founded the Church of Satan in 1966, setting up sensationalist events at the 'black house' in San Francisco, and becoming, along with the popular British witch and astrologer Sybil Leek, one of the main sources for journalists writing about the rise of magic. Though LaVey himself was critical of the hippie drug scene, one of his dynamic co-conspirators was Kenneth Anger, whose tangled engagement with the Age of Aquarius is reflected in his dark and jagged 1969 short film *Invocation of My Demon Brother*, much of which was shot in the Haight. In one of the creepy synchronicities of the age, the film featured Bobby Beausoleil, a crony of Charles Manson who was later convicted for the Manson-inspired murder of Gary Hinman. Far more than the trendy devil-dabbling that led the Rolling Stones (at the urging of Anger) to call their 1967 record *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, Charles Manson crystallized, in the social imagination and to some extent in reality,

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the spiritual diabolism potentiated by the counterculture's wayward plunge into sex, drugs, and nondual metaphysics.

The infernal side of occult religion—real, imagined, or performed—was paralleled in the 1960s by more balanced and affirmative nature-based religions, which in part sacralized the countercultural ethos of the enchanted flesh. British Wicca made inroads across the country, but an arguably more important part of the magical revival was the counterculture's willingness to ground spiritual authority in imaginative invention rather than narratives of unbroken historical transmission. Emerging in 1961 from a prophetic stew of science fiction, libertarianism, and Maslow's psychology of human potential, the Church of All Worlds was already on its way to becoming a nature-focused magical group when it became the first earth religion to receive a formal charter in 1968. In California, the New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn formed when college students started mixing Gerald Gardner's *Witchcraft Today* with the radical ideas of Norman O. Brown and the creative possibilities of group performance and ritual play. Even the secular re-enactment scenes like the Society for Creative Anachronism and the Renaissance Pleasure Faire provided cultural context for the fabrication of explicitly Pagan identities. The lesson from the counterculture was that, magically speaking, the collective performance of the creative imagination was at least as important as initiation and the replication of 'tradition.'

Perhaps the most audacious public expression of this lesson, one that reached far beyond witchcraft or even the spiritual counterculture, was the 'exorcism of the Pentagon' that took place in October 1967. Following a massive rally held at the Lincoln Memorial to protest the Vietnam war, about 50,000 people marched on the Pentagon. Along with thousands of civil rights activists, peaceniks, and leftists, the crowd included many colorful and festive representatives of the counterculture. One protest group that explicitly sought to blend activism with such feral pageantry were the Yippies, whose co-founder Abbie Hoffman, in an act of knowing theater, attempted to use the gathered psychic energy to physically levitate the Pentagon, turn it orange, and end the war. Allan Ginsberg supported the effort with Buddhist chants, while Hare Krishnas danced and the crowd 'ommed.' At another point the New York underground folk group The Fugs led a (partly?) tongue-in-cheek exorcism of the Pentagon's demons, while Kenneth Anger performed Crowleyian magical spells on his own without the slightest bit of irony. The complex mixture of absurdism and sincerity that various actors brought to this galvanizing magical protest reflects the degree to which the occult had become a generalized cultural language of collective possibility and not merely a 'spiritual' orientation.

Progressive politics would also come to characterize the evolution of explicitly magical and pagan currents in the 1970s. The most notable of these was the development of feminist witchcraft, perhaps the most extreme example of the widespread feminization of religion and spirituality in the decade. In 1971, Z. Budapest established the women-only Susan B. Anthony Coven no. 1 along essentialist feminist lines. Budapest, who was arrested in 1975 for breaking a California law against 'fortune telling' that she later led the effort to overturn, fused the rhetoric of radical feminism with an exclusive focus on female deities rather than the sexual polarity of traditional Wicca; for her coven and many others, 'consciousness raising' had become the conscious raising of goddess energy. Budapest's most influential and

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important student was Starhawk, who widely popularized witchcraft with her 1979 book *The Spiral Dance*, and whose highly visible and politically active form of pagan practice channeled the older energies of the counterculture into the embattled political and environmental landscape of the 1980s and beyond.

### POP OCCULTURE IN THE EARLY 1970S

Some peg the end of the counterculture to 1970, when Charles Manson went on trial for the Tate-LaBianca murders and national guards killed four protesting students at Kent State. A longer, more inertial view stretches the epoch into the mid-1970s, with the early 1970s characterized as a hazy twilight of the hippie idols. (Beyond this point, we may speak of countercultures—squatter punks, travelers, radical environmentalists, ravers—but the rhetoric of generational unity is over.) The 1960s had been marked by a pervasive sense of imminent collective transformation, but then the Age of Aquarius went into eclipse, just as Johnson's Great Society gave way to recession, Watergate, and the politics of paranoia. So even as 'liberated' or permissive mores began to transform mainstream social life, the ravages of drug abuse and the existential confusion introduced by the psycho-social dislocation endemic to the counterculture became impossible to ignore. Environmental consciousness grew in intensity—the first Earth Day was in 1970—but it was accompanied by the defeatist sense that the only way to keep the dream alive was to retreat into rural life or an idealized nonhuman nature.

These conditions all help explain the spiritual innovation that characterized the early 1970s, which from the perspective of the history of religions was an extraordinarily fertile if sometimes desperate era of discovery and reinvention. The most notable development was the unprecedented growth of new and transplanted religious movements, like the Unification Church, Siddha Yoga, and a wide variety of Jesus People sects. Accompanying these groups, and the parallel growth of earlier NRMs like the Hare Krishnas or Scientology, was a growing public discourse around 'cults.' Usually led by charismatic teachers or gurus and sometimes relying on the counterculture's already established occult sensibility—with the Los Angeles-based sect around Father Yod/YaHoWha/James Baker representing one group deeply in debt to Western esotericism—these movements internalized the era's utopian and collective expectations while providing crystallized social and metaphysical structures in the place of existential drift.

More important here, however, is the establishment in the early 1970s of a more informal but pervasive 'pop occulture.' This widespread cultural sensibility was produced in part by strong commercial forces that had already been building toward the end of the 1960s, when, for example, the number of newly published books on occult science and parapsychology increased by more than 100 percent annually. Similarly, while a number of popular television shows in the 1960s featured occult powers—examples include the gothic soap *Dark Shadows* and the comedy *I Dream of Jeannie*—the mediascape of the 1970s was saturated with a supernaturalism, from the rise of heavy metal and progressive rock, to the increasingly cosmic iconography of comic books and poster art. Esoterica was big business—major publishers like Doubleday established occult imprints, while US Games issued their popular (and exclusively copyrighted) version of the famed Rider-Waite Tarot deck in 1971. The

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urge to publish also marked independent and underground outfits already identified with the spiritual counterculture: Llewellyn issued an American witch's version of Gerald Gardner's legendary Book of Shadows in 1971, while the Church of All Worlds and other nature religions developed Pagan discourse through a lively network of periodicals.

As with new religious movements and self-improvement regimens like est, the explosion of occult—books, oracular tools, popular narratives, ephemerides, etc.—helped organize the deterritorialized flux of counterculture consciousness as it engaged a darker and more paranoid era with its yen for enchantment very much intact. One notable example of this fit are the bestselling series of books by Carlos Castaneda, in which the UCLA anthropologist described (or, more likely, invented) his long initiation by the Yaqui 'Man of Knowledge' Don Juan Matus, who gives Castaneda psychedelic drugs along with a variety of intriguing practices. Though the first volume appeared in 1968, it was the Don Juan books Castaneda published in the early 1970s that really resonated, presenting an accessible magical reality that was populated by somewhat ominous allies and required constant vigilance and self-discipline to navigate. This amoral and more traditional 'shamanic' view stands in sharp contrast to earlier and more beatific Aquarian visions. Though Castaneda's books came to be seen by most (but not all) anthropologists as fabrications, this hardly made a difference to many readers; like Don Juan and many of the 'crazy wisdom' gurus of the era, Castaneda himself could be seen as a trickster capable of waking you up.

Timothy Leary too sensed the shift in the air. In his short 1973 'Starseed' pamphlet, written in Folsom prison, Leary advises readers to reject the 'Hindu trap' he had earlier embraced, with its 'soft, sweet, custard mush' of unity. Instead, Leary offered an expansive, futuristic, and increasingly transhuman 'Psi-Phy' perspective on the ongoing possibilities of re-programming the human nervous system. One of Leary's most important influences in this transition was Aleister Crowley, many of whose most important works (including the extraordinary Book of Thoth) were published or republished in the late 1960s and early 1970s, sparking a deep interest in Thelema that has yet to abate and that remains intertwined with certain streams of rock and other popular cultures. In many ways Crowley stands as the most important 'ancestor' of the occult counterculture: he loved drugs, tapped Eastern as well as Western esoteric sources, spear-headed a dysfunctional commune, and placed sexuality at the core of his controversial and counter-normative mysticism. His bald head appeared on the cover of the Beatles 1967 *Sgt. Pepper's Hearts Club Band* (along with Jung, Aldous Huxley, Burroughs, and other counterculture heroes), but the Beast received his most important rock endorsement from Led Zeppelin guitarist and composer Jimmy Page, who sold Crowleyana through his occult bookstore and lived for a spell in the man's old mansion. The fact that a myriad young fans across the globe were exposed to a scandalous Edwardian ceremonial magician through the medium of chart-topping rock and roll is as good a characterization as any for the dynamics of pop occulture in the 1970s, when the spiritual seeds of the counterculture spread far and wide, high and low.

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