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My Own Private Library

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Timothy Cole Hale's Private Library: An Aquarian Collection

During the 1960s, thousands of youths became disillusioned with their middle-class comforts and began protesting social injustices and the Vietnam War in a simplistic, yet ingenious method: "dropping out" of society. This group, collectively known as the counterculture or colloquially as the "hippies," became a lasting and impactful crusade hoping to bring about a revolutionary Age of Aquarius.

books from the era, I built up quite a collection. The books in my personal library can be summarized into three categories: products of the counterculture, philosophies of the counterculture, and reflections of the counterculture.

The first of these categories is the most obvious: products. These are works produced directly by

prominent figures in the movement that became essential reading for those who were part of it. The most well-known example is *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, in which Tom Wolfe chronicles Ken Kesey's famous cross-country trip in 1964 to promote Kesey's book *Sometimes a Great Notion*. My most prized possession in this category is a first edition of Timothy Leary's



One of the author's bookshelves

Only as recently as the 2010s has the counterculture been taken seriously in academia and become viewed as a legitimate movement rather than just silly kids engaging in hedonism. I dedicated my graduate studies to hippies, and between purchasing monographs to build the apparatus for my thesis and winning a grant organized by Dr. Nick Wilding at Georgia State University to purchase first and early editions of

The Psychedelic Experience. This group of books is important because they are the written opinions of those who lived and grew the movement, allowing future readers to see how the words of these "hippie gurus" influenced millions of people.

The second category, philosophy of the counterculture, is a bit more nuanced. I include



Some of the author's books on display at the Charles D. Switzer Library

in this group overtly philosophical works such as *Be Here Now* by Ram Dass, as well as books that contributed to the hippie ethos through the masque of a novel. An example of this latter set includes Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. While this book became popular because the story and characters are entertaining, at the heart of the book are two questions: what is madness and who decides what madness is? These questions, in addition to the prevalent themes of self-reliance and rebellion, shaped the counterculture that blossomed just a couple years after its publishing. Another book that I include in the philosophy category is Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. This book was a call to action that brought the environmental movement into public knowledge that became one of the main activist causes supported by the counterculture. One more book that I own in this group is a first edition of Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, which has remained a significant work in Black literature, that also contributed to the hippie ethos through Cleaver's questioning of contemporary society.

The third category of books in my library are reflections of the hippie community, an umbrella term that encompasses both memoirs and

academic works. This includes works written by people who "lived the sixties" written after the fact, combining memory with today's knowledge to build a vital interpretation of the movement. Similarly, because they analyze the reception of the era now that it is far enough in the rearview mirror of time, I include them with monographs and other histories written by counterculture historians. While scholars often use memories that are not their own, they share the same tactic of autobiographers seeking to investigate what hippies meant to society during the sixties and how they influenced the world today. Memoirs in my collection powerful enough to bring a sense of nostalgia even to those of us who were born long after the era include Roberta Price's *Huerfano* and especially Peter Coyote's *Sleeping Where I Fall*. Monographs include John McMillian's *Smoking Typewriters* and Joshua Davis's *From Head Shops to Whole Foods*.

After graduating from Georgia State University in 2020, societal interest in the hippie counterculture has continued to grow, and so too has my personal library. Upon getting employed at Switzer Library in Marietta, I have since put my rarest first and early editions of the books in one of our display cases alongside other pieces of ephemera such as an original concert ticket from



One of the author's bookshelves

Woodstock. Nearly every day, both young and old patrons stop by the display to take photos.

There is something very special about seeing an artifact from a previous time and knowing that it was there—and likely in the hands of someone who adhered to a philosophy shared with hundreds of thousands of other youths that were part of such a unique period of hope and rebellion.

To be certain, some hippies did lead self-destructive lifestyles and were only part of the international community for hedonism and the incredible music. Despite this, the vast majority of those who made up the counterculture had a desire to bring about a society that was more creative, authentic, peaceful, and free, than had ever existed before. I hope their message will not go overlooked.

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