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Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities (Gutenberg-e)

Timothy Hodgdon

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Manhood in the Age of Aquarius investigates how a deep commitment to the belief in the naturalness of masculinity shaped the efforts of American hippies to create economic, social, political, institutional, religious, and environmental alternatives to their received culture during the 1960s and 1970s. Their efforts to create such alternatives informed the creation of a range of new forms of masculinity.

Timothy Hodgdon compares two sharply contrasting hip communities: The Farm and the Diggers (later known as the Free Families). The Farmies argued that industrial progress had encouraged a dangerous hypermasculinity in men and a corresponding devaluation of women's fertility and capacity for maternal nurture. Only through veneration of women's beautiful yin could humankind return to the path of enlightenment charted by Buddha, Jesus, and other sages, and men were to cultivate a knightly masculinity of egoless service to women within lifelong, monogamous marriages.

The anarchist Diggers reached the opposite conclusion: that progress had effeminized the organization man while brutalizing the respectable working-class men who served his interests as wage worker, policeman, and soldier. The Diggers sought to uproot the alienating status hierarchy mandated by private property. Their theater of the streets valorized the manliness of the outlaw& mdash;the Native American warrior, the Black Panther, the bohemian artist, and the Chinese tong member& mdash;who forcefully defended his freedom from the depredations of unjust authority while practicing the communistic sharing of wealth that, they believed, was a mark of honor among those slandered as thieves.

Thus, Hodgdonargues, the Farmies and the Diggers occupied widely separated positions on a continuum of countercultural manhood. Their divergent criticisms demonstrate that the shift from producerist to consumerist conceptions of manliness was still by no means complete at mid century. Furthermore, hippies' unabashed commitment to masculinity as a natural trait, rather than a political and social construct, shows how even these incisive& mdash;and at times, impish& mdash;critics of American culture stood utterly unprepared for the emergence of radical feminism in 1967 and 1968.

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