

Part 2

"We Be Yogis and Yoginis Together in Our Families": Tantric Masculinity on The Farm

Chapter 4

"I Used to Believe in Hemingway": The Self-Making of a Haight-Ashbury Spiritual Teacher

The miracle is not that you can't knock me down[;] my miracle is that I know how to get up. And I can teach you how to get up.

—Stephen Gaskin

As the decade of the 1970s neared its conclusion, Stephen Gaskin, spiritual teacher to a Tennessee commune of more than a thousand residents, put the finishing touches on *Haight-Ashbury Flashbacks*, a book that recounted some of his most memorable experiences as an acidhead in the Haight-Ashbury. He recalled how he and his peers had had to improvise the LSD subculture of the mid-1960s while trying to make sense of the overwhelming LSD experience: we, today, might liken the process of creating social rules for using acid to traversing the metaphorical "new speedway" of a Grateful Dead song, which described a highway that lacked markings of any kind, and rules of the road as well.¹

On this unmarked highway, Gaskin took many wrong turns. At first LSD produced for him only pleasant, interesting sensations. His twenty-sixth acid trip, however, truly blew his mind, shaking the foundations of his identity. "My consciousness," he later wrote, "was reduced to zilch, zero, and I crawled back up many times, caught myself putting it back together wrong and kicked it down again, and didn't accept one until I found a direction of growth I . . . could live with."² Neither he nor his friends had expected to become convinced of the literal existence of a metaphysical dimension of reality, which they often called God. But his use of terms like *astral plane* signals immediately that he and his companions did not become conventional Christians. They plunged into an informal study of comparative mysticism, searching the world's religious traditions for the tools that might put tripping into perspective. This was a first step in Gaskin's development of a syncretic but mostly Buddhist spirituality that seemed, to these psychedelic travelers, to reveal the possibility of human transcendence of conflict—war, racism, poverty, and even the battle of the sexes. They dedicated themselves to developing a spiritual discipline that might steer all humanity toward peace through spiritual enlightenment.³

By choosing to interpret their LSD experiences as revelations of profound spiritual

truth, Gaskin and his followers rejected the Hegelian materialism of the New Left.⁴ Inequality, violence, and the degradation of the natural environment certainly required, in their view, a radical response—but these were problems primarily of human *consciousness*, not material structure. In a 1970 interview, Gaskin argued that "we don't have to change the material plane around. That's just moving the furniture—you change people's heads and you can do all of that. . . . So that's why I'm not political—politics is about changing the system. I'm about changing people."⁵

But his efforts to change people's heads entailed a rejection of Digger anarchism as well. One result of this choice was that manhood among Gaskin and his followers diverged sharply—in many respects, diametrically—from the outlaw masculinity of the Diggers. Gaskin could not have disagreed more strongly with the Diggers' contention that conformity to unjust authority had emasculated American men. Holding himself up as an example, he argued that Americans' lack of attunement to Spirit led to callous, even violent, *hypermasculinity*. In 1970, he told interviewers that he "used to be into fencing and . . . deer hunting—you see this little male trip happening there? I used to believe in Hemingway. . . . The country . . . tends to be a little hyper—John Wayne."⁶

In response to this assessment, Gaskin and his followers developed, during the 1970s, a countercultural lifeway designed to counter American hypermasculinity through the cultivation of what they saw as men's repressed capacity for love, compassion, and selfless devotion to the good of all. Gaskin's model of relations between the sexes posited that "ladies are supposed to take it upon themselves to create a field around them . . . that's nice and smells good and feels good and is clean and a good place for a baby to be." While Digger men might have found this version of earth-mother femininity alluring from a distance, they would have recoiled from Gaskin's suggestion that "men are supposed to be really chivalrous and . . . knightly and help ['ladies'] . . . to do that." The Diggers would have ridiculed the holy man's insistence that men marry before engaging in sexual relations. Gaskin's chivalrous man of Spirit and the Diggers' footloose outlaw marked extremes on the continuum of countercultural masculinity.⁷

In this chapter, we will follow the gradual development of Gaskin's religious views during the years before the founding of The Farm, and the understanding of masculinity that evolved from his pursuit of a mystical path to countercultural transformation. In the introduction, we witnessed Gaskin's intervention in an attempt by a "black magician" to cop a woman's mind. His ethical certainty that chivalrous intervention was appropriate grew out of intense encounters with acidheads that included moments of ecstatic brotherhood—and, at least as frequently, moments of conflict. In these conflicts, unscrupulous Psychedelphians knocked Gaskin down, in the sense intended in the chapter epigraph, many times.

These encounters bruised his ego, but from them he learned how to get up. He claims that keeping faith in the acid vision of a fair and just universe enabled him, in the end, to develop a level of skill in the art of *tantra* (manipulation of energy on the astral plane) that surpassed the skill of those who succumbed to the temptation to exploit the vulnerabilities of other truth-seekers.⁸ This hard-won knowledge of how to get back up formed the basis of his authority as a preacher in the Haight-Ashbury, the leader of a cross-country caravan of hippie buses in 1970, and the founder of a communal "family monastery," The Farm, in 1971.

Spiritual Novitiate

Stephen Gaskin was born on 16 February 1935 in Denver, Colorado. In his youth, few would have marked him as a future religious leader. By his own account, he absorbed conventional perspectives on religion and morality without developing a strong attraction to questions of religious faith. In those days, if professing faith seemed to him to be a social requirement, so too, it seemed, was a sophisticated skepticism about its veracity. Science had subsumed religion's authority as an account of the workings of the universe. Yet Gaskin later claimed that he had intuited, early on, that the teachers and scientists who proclaimed the superiority of Enlightenment rationalism had overlooked important truths about Spirit. What he lacked in his youth, he said, was the language and experience necessary to articulate those truths.⁹

Gaskin enlisted in the Marine Corps at seventeen, lying about his age in order to escape the authority of his parents. The Corps sent him into combat in Korea. Discharged in 1955, he drifted for a time, suffering from what we now call post-traumatic stress syndrome. He pursued an associate's degree over several years, but heavy drinking interfered with regular attendance. He married twice; neither marriage endured. In 1958, he opened what he later described as the first of his several Beat coffeehouses, in San Bernardino, California.¹⁰

The passage of time, and dwindling G.I. benefits, brought Gaskin out of this sleepwalker's trance. He transferred to San Francisco State College, and, forsaking beatnik attire, transformed himself into a model student, earning an undergraduate degree in 1962 and a master's degree in 1964. For the next two years he taught first-year English, creative writing, and general semantics at the College.¹¹ But then the counterculture blossomed around him, and, as he tells it, many of his best students were dropping out of school to pursue an interest in spiritual matters. Intrigued, he followed them. He recounted his journey of spiritual awakening in *Haight-Ashbury Flashbacks*.

It is useful, to a point, to approach *Flashbacks* as a book that echoed the deeply ingrained cultural logic of the American conversion narrative. The anecdotes that comprise Gaskin's text suggest a winding path from unformed youth to mature

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self-possession, from willful denial of a higher power to the spiritual grace and rebirth achieved through what historian Susan Juster, writing of early nineteenth-century American evangelicalism, has called "a breaking down of the unregenerate will and sense of self, and its reconstitution under the divine power of the Spirit." This breakdown cleared the way, for Gaskin as well as earlier evangelicals, to "a mature union with God" that entailed "recovery of moral agency and spiritual potency." Yet another similarity to the past coheres in Gaskin's motives for publishing his account, which were as decidedly pedagogical as those of his evangelical forebears. Finally, in Gaskin's insistence that he, to a degree unmatched by most of his peers in the LSD subculture, took care to observe and interpret the minutiae of his acid trips, we can even see traces of the characterization of power and authority as "an abstract system of rules and principles" that, according to Juster, distinguished early-nineteenth-century men's conversion narratives from women's.¹²

By noticing, however, that *Flashbacks* consists not of a single narrative, but of a series of loosely connected vignettes, we reach the limits of the conversion narrative as a template for Gaskin's tale. Although he made frequent reference to God in all of his writing and preaching, his primarily Buddhist understanding of the higher power contrasted sharply with that informing the evangelical narratives of the early republic. For Gaskin, God was not an entity, but another name for the congeries of immanent forces—vitality and entropy, *yang* and *yin*, *eros* and *thanatos*—that constituted the universe and the indescribable Void in which it became manifest. Although, as a sincere believer in karma, Gaskin taught that one's personal relationship with God was the primary focus of spiritual practice, he could not conceive of that relationship in the individualistic terms of the nineteenth-century conversion narrative. 11

Gaskin's conception of *Flashbacks* as a series of personal vignettes owed at least as much to the Buddhist genre of pedagogical biography—stories about the lives of past masters—as it did to the conversion narrative. According to Zen scholar Ruth Fuller Sasaki, these biographies evolved into the *koan*, a story-riddle that poses a problem impenetrable by intellectual means, thus encouraging the student to reach for a nondualistic solution.¹³ *Flashbacks* complemented Gaskin's scriptural works, such as *Monday Night Class*, *Mind at Play*, and *Sunday Morning Services at The Farm*, by suggesting the origins of his teaching through illustration rather than through formal argumentation, and thus the book can serve as our primary means of periodizing his self-making as a holy man. 12

Encountering Psychedelics

Gaskin's first experience with marijuana—and of being "knocked down" spiritually by a fellow drug user—came while he was still a Marine, visiting a cousin in California. The cousin's generous impulse to introduce him to a new source of 13

pleasure was tempered by abuse of the drug's spiritual power. The cousin first impressed the neophyte by demonstrating how to intensify the feeling of giddy intoxication that had come over him. Then, without warning, the cousin began to drive erratically, shouting hysterically that the car was about to crash. Satisfied that he had terrified Gaskin, he brought the car to a stop, declaring that his superior knowledge gave him the power to make Gaskin's drug experience either miserable or euphoric. From this manhood act, Gaskin says that he learned not the intended lesson—to follow the cousin blindly—but to distrust anyone who said that marijuana was worth the trouble.¹⁴

However, Gaskin's next guide to the mysteries of marijuana intoxication was much more nurturing. In 1962, a few months before his college graduation, several friends gathered to celebrate his birthday. George, an artist and avid student of mysticism, handed him a pipe, gently insisting that he give it a try. Gaskin obliged and became thoroughly "stoned." Looking into George's eyes, Gaskin felt a telepathic bond with his friend. George confirmed this perception. On a subsequent occasion, George handed him a pipe loaded with hashish and instructed him first to squat, and then to stand as he inhaled. Gaskin rose, handed the pipe back to George, and fell backward into an armchair. Before losing consciousness, he eyed the design in an old Mexican bowl; he experienced the sensation of falling into the design, which had become a vortex into the Void.¹⁵

In these stories Gaskin describes intoxication on his first use of marijuana. While this certainly was possible, as critical readers we should note that, at least in the statistical sense, this outcome was rather uncommon until the final decades of the twentieth century.¹⁶ This probably was not dishonesty on his part; he may have compressed a longer series of encounters for didactic purposes. We may also note Gaskin's tendency to reject the simplest explanations available in favor of Buddhist metaphysics. We might say, for example, that Gaskin blacked out for lack of oxygen when he inhaled and stood in the same motion. He chose, instead, to describe his fall into the design as an "ego death and rebirth."¹⁷

We need not accept such statements as literal description in order to grasp their historical significance, which lies in the sincerity of Gaskin's belief and the consistency of this belief with the general thrust of his subsequent actions. As with many religious seers, past and present, sincere belief helped Gaskin make the most of the charisma that later inspired thousands to follow him. Furthermore, Gaskin's preference for metaphysical explanation was not his alone. Those around him shared his penchant for Buddhist interpretation, and the flow of ideas within those circles tended to reinforce that view.¹⁸

Gaskin continued to move in bohemian circles after entering graduate school.

Despite his intellectual ability, he felt ill at ease among the faculty, whose professional demeanor was bourgeois and whose avowed tastes were decidedly highbrow. He found fellowship among the more eccentric of his peers and students.¹⁹ As his network of bohemian friends expanded, drug experimentation among them widened to include LSD.

LSD reached bohemians like Gaskin and his circle through a gradual process of diffusion. The substance was discovered in 1943 by a Sandoz Pharmaceuticals researcher seeking a remedy for migraines. The company's marketing executives distributed the new drug to psychiatrists and government agencies around the world, hoping that they might uncover a profitable application for the powerful psychedelic. Initially, experimentation centered on the belief that the drug served as a psychotomimetic, inducing "model psychosis" in research subjects, which might enable researchers to understand the disease's somatic development. The Central Intelligence Agency funded experiments to assess its potential as a weapon or a tool of espionage, for which it proved to be of little use.²⁰

LSD and other psychedelics diffused outward from the controlled setting of the laboratory in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Sometimes, as in the case of Dr. Timothy Leary, the researchers themselves "went mysto," to use Gaskin's phrase, after sampling psychedelic drugs.²¹ Bohemians who volunteered for the various studies, such as novelist Ken Kesey, served as another conduit of diffusion. Members of both groups took psychedelic experimentation into their own hands, believing that these sacramental substances could not be left to secular science alone. Acidheads invented ingenious ruses by which to procure quantities of the drug from Sandoz. From there, experimentation proceeded in as many directions as the "heads" could imagine. Leary, discharged from Harvard in 1963, promoted tripping in carefully controlled settings as a means of mystical transcendence and self-discovery. Kesey experimented with LSD as an agent of social "deconditioning" and as a catalyst for artistic creativity, in a series of utterly uncontrolled "acid tests" and a "Trips Festival" in California in 1965 and 1966.²²

Rather like Kesey and his Merry Pranksters, Gaskin's circle of outsider literary intellectuals enjoyed science-fiction stories, Tolkien novels, and comic books, and employed the imagery of these genres as tropes for aspects of the LSD experience.²³ We might say that they were "serious trippers": their drug use was not primarily recreational. Acid trips seemed to facilitate a telepathic bond among them that, they posited, could lead to the development of a group consciousness—a "group head." The sense of egoless existence that sometimes marked their trips—a version of what Victor Turner would soon call *communitas*—tended to confirm their critique of the striving individualism, routinized bureaucracy, consumerism, and hypocritical deference to authority that, for bohemians, marked the twentieth-century American version of the

Protestant ethic.²⁴

Gaskin and his friends were not yet ambitious proselytizers of LSD, however, in the fashion of Leary and Kesey. At first, in the early 1960s, Leary (who began his research with studies of psilocybin, extracted from species of psychoactive mushrooms by the same Sandoz chemist who had earlier discovered LSD) published his views in academic journals. These caught the attention of journalists, to be sure, but no one wrote, as yet, of an epidemic of psychedelic drug abuse. Researchers considered LSD a very safe drug, because they observed very few psychotic reactions among their carefully screened test subjects. But by mid-1965, both Leary and Kesey fairly shouted from the rooftops that LSD would facilitate a precipitous revolution in American consciousness. According to journalist Jay Stevens, these bold public claims and a small but rapid increase in the number of LSD-induced psychoses, amplified incautiously in mass media, created panic among public-health authorities and legislators, who moved to outlaw psychedelics. In 1965 and 1966, as Sandoz curtailed its distribution, talented amateurs such as San Francisco's Augustus Owsley Stanley learned how to synthesize the compound and developed extensive, lucrative distribution networks.²⁵

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Stevens seeks to understand how the psychedelics, once popularly understood as wonder drugs that promised to liberate humanity from the ravages of mental illness, were recast as agents of American moral decline. Necessarily, he brings to the fore those historical actors who, like Leary and Kesey, most boldly pushed the envelope. As is clear in the early pages of *Flashbacks*, however, among grassroots heads like Gaskin and his friends, Leary's and Kesey's approaches, while intriguing, never garnered their undivided loyalty, and they felt prompted neither to make pilgrimage to Leary's headquarters nor to replicate Kesey's "acid tests." Instead, Gaskin's circle, and other grassroots heads, continued in their less flamboyant pursuits. In 1964 theirs was still a face-to-face drug culture, in which a folklore of LSD had only begun to evolve.

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But in 1965 and 1966 the San Francisco counterculture expanded around them. The rapidly increasing number of acidheads meant that the LSD subculture could no longer operate entirely on a face-to-face basis. Competing interpretations of the LSD experience proliferated, and as the pace of psychedelic exploration intensified, men in the Haight-Ashbury vied with one another for places in an emerging hierarchy of charismatic expertise and leadership. The most intensive part of Gaskin's spiritual novitiate was about to begin, in which he found himself repeatedly knocked down by "black magicians." As in other rags-to-spiritual-riches tales, Gaskin portrayed these repeated knockdowns as lessons in "how to get up."

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Manhood among the Magicians

Some of Gaskin's early lessons in the art of psychedelic self-defense came at the hands of fellows in his circle of bohemian literary outsiders. One, whom he identifies as "O.," a fellow graduate student, proved himself a skillful, passive-aggressive manipulator. His outward appearance bespoke deep suffering: emaciated and acne-pocked, he always wore the same unkempt black suit. He lacked both the manly self-confidence and the personal warmth to negotiate sexual intimacy. Gaskin and his friends might have ostracized this unsavory character had it not been for O.'s skill at manipulating the social contract among heads, which, in principle, extended fraternity to all users of LSD.²⁶ 24

According to Gaskin, O. exploited his inclusion shamelessly, constantly badgering him to reveal the secrets of his LSD magic. Gaskin patiently explained, at times, how a particular book he was reading might help to explain some elements of the psychedelic realm. Yet when he moved from matters of technique to matters of ethics, O. dug in his heels. According to Gaskin, his fellow tripper sought to maximize his power and prestige with the least possible effort. Gaskin would later describe such undisciplined, parasitic power-seekers as "into the juice" developed by others (*juice* in the sense of *electrical charge*). Although O. did manage to turn one of Gaskin's close friends against him, he never succeeded in his efforts to cop Gaskin's mind. From these encounters, the future holy man learned that the power of LSD was available to all, regardless of character and integrity. On the "new speedway" of the Haight-Ashbury acid subculture, some drivers were thinking only of themselves.²⁷ 25

O. lacked subtlety; his black magic was relatively easy to spot. Other LSD magicians presented a greater challenge: they practiced *both* kinds of magic, their sincerity camouflaging their self-indulgence. The charm, wit, intelligence, and dedication of the (presumably) pseudonymous "Rockin' Jody Morningstar" earned him the respect of Gaskin and others for a time. At his best, Morningstar did not hesitate to knock down his friend Gaskin, when the latter's pride and ambitions as a serious tripper led him to reach beyond his actual grasp. But Morningstar also proved, in the end, to be the kind of teacher who preferred that his students remain forever reliant on his tutelage. As Gaskin's grasp improved, Morningstar intended his knockdowns, more and more, to promote continued dependency. The process of breaking free from that dependency tested Gaskin's mettle on a number of occasions. 26

Gaskin credits Morningstar as one of the first genuinely spiritual acidheads he encountered. The spirituality of acid was not a new idea. Aldous Huxley had popularized psychedelic mysticism in the mid-1950s, and in 1964 Leary and Richard Alpert had used the Tibetan Book of the Dead as an interpretive frame.²⁸ But it is in his recollections of Morningstar that Gaskin points to the onset of his belief that LSD offered users more than science-fiction fantasy. "We had this 27

agreement," he wrote, that tripping was "the church. Not *a* church. *The* church. It didn't belong to nobody. . . . It was a church meeting *every time* . . . good people . . . got high and loved each other and went into being telepathic . . . with one another; and we tried to be that way about it."²⁹

The stories Gaskin selected for *Flashbacks* were those that would best convey the seriousness with which he and other heads regarded psychedelic experience as a church. In one such story, Gaskin, Morningstar, and several other men were conducting a "peyote ceremony" one night. One of the participants began to invoke inappropriate forms of black magic. Morningstar, presiding as the "road chief" of the ceremony, quickly interceded. At another point, when Gaskin left the room to vomit (the peyote-button tea having been particularly bitter and moldy), Morningstar became convinced that the novice was indulging in ego needs and not lending his best efforts to making the ceremony a successful spiritual experience for all in attendance. Morningstar approached him and, so serious in his spiritual office that principle overrode friendship, curtly instructed the others to purify Gaskin with cedar smoke before allowing him to re-enter the ceremonial chamber. This Gaskin took as a lesson on the humility and discipline required of church members.³⁰

Morningstar's sincere teaching masked his more self-interested motives for some time. Morningstar, Gaskin writes, was attempting to cop his mind, as had O. One part of this effort involved extravagant public acclaim for Gaskin's psychic powers—an appeal to the novice's ego-hunger for praise—as was the case one evening at the Family Dog dance hall. At other times, Morningstar manipulated the trust Gaskin placed in him. One afternoon, Gaskin and his lover paid a visit and accepted Morningstar's offer of marijuana. When he sensed that Gaskin was very high, Morningstar advised his protégé that he was enveloped by a "red aura," indicating spiritual pride. This sudden pronouncement caught the earnest novice off-guard; while he was attempting to regain his equilibrium, Morningstar suddenly reclined into the lap of Gaskin's partner, and the two, by previous agreement, kissed passionately.³¹

Clearly, the message behind Morningstar's behavior was that, whatever the level of Gaskin's spiritual development, he yet lacked the competence to detect—or, better yet, avert—such secret alliances. Like the knockdown Gaskin's cousin had delivered years earlier through erratic driving, Morningstar's action was intended to establish dominance. If getting high was *the* church, then Morningstar was reserving for himself a better pew. Gaskin described this incident wryly, joking about its brusqueness. On a more serious note, he called it a genuine lesson, in that Morningstar had, by the standards that both men accepted, demonstrated superior magical gifts.³²

Gaskin's account implies, however, that this incident and others like it were also *negative* teachings: he relates them to readers in order to advance his own, more principled vision of *the church*, in which all pews are equal, and seekers vow not to cop one another's minds. It took Gaskin some time to develop the stature to make that vision manifest. Until then, he had to accept Morningstar's arrangement. 31

Gaskin applied himself assiduously to this quest for a more ethical church. The face-to-face subculture of freaks he had entered in the early 1960s accepted the casual trade in drugs as an honorable alternative to conventional employment, and Gaskin had supported himself in this way. But his growing insight into the workings of the supernatural began to suggest that the Hindu concept of karma applied to the sacred substances of the psychedelic church: those who used drugs absorbed the karma of the persons and actions involved in providing them. Thus he decided to relinquish this source of income, especially given the egoistic, professionalized, profit-driven transactions that increasingly marked the trade. As Gaskin settled his outstanding accounts, Morningstar—apparently an important supplier—at first became quite upset, sensing that he might lose a follower and customer. When Gaskin stood his ground, Morningstar tried a different tack, offering to let Gaskin keep some of the LSD at no cost, for his own use: "Don't you want to keep a couple of tabs to get high?" Gaskin stepped forward to declare his independence: "I *am* high. Ain't nothing you could give me that could *get* me high. *Am high now*."³³ 32

This move revealed that now it was Gaskin who ranked as the more assiduous practitioner. Self-indulgence was rapidly diminishing Morningstar's astral powers. The latter graduated from State College, cut his hair, and returned to wearing conventional suits. He visited Gaskin one last time before leaving San Francisco. As they smoked marijuana together, Morningstar affected the mannerisms that once had made him a charming figure—but by now, his act had worn thin. Gaskin recalls thinking, "*A shadow of his former self*."³⁴ 33

Looking back on his days in the Haight-Ashbury, Gaskin discovered, in the stories of Morningstar and other onetime luminaries of the psychedelic church of the streets, two characteristics that distinguished his practice from theirs. One was that he, in stark contrast to figures like O., had keenly observed the characteristics of the astral plane while tripping, and had invested considerable energy in building a coherent model of this newfound metaphysical reality, modifying his spiritual practice in response to new experiences. He also discovered that good character and humility were more important for the serious tripper than study alone: in the fast-paced, unpredictable realm of the astral plane, a good outcome depended more on good habits and good character than scriptural knowledge. This was why the law of karma was so important: over the 34

long term, ethical practitioners tended to attain higher levels of consciousness. Those who indulged in misuses of the power of LSD tended to lose their sensitivity. Writing a decade later, he declared that few of his erstwhile comrades retained their powers.³⁵

Headman of a Hashburian "Tribe"

By Gaskin's account, at least, his powers continued to expand through fastidiousness and careful study. As an increasingly self-assured tripper, he did what he could to guide his circle of friends toward higher levels of metaphysical experience and insight, teaching them how to get up when, during an acid trip, someone or something knocked them down. He and his friends developed a very strong bond, one that was reinforced as they learned how to apply the principles of ethical tripping to their daily lives with greater consistency. 35

One moment of intense bonding came when Gaskin, his wife Margaret (formerly Margaret Nofziger, whom we met in chapter 1 during a discussion of Beat bohemia), and several others took acid together in his Broderick Street apartment. Margaret, feeling ill, had covered her face with a pillow, while a man named Charlie seemed to be absorbed in his own pursuits; Gaskin hallucinated the image of his friend playing with toys and stuffed animals. Suddenly, something caught the attention of the group; they discovered that they were telepathically connected to one another, able to share thoughts without uttering a word. The existential nakedness of this unexpected moment of "group head" flustered everyone; with no one confident of the way forward, the connection disintegrated as each fumbled for ways to sustain it. Nevertheless, those present came away feeling grateful for direct, collective experience of what they had previously encountered only in pairs: that humans, and all else in the universe, were part of the universal oneness of God. Conventional understandings of individual distinctiveness, while correct as far as they went, could not account for the group's apparent capacity to think as if with a single mind.³⁶ 36

Another moment of bonding came from a lesson in bad karma. Stephen and Margaret went to Mount Tamalpais, in Marin County, with another couple, their friends and roommates Ina May and Michael. At one point, Gaskin told the others to listen carefully. They heard what he describes as all the birds, animals, and insects of the mountain sounding in unison, providing a beacon guiding the psychedelic explorers to awareness of the unity of all life. After an interval in this state of communion, the group descended the mountain, pausing to bless themselves with water from a creek. 37

Arriving home in a state of heightened sensitivity, some elements of their home environment seemed to violate the spirit of oneness and compassion that they had felt on the mountain. A portrait of elderly residents of a charity house, which, before, they had found amusing because of the women's peculiar appearance, 38

now felt like a mockery of fellow human beings. In another room, the group examined a set of rubbings that they had mounted on the wall in admiration of their artistic elegance; now they discerned that they depicted soldiers herding slaves. They removed these objects, and everything else in the apartment that bespoke indifference to suffering, as an act of fidelity to their transcendent vision.³⁷

As tripping companions, the two couples became very close. During another LSD trip in June 1968 (it is unclear whether the visit to Mount Tamalpais occurred before or after), the four experienced what Gaskin described as mutual telepathic connection combined with out-of-body travel. He claimed that their individual selves mingled in the process, so that, when he returned to his own body, he found that he now possessed not simply his own identity, but shared those of the others as well. Stunned, none of the four found themselves quite ready to discuss what they had experienced; the two couples retired to their own bedrooms. Once alone, Stephen asked Margaret for confirmation that something "really heavy" had happened. When she disclosed that she, too, now shared the others' minds, they decided to talk to Michael and Ina May. It was on that evening, wrote Gaskin, that the four realized that they had entered a state of "spiritual marriage." Later, Gaskin described their group marriage as a "four thing," and spoke of "four-" and "six-marriages," or of being "married in two" or "married in four."³⁸

Marriage was not a violation of the principle of the universal oneness of the cosmos, an us-versus-them relation; rather, it was a union of sentient beings who had arrived at a particular level of awareness, and involved a commitment to devote their lives to maintaining and expanding it. This four-marriage became the nucleus of their religious movement to transform humankind by bringing more and more people to the point where they, too, could share in this state of communion. When all human beings shared this bond, then the human race would transcend its divisions and shed its oppressions. *We are all one* would become the social contract; later, at The Farm, the destination placard on the commune's Greyhound Scenicruiser declared that the community was "Out to Save the World."

Again, we need not accept the literal truth of stories about telepathy or spiritual marriage to understand that belief impelled these psychedelic voyagers to act on the stage of history. Like Grogan's tale of redemption in the forests of New Mexico, Gaskin's stories numbered among the founding myths of a movement that, by the late 1970s, held together the largest of all the hippie-era communes.

"Our Tribe Don't Do That"

Loyal to his four-marriage's sacred bond and the knowledge that he had accumulated, Gaskin felt called upon to articulate an ethics and politics of the

power of LSD—both in his encounters with black magicians, and sometimes in contests of manhood within his own circle. At a gathering in his Howard Street loft, Gaskin and his friends were on their way into the most intense phase of a trip. The holy man recalled that the group were "all . . . feeling tribal," and this feeling manifested in the hallucinatory imagery of the trip. "People are looking Indian-ish . . . Margaret looked like an Eskimo lady."³⁹

Gaskin and his friends understood themselves as a *tribe*, a word that carried multiple meanings in postwar America.⁴⁰ In a conflict that would arise among them shortly, the implicit question was: Which sense should prevail? Would they agree to see themselves as a tribe of Rousseau's Noble Savages, instinctively just in their social relations by virtue of having returned, through acid, to a life in harmony with Nature? Or was this a tribe in the other major sense of the term? In the hegemonic Euro-American imagination, the so-called Bloodthirsty Savage stood as the inferior of the civilized white man. But some hippies, such as the Diggers, inverted this cultural logic, arguing that the Bloodthirsty Savage was the defender of an egalitarian way of life—one who valued the manly qualities of dignity, liberty, and autonomy enough to cast aside bourgeois distaste for personal involvement in violent confrontation.⁴¹

Gaskin's vignette tells us where he stood. The tripping buddies had begun to relax after resolving a moment of panic among their number, when, without warning, a man in the group named Lee telepathically communicated his interest in initiating a tribal barter of the Bloodthirsty kind with Gaskin—he wanted to trade for Gaskin's wife, Margaret. Gaskin recalled that his initial response, besides shock, was to dismiss Lee's outrageous offer as a tasteless joke. But Lee persisted, this time verbally. His insistence prompted a discussion of the offer's legitimacy. Gaskin saw discussion as altogether too generous a response to an affront to the ethics of the LSD church, and articulated his resistance more firmly.⁴²

But Lee pressed forward, testing Gaskin's manly resolve by naming a price: "some cows." Gaskin described his reaction in racialized terms: "And I immediately step out of the tepee and slam the spear in the ground, quivering with the feathers hanging on the shaft, and say, 'Our tribe don't do that.'"⁴³

But even this evocative display did not put the issue to rest. Note that neither man appears to have consulted Margaret, nor did she offer any sign of protest—at least as Gaskin renders the tale. This replicates the complex and marginal position of women in the Euro-American "West of the imagination": the objectification of most women of color as wantonly sexual, thus bestial and fit for barter, and the objectification of white women as, variously, chaste moral civilizers or degraded prostitutes—both of the latter dependent on white men for protection from the Bloodthirsty Savage.⁴⁴ Lee continued to badger Gaskin,

following him into the kitchen of the loft. The controlling metaphor of the encounter shifted, for no apparent reason, from romantic tribalism to cowboy justice. Lee moved the contest to a showdown by proposing a coin toss.⁴⁵

The two magicians faced one another. *Dodge City; high noon; black hats and white*. But this was a *psychedelic* Western: Lee conjured the image of a large, multicolored disk, which he "tossed" high in the air. The men's eyes locked on one another: Lee, to see if Gaskin accepted his challenge by following the tumbling disk, and Gaskin, in order to show his utter disregard for the outcome of the toss. Gaskin's steady gaze into Lee's eyes "seemed to settle it."⁴⁶ Since he succeeded in refusing the terms of Lee's manhood act, Gaskin's declaration of Noble Savage ethics prevailed.

Preaching to the Haight-Ashbury: The Monday Night Class

Constructing a new religious movement asks more of a charismatic leader than just his capacity to . . . tell of his vision; finally, it asks for the creation of a people who realize in their living the sacredness they met in him.

—Arthur Kachel

At the same time that Gaskin and his circle were rethinking their daily lives, their tribal headman was also attracting a following. In March 1966 Gaskin began to offer informal courses in San Francisco State's new Experimental College. Listed under titles such as "North American White Witchcraft," "Magic, Einstein, and God," "Group Experiments in Unified Field Theory," and "Meta-PE," these courses blended literature on mysticism, magic, popular philosophy and psychology, and hallucinogenic experience. By his own account, Gaskin was no longer maintaining the grooming and behavior of a professor-in-training; the literature department chose not to renew his teaching contract in the fall. Initially unsure of what to do next, he gradually realized that his true calling had already found *him*, as youthful trippers approached, drawn by word of mouth. His bearing and experience helped qualify him as an "acid preacher": his time in the classroom and study of literature and semantics had honed a native gift for teaching and speaking, and his age (about a decade older than most young heads), imposing stature, and resonant voice added to the authority of his pronouncements. When necessary, he could even draw on his military experience to make quick decisions and organize people for specific tasks.⁴⁷

In February 1967 Gaskin began to meet informally with a small group in the Gallery Lounge at San Francisco State. In December 1968 they moved away from the campus, which was embroiled in the Third-World Strike, to the basement of Glide Memorial United Methodist Church in the Tenderloin district. The group that met there numbered initially about a dozen co-discussants, but grew steadily. When weekly attendance surpassed five hundred, in March 1969, they relocated

to the Straight Theater on Haight Street, an area that, after the influx of young seekers during the Summer of Love, had become the site of a serious epidemic of heroin use and crime. Nine weeks later, with over a thousand in attendance, the Monday Night Class, as it came to be called, relocated again, this time to a dance hall on the Pacific Coast Highway operated by the Family Dog. In October 1969 Gaskin initiated "services" at sunrise on Sundays for a smaller, more dedicated group of seekers, at Family Dog facilities in Lindley Meadow and Pompano Beach, and on Mount Tamalpais.⁴⁸

An informal structure evolved for the Class. Gaskin usually opened the proceedings with a monologue on a topic of his own choosing; then, perhaps in a nod to the ancient Buddhist teaching practice of *mondo* (a rapid-fire question-and-answer session between a Zen master and his monks), he would invite the audience to ask questions.⁴⁹ At times, this question-and-answer evolved into a discussion among audience members, with Gaskin involved only as moderator. In a 1991 interview, Gaskin said that his presence on the stage was contingent on a tacit agreement with his audience that his authority derived from the truthfulness of his words and the humility of his comportment. He claims that he never stood on the stage and never mounted it from the front. Rather, he entered from the rear—presumably, to make the stage a meeting ground of equals, rather than a place that elevated speaker above audience. He always sat, cross-legged, on a cushion, and spoke without a microphone. At the Family Dog facility, the stage was a makeshift wooden platform that sat in the middle of what had once been a roller-skating rink. The audience sat in a semicircle around the platform, and the house lights were not dimmed; both teacher and audience were equally illuminated. Gaskin believed that the heightened consciousness of those in attendance—many of whom were tripping during the Class, as he sometimes was—made them quick to spot false teaching. He suggests that even the twitch of a muscle could alienate this highly sensitized audience.⁵⁰

Some of the sessions of the Class were transcribed and became the text of Gaskin's first book, *Monday Night Class*, which preserves a statement of Gaskin's Buddhist-inspired philosophy of social change at an early stage of its maturity. Hundreds of "trips" had confirmed for him that there was a reality of spirit and energy, of which the physical universe described by science was but one product. Ignorance of the metaphysical led, Gaskin believed, to willfulness in the exercise of human free will that he described as "uptightness"—attachment to the self and its desires. Not only did attachment render individuals prone to personal suffering; for Gaskin, as for so many others, ignorance—or denial—of the realities of Spirit made existence on the material plane a Hobbesian hell of systematic human exploitation and environmental ruin.⁵¹ Furthermore, karma—responsibility for the consequences of choice—accompanied the power of free will. For as long as humans chose ignorance and attachment, then suffering would be their lot;

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and, over time, the accumulation of negative karma might make the planet literally uninhabitable.⁵²

The alternative, Gaskin taught, was for humans to pull themselves up by their karmic bootstraps. The cultivation of enlightened nonattachment—a state of consciousness in which humans could become increasingly efficient, tantric "transceivers"⁵³ of *qi* flowing from the astral to the material plane—would counteract the entropic tendencies so evident in the American way of life. Disciplined and compassionate trippers would introduce a new "vibe" into human affairs that would attract others. Over time, commitment to Spirit would reach a critical mass, resulting in a higher denominator of spiritual agreement that would enable humankind to transcend conflict and suffering. Based on a hermeneutical equivalence between the "high" produced by psychedelics and the Buddhist concept of enlightened nonattachment, Gaskin conceived of the Monday Night Class as a vehicle for serious trippers to get high and *stay* high, with or without the assistance of drugs, in order to perform the vital work of counteracting the entropic tendencies of industrial civilization. 52

Gaskin's attraction to Buddhist insight into the nature of human suffering did not, by itself, distinguish him from many of his countercultural peers. Why was he able to draw such impressive numbers to the Monday Night Class? Although highly charismatic, his overall approach to teaching Buddhism was not particularly self-conscious and refined; some of those who attended the Class found his monologues impenetrable. For today's readers, *Monday Night Class* poses many challenges, including poor organization and the promiscuous mixing of dated street argot and borrowed Asian terms. However, one aspect of his teaching paid dividends: Gaskin's impulse to draw from the familiar vocabulary of Christianity for metaphors that would clarify key Buddhist and Vedic concepts to Americans helped to mitigate his hip preference for spontaneity over a more polished pedagogy. The concept of karma, for example, became much easier to digest when rendered, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."⁵⁴ However, Christian *doctrine*, particularly that pertaining to the redemptive power of suffering, appears to have exerted little influence on his spiritual outlook.⁵⁵ 53

Timing and temperament certainly contributed to Gaskin's popularity. By the late 1960s, both Timothy Leary and Ken Kesey were deeply enmeshed in criminal proceedings and thus unable to build a following. Leary was a figure of international renown—but, during the time when he was least encumbered by run-ins with authorities, he based his operations at a mansion in Millbrook, New York, away from major countercultural population centers. Only later, under the cloud of indictment, did he develop a psychedelic road-show intended to attract adherents. In any event, Leary's mercurial temperament made it unlikely that he would have succeeded in the slow, patient work of building a following. Moreover, 54

because Leary always needed money for his legal defense, he charged admission to his road shows; Gaskin's class was always free of charge. He appears to have supported himself on freewill offerings.⁵⁶

Timing and temperament aided Gaskin in other ways as well. Love, compassion, 55
 pacifism, and optimism about the possibility of social change were the hallmarks of his message during 1966–68, when Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Black Power movement were repudiating nonviolence in favor of militant anti-imperialism. In a sense, Gaskin preserved the spiritual optimism of the early Haight, which appealed to some of those in SDS who, unable to choose sides as the national organization splintered into competing factions, took new interest in the counterculture's idealist approach to social change. As historian Doug Rossinow has argued, many former SDSers fashioned a "New Left counterculture" that gave rise to its own communes, food cooperatives, and a new interest in spiritual perspectives on social change. Gaskin was one of many gurus who offered a distinctive alternative at a time when apocalyptic thinking had gained prominence in Movement circles.⁵⁷

But in my view, it was Gaskin's rejection of asceticism that, more than any other 56
 feature, won him a broad audience. Numerous Asian mystics cultivated the fertile fields of America in the 1960s, but their teaching frequently clashed with countercultural praxis and values. Some advocated a monastic asceticism that required students to forsake drug use and sexual relationships; others so clearly exploited metaphysical knowledge as a means to worldly wealth that committed hippies regarded them with contempt.⁵⁸ In contrast to both of these approaches, Gaskin's path to enlightenment derived organically from countercultural practice: he saw both sexuality and drugs as means to liberation, even though he taught a decidedly non-hedonistic restraint in both cases. He chose not monasticism but the competing tradition of householder yoga, in which devotees cultivated higher consciousness through active involvement with family and the everyday world. His vehicles for social change—the Class, the Caravan, and The Farm—addressed matters of gender more systematically than did many other countercultural groups. Let's focus on the gendered dimensions of his teaching in the Class in order to locate the roots of The Farm's distinctive form of masculinity.

The Gendered Foundations of Gaskin's Teaching

In the Monday Night Class, Gaskin preached to what he later described as "a 57
 village that met once a week." That village did not take gender as a fundamental social and political problem requiring extensive deliberation. Thus Gaskin framed virtually all of his teaching in *Monday Night Class* in gender-neutral terms.⁵⁹ And yet Gaskin and his village, like the Free Families in their communes, found that their efforts to create a countercultural lifeway frequently ran up against questions about manhood and womanhood.

Gaskin taught that heterosexual union could serve as an important form of yoga: 58
that is, a body-mind discipline that developed individuals' capacity to focus energy
from the astral onto the material plane. He referred to this sexual yoga as *tantric
loving* or *tantric balling*. In conventional sexual practice, he said, men (who, we
will recall, were inclined toward the "hyper-John Wayne" by American culture)
tended to rush headlong toward orgasm. What was lost in this egoistic haste was
the possibility that the two partners could help one another quiet their minds and
concentrate their attention on the flow of astral energy through the nervous
system.⁶⁰ To create this meditative state, it was important to proceed slowly,
beginning with a generalized, deep massaging of the partners' musculature.⁶¹

Given American men's hypermasculine tendencies, Gaskin made a point of 59
emphasizing to the Class that this yogic practice required men to become
receptive to the *female* partner's guidance. The "lady" became "the helmsman,
the guide." Addressing the men in the room, he continued, "And if you say, Oh,
let me just take the wheel for a minute, 'cause it feels so good, that's a cop-out."
Indeed, Gaskin instructed men to approach sexual union as an act of
"renunciation" in which they should "go right up to a real-life climax and hang
there for a long time" without ejaculating, in order that their partner might
experience orgasm. The unstated assumption, which becomes clear in his later
pronouncements on the sacredness of childbirth, was that women's fertility
afforded them a reliable conduit to *qi*. Male renunciation was not renunciation of
sexuality as such, but rather was intended to result in ego-death, an opening to
the life-force readily channeled by the female "helmsman." He reassured men
that "after you've achieved . . . that [renunciation], I think that whether you have
ejaculation or not . . . is less important, it's just that you got to withhold it long
enough to get stoned just to see what that's like."⁶²

Gaskin also shocked many in the counterculture with his advocacy of lifelong 60
marriage, but, in light of the spiritual centrality of both karmic and tantric yoga in
his teaching, marriage of some sort became a necessary component of his utopia.
The law of karma pointed toward the importance of fair dealing with all persons.
But the intimacy and vulnerability of sexual relationships—especially those of the
tantric variety—presented many ethical challenges for Gaskin and his village of
believers, who sought to change the world by introducing a pure, spiritual "vibe"
into worldly affairs. Those whom Gaskin served as spiritual teacher would make
little headway if they tolerated black magic in affairs of the heart, the copping of
others' minds and "ripping off" of others' spiritual energy, by either men or
women.⁶³ Gaskin described tantric marriage as a lifelong agreement between
male and female seekers, not only to practice tantric loving, but to assist one
another in maintaining a high level of spiritual consciousness in all aspects of the
relationship.

In the Class, Gaskin frequently offered his own four-marriage as an example of how such a lifelong commitment served the village's long-term interest in social change. That there were three other partners with a mutual interest in spiritual growth meant that it was far more difficult for lapses on the part of any one of them to go unnoticed. The partners, he said, spent a great deal of time processing their interactions and elaborating their mutual understanding of their conjugal bond. To this, Gaskin contrasted his earlier, straight marriages, which lacked precisely this agreement to keep one another honest.⁶⁴ Marriage also brought upon partners the karma of the children born through the "heavy magic" of "vibrations" which, Gaskin told the Class, were akin to the combination tones produced by ensemble musicians—that is, a new tone generated not by plucking a string or vibrating a column of air in an instrument, but by the mingling of the overtones that resulted as the musicians sounded their various instruments. In Gaskin's simile, the resulting combination tone was a new human life.⁶⁵

Woman as helmsman, male receptivity, abstinence from ejaculation, linkage of sex to reproduction—to say the least, Gaskin was unusual among the sexual revolutionaries of the 1960s. To be sure, Gaskin's form of sexual revolution did not resemble the Diggers' bacchanalian Invisible Circus, in which participants had been encouraged to set their impulses above the constraints of all law and custom—even if impulse led, as was reported, to performing sexual acts on the altar of the sponsoring church.⁶⁶ Yet Gaskin still belonged to historian Beth Bailey's category of self-conscious sexual revolutionaries of the 1960s, because he celebrated sexuality as a form of power directed toward revolutionary social change. If the Diggers preferred to derepress sexual impulses, Gaskin sought to derepress the Holy Spirit that, from his perspective, had been buried under scientific rationalism and the capitalist elevation of material goods over spiritual values. The Holy Spirit could only be made manifest through the slow, meditative movements of tantric loving; the discipline required to achieve grace through heterosexual communion was imposed not by man's law, but by God's. As a matter of principle, he disregarded earthly law against bigamy in his four-marriage, but he obeyed what was, in his experience, the natural law of karma.⁶⁷

We cannot know whether many of the men who attended the Class actually attempted to practice Gaskin's version of tantric sexual meditation. No doubt, given a weekly attendance of a thousand or more, no small number of men left the Class on those evenings when the subject was broached, thinking that "renunciation" was most emphatically *not* their vision of sexual liberation. But even if a sizeable number of his followers simply ignored this dimension of Gaskin's teachings, as many Catholics today discount the Church's strictures against contraception, enough men and women returned, week after week, to confirm the popular appeal of Gaskin's vision of a universe governed by natural

law, and of a movement of spiritually attuned people acting in accord with natural law to foment radical change.

A vision of harmonious relations between the sexes formed an important, and attractive, dimension of Gaskin's larger vision. Relatively few women—or men—could wholeheartedly adopt the Diggers' absolute rejection of ties that bind. If, like the Diggers, Gaskin and his followers did not value a marriage certificate representing the authority of man's law during their time in the Haight, most still longed to find a sign that their partnerships were blessed under natural law, and would endure. Gaskin shared that longing, and his teaching about tantra and the karma of relationships spoke directly and knowingly to it. He testified to the Class that his four-marriage had not been a conscious choice: it had "f[allen] on us one night"; the transpersonal bond was so undeniable and "so real . . . that we'll stay together, to commemorate it—forever."⁶⁸ The development of enlightened consciousness promised a way out of the battle of the sexes that had bedeviled him and his followers, and their parents' marriages as well. Joining this spiritual community offered followers the possibility of finding their way to what Gaskin said he had found. Although he did not yet prohibit promiscuity or cohabitation, Gaskin and his followers were already well on their way toward a conviction that the battle of the sexes was connected to all of the other social problems that they hoped to resolve through the transformation of consciousness.⁶⁹

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The Holy Man and His Fellow Pilgrims

Gaskin's message of personal and collective salvation resonated deeply with the core of his "congregation"—those who attended the Class and the Sunday services regularly. This core responded to their guru in the same ways that followers have responded to charismatic religious leaders past and present. Theologian Arthur Kachel cogently argues that the Monday Night Class constituted a dialectical process. On the one hand, it served as the vehicle by which Gaskin became a holy man. His confidence in his emerging worldview grew as he counseled his students and sermonized to the Class. As his audiences expanded, Gaskin demonstrated his capacity to turn aside challenges to his authority. They came from New Leftists who questioned the political efficacy of what they regarded as mystical navel-gazing. Asian-born mystics, on the other hand, challenged Gaskin's assertion that one could achieve spiritual insight through psychedelics—and yet he turned aside these challenges, too, making impressive showings at several gatherings of gurus and seekers in 1970.⁷⁰

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On the other side of the dialectic, as Gaskin became a holy man, his core followers—perhaps two hundred in number—became holy pilgrims. Students came to Gaskin for help in sorting through the myriad ethical, practical, and interpretive choices involved in finding a spiritual path amid the cascade of sensory impressions and symbols that made up the LSD experience. In the process of

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learning "how to get up" after bruising encounters with the Infinite, students entrusted their teacher with the power to decide many aspects of their everyday lives.⁷¹ Kachel closes the dialectical loop by observing that late in 1970, during the Caravan, it became clear that LSD had outlived its usefulness as a sacrament of "the church." "Stephen led his students to accept him as the mediator of their communal sense of sacredness, the group-mind. . . . Now their sense of transcendent authority was provided in his work and his person. No longer would they turn to LSD to encounter the Holy. Instead, Stephen, the Holy Man, would be the means for a continuing encounter with the Holy as revealed in their own everyday lives and . . . class meetings."⁷²

In many ways, Gaskin proved himself a leader genuinely interested in the welfare of his community of followers. The best examples come from a later date, at The Farm. When zealous communards built Gaskin's family a frame dwelling while he was away on a tour with the Farm Band, he refused the gift, turning it over to a family caring for an elderly relative. He was one of the last of the Farmies to move from a tent into a house. When authorities found marijuana growing on the commune, Gaskin accepted legal responsibility, even though he had expressed strong reservations about cultivating the sacred herb.⁷³

Yet the risk that followers always take by investing faith in leaders, religious or secular, is that they may effectively cede their free will. We can invoke extreme examples from the historical record in order to show that, by comparison, Gaskin's leadership cannot be reduced to simple demagoguery, nor his followers' faith to the abject surrender of free will. Still, some participants in the Class noted troubling signs of hero-worship. A female member of the Class recalls that at the conclusion of Monday-night sessions, a number of people always rushed to the front of the room with arms outstretched. She was disappointed that Gaskin did not discourage such behavior.⁷⁴ Later, when the most dedicated of his students had gained a mature understanding of the teachings, they found that Gaskin's charisma, and his unwillingness to relinquish his spiritual leadership, inhibited their efforts to adapt The Farm to changing circumstances.

The Caravan: From "Village" to Community

The size of Gaskin's following, and his optimistic, pacifistic message during a time, in Movement circles, of widespread anticipation of an impending apocalypse, attracted attention from outsiders to the counterculture. During the winter of 1969–70, the American Academy of Religion held a conference in San Francisco. Accounts differ, but it appears that a group of attendees came to the Class. Impressed by what they heard there—and, in Gaskin's account, comparing it favorably to their encounters with freaks in their hometowns—the group spoke with the holy man at the end of the session. Gaskin recalls addressing a session of their conference; other accounts relate the extension of invitations to Gaskin

from theologians and campus ministers to speak to congregations and student assemblies around the United States.⁷⁵

There seems to be no record of what must have been extensive negotiations in the wake of these invitations. What emerged on Gaskin's side was a plan for a national speaking tour that would function as an "Astral Continental Congress," forging a new agreement among the American people on national purpose and a new commitment to heal social conflict by nonviolent means. "The idea," he told a reporter for the underground press, "is to . . . pacify the head of the nation." The reporter glossed other elements of the plan as generating enough goodwill to improve the popular image of hippies, and to humanize straight America in the eyes of militant leftists.⁷⁶ 70

When Gaskin announced his decision to suspend the Class for the duration of the Congress, many students asked to accompany him. Gaskin welcomed those who could provide their own transportation and pay their own way. One group of seventy students pooled their cash, purchasing nine buses and outfitting them with beds and stoves. By the time of departure on Columbus Day, 1970, some thirty-two school buses, and a similar number of smaller vehicles, had been modified to provide homes on wheels for about 250 people. Participants had already begun to refer to themselves as the "Caravan" and "the bus family."⁷⁷ 71

As participant Michael Traugot points out, this expansion from a straightforward speaking tour to a community on wheels offered Gaskin new opportunities. With hundreds of supporters in train, Gaskin had willing helpers who, after he had finished his talk, could mingle with audience members, answering questions about the group and furthering the discussion of important issues. But the presence of hundreds of supporters also raised the stakes: a group of such size became the focus of attention by the mass media. The actions of every individual would reflect directly on the holy man and influence the reception of his message. Gaskin set ground rules for participation. Buses could be painted in bright colors, but they had to be painted neatly; Gaskin's own was white, with red and blue waterline stripes. Drivers had not only to obey traffic laws; they also had to be mindful of the effect of their massive presence on local traffic. At a sendoff attended by two thousand people, he told Caravaners to treat straight folks with courtesy and avoid behavior that might frighten or disturb them; to manifest their opposition to the Vietnam War clearly, but politely; to avoid inflammatory terms, such as "pig," in reference to authorities; and to try to visit their parents during the trip, in order to mend fences with them as much as possible. He forbade all resort to welfare programs, telling his followers to ask for work, not charity, to counter the stereotype of the shiftless hippie.⁷⁸ 72

An early encounter with the law brought a significant change to the "bus family's" religious practice. The Caravan proceeded north along the California coast to 73

Oregon, where the state patrol lay in wait. A search of the buses turned up a quantity of marijuana; Gaskin was arrested, but the judge, apparently impressed by the Caravan's spiritual purpose, postponed further proceedings on Gaskin's promise of good behavior. After pondering the poor judgment that had nearly derailed his tour, Gaskin announced in mid-October, at Yellowstone Park, that henceforth, he would not allow his name and spiritual teaching to be associated with the use of LSD. The drug was too strong, he said, for some users to handle; to have it associated with their practice would earn for "the church" the bad karma of those who suffered after following their example. "Organic" psychedelics, not produced in a laboratory—mushrooms, peyote, and marijuana—he would continue to embrace. But LSD was no longer a sacramental substance.⁷⁹ Later, in *Flashbacks*, he would explain that the drug had been helpful at first, but became unnecessary. Life itself was a trip. Right livelihood, right thought, and right conduct could, of themselves—with the love of friends, and the occasional joint—get you high and keep you there. Although this announcement shocked some Caravaners and many more outsiders, Gaskin and his core group had, by this time, exhausted the drug's potential as a means to religious revelation, and had been consuming it less and less, as their religious beliefs cohered.⁸⁰

Life on the road forged the once-scattered "village" into a cohesive community responsive to Gaskin's charismatic authority. They proceeded inductively, inventing rules and roles as the need arose. Elements of Gaskin's authority devolved spontaneously to other members of the group: for example, he walked quickly down the line of buses in the morning, banging the bumper of each with a hammer as a signal that the Caravan would depart in twenty minutes. A man offered to take on this responsibility so that Gaskin could eat breakfast. Soon, there were daily meetings of the drivers—mostly men, with Gaskin taking the lead—to discuss the route, plan stops for gasoline, assess maintenance needs, and settle logistics for the next speaking engagement.⁸¹ Women mostly managed the domestic duties—and, if there were children in a vehicle, their care.

Sources offer no explanation for this sexual division of labor, but it could have been only in part a matter of practicality. While it is likely that some of the men already possessed skill in driving large vehicles, it is reasonable to suspect that many of the Caravan drivers learned that skill during the journey, and that women could just as well have taken that responsibility. As historian Virginia Scharff has demonstrated, women had been driving automobiles since they had become widely available, and women drivers, as a group, had influenced the automobile's design and marketing. It also seems reasonable to presume that at least some members of the "bus family" were familiar with radical feminism's critique of the sexual division of labor and the politics of "roles"; the women's liberation movement had been active in San Francisco since 1968, and notices of

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their actions had been published in San Francisco's underground press since at least February 1969, and perhaps before.⁸² Since practicality provides only partial explanation, I presume that the group regarded this division of labor as at least unremarkable, and perhaps as consistent with the gendered nature of the universe.

If the Caravan wrought the final deletion of LSD from the group's list of sacraments, it brought additions to the list as well—additions that further developed its political economy of gender. The evidence hints that a discussion had been percolating about the number of couples whose commitment to one another—particularly, some men's commitment to their female partners—was not sufficiently strong to satisfy everyone that they were practicing what Gaskin preached. By mid-November 1970, while the Caravan was visiting Ohio, the discussion came to a head. Stephen announced to a morning drivers' meeting that, from that point forward, sexual coupling among members would be interpreted by the group as betrothal; pregnancy would indicate that the couple would marry as soon as practicable. Single people were still quite welcome in the group, but they were expected to maintain celibacy until betrothal. According to Ina May, the immediate effect of the decision was a separation of wheat from chaff: some of those whom she characterizes as unsavory left the Caravan that very day. Gradually, two additional agreements emerged among the Caravaners: that men would not touch women without their consent, and would not pressure women for that consent; and that women would not seduce one another's husbands. Each of these agreements was a logical extension of Stephen's teaching about the karma of relationships; the difference, now, was that marriage had become a sacrament.⁸³ 76

Another critical addition to the group's sacraments was childbirth. According to Ina May, it began to gain sacramental status shortly before the departure of the Caravan. Women in the Monday Night Class who had given birth in hospitals compared notes with those who had given birth at home, and some of those who had opted for home birth reported a spiritual dimension to the experience.⁸⁴ So, as women came to term during the Caravan, the group experimented with various means by which to honor this sacred experience. No one in the group had trained as a midwife, but someone had brought along *The Mexican Rural Midwives' Handbook*, and Gaskin's co-wives, Margaret and Ina May, stepped forward to preside at births. Ina May told an interviewer in 1996 that when she witnessed birth for the first time, she found the process strikingly beautiful—so compelling that she knew, immediately, that she had found her life's work.⁸⁵ 77

Those early births on the Caravan were profound learning experiences for the untrained midwives. In the first, the would-be midwives simply observed, because it was the mother's third baby and the delivery proceeded rapidly, without 78

complications. In the second, Cara O'Gorman (later herself a Farm midwife) reports that some twenty-five members of the group, drawn by word that she was in labor, crowded into the bus to commune with mother and child. The self-conscious O'Gorman's contractions ceased, and the midwives asked the men to leave. O'Gorman wrote a few years later that they had learned from her experience that only immediate family members and midwives should attend. The more who were present, the more likely it was that an unfocused person's "vibrations" (my word) would disrupt the process.⁸⁶

This was also the first birth presenting complications: the child did not begin breathing on its own. The midwives did not know what to do, since they had not yet read the relevant pages of the *Manual*. They had their reasons for not doing so: Stephen taught that "attention equals energy," and that one was likely to receive more of whatever caught the focus of one's attention. It seemed reasonable, then, that reading about complications might bring them about. With the baby turning blue, Ina May and the O'Gormans prayed fervently. As it happened, Stephen stopped by at that moment to check on the situation. Sensing that something was wrong, he stepped forward, and—presumably—drawing on his first-aid training from his Marine Corps days, administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. The baby lived, and the midwives decided that their interpretation of Stephen's teaching had been a form of "superstiti[on]." After this, they read all of the obstetrical literature they could obtain, without fear of causing complications. Through the ten births on the Caravan, spiritual, meditative childbirth became a sacrament of "the church."⁸⁷

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This inductive, continuous revision of the group's shared principles and beliefs continued throughout the Caravan and then on The Farm. Members of the group referred to this accumulation of shared principles as "the agreements." In 1972 the commune's legal crew formulated a concise statement of the agreements for inclusion in the brief appealing the conviction of Stephen and three other Farmies for cultivation of marijuana. We might view these core principles as an American-inflected condensation of the Buddhist Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. We are already familiar with the group's thinking on the law of karma, and their faith that "we are all One." From these derived a third principle concerning the moral imperative of those who shared the group head: the collective transcendence of suffering required of each individual a disciplined effort to cultivate purity of thought and conduct. The group's adherence to strict vegetarianism, refusal of welfare benefits, and strictures against abortion, "artificial" contraception, and synthetic drugs (extended to include naturally occurring tobacco and alcohol) all derived from this emergent third principle.⁸⁸

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"Getting into It with the Dirt": In Search of a Farm

The ranks of the Caravan grew steadily on the road; a much enlarged group arrived in San Francisco on 1 February 1971. There had been discussions, as early as their passage through Rhode Island the previous December, of searching for land and founding a commune. Those discussions ripened upon return to the City of St. Francis. It was difficult to find parking for the lumbering buses. Many members felt reluctant to relinquish intimacies they had cultivated on the road, and a return to their former pursuits seemed decidedly unappealing. Stephen, for his part, found that he could not return to teaching the Monday Night Class; to him, it seemed that the audience he drew in San Francisco had lost its genuine commitment to the life of Spirit. We might say that the Bay area had become, for him, a burned-over district.⁸⁹ It was time for the group that had matured on the road to develop a community of their own, in which they could organize work, marriage, and family life around the agreements. Ten days later, at a Sunday service in Sutro Park, Gaskin told the group that after touring the country, he realized that the urban environment was corrosive to spiritual consciousness. "So," he concluded, "today is kind of a caravan drivers' meeting. . . . After services, the caravan's going to take off to Tennessee and get a farm. . . . I need more trees, more grass, more wheat, more soybeans, more healthy babies, more good-looking, sane people, people [who] can work. . . . That's why I want to go out and really get into it with the dirt. . . . God bless you all. . . . I just love you a whole bunch, and we'll see you whenever we see you, down whatever road we go down."⁹⁰

For about 250 of the Caravaners, Tennessee beckoned with low prices for land and what had seemed to be a more tolerant reception than that offered by other locales. Tennessee also presented a challenge: if a commune practicing Stephen's principles could win the respect of residents of the Bible Belt, then its viability as a model for an American life of Spirit would be confirmed. And so a fleet of psychedelic buses about the same size as the original Caravan nosed its way out onto the highway yet again.⁹¹

Notes:

Note 1: Robert Hunter, "New Speedway Boogie," *Workingman's Dead*, analogue LP disc, WS-1869 (Burbank, Calif.: Warner Bros. Records, 1970). Note that Gaskin makes no reference to this song in his text. Stephen Gaskin, *Haight-Ashbury Flashbacks* (Berkeley, Calif.: Ronin, 1990), 2d ed. of *Amazing Dope Tales* (Summertown, Tenn.: Book Publishing Co., 1980).

Note 2: Arthur Theodore Kachel, "An American Religious Community Using Hallucinogens in 1970" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia Univ., 1975), 75; quotation from Stephen Gaskin, *Mind at Play* (Summertown, Tenn.: Book Publishing Co., 1980), 13–14. Note that Kachel's manuscript carries two systems of pagination; the one appearing in the left-hand margin begins at the first page of text, but a mechanical error renders it inaccurate. Therefore, my references follow the consistent pagination found in the right-hand margin, which begins at the table of contents.

Note 3: Stephen [Gaskin] and The Farm, *Hey, Beatnik! This Is the Farm Book* (Summertown, Tenn.: Book Publishing Co., 1974), [3]. When assigning page numbers to

this work, I counted the first recto page ("It's a blessing to wake up . . .") as p. [1].

Note 4: Gaskin emphatically rejected all suggestions that he exercised leadership authority, preferring to speak of "students" and "friends" rather than followers (interview with Geoph Kozeny, Summertown, Tenn., 16 March 1991, CCS transcripts, folder 122, SCDLR, 12).

Note 5: Mary Cantwell and Amy Gross, "I Want Us to Get Real Good Understanding and Real Good Love and Peace and Brotherhood and Just Hang Around, Man," *Mademoiselle*, March 1971, 147.

Note 6: *Ibid.*, 146.

Note 7: Stephen [Gaskin] et al., *Hey Beatnik*, [78]; On "lifetime trip," see Stephen [Gaskin], *Monday Night Class*, rev. 3d printing (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Book Farm., 1971), [93].

Note 8: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 1–5; *idem*, *Mind at Play*, 11–12.

Note 9: Stephen [Gaskin] et al., *Hey Beatnik*, [3].

Note 10: Stephen Gaskin, resume, n.d., available online at <http://www.thefarm.org/lifestyle/sg.html> (accessed 9 January 2007); *idem*, *Flashbacks*, 31; *idem*, *Monday Night Class*, [149].

Note 11: Gaskin, interview with Kozeny, 2.

Note 12: Susan Juster, "'In a Different Voice': Male and Female Narratives of Religious Conversion in Post-Revolutionary America," *American Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1989): 37, 35, 39. On Gaskin's self-assessment as a keen observer of psychedelic phenomena, see *Flashbacks*, 4–5.

Note 13: Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Zen: A Method for Religious Awakening* (Kyoto: First Zen Institute of America in Japan, 1959), 12; quoted in Charles G. Zug III, "The Nonrational Riddle: The Zen *Koan*," *Journal of American Folklore* 80, no. 315 (January-March 1967): 82. Perhaps the collection of *koans* most familiar to Americans is Paul Reps, comp., *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Compilation of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1957).

Note 14: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 6–8.

Note 15: *Ibid.*, 9–13.

Note 16: Sociologist Howard Becker observed in 1953 that marijuana users passed through a socialization process in which they learned (1) proper smoking techniques, (2) to detect the symptoms of intoxication, and (3) to interpret intoxication as pleasurable. The majority of Becker's subjects reported that repeated use was necessary to accomplish the last two phases. Becker's observations have been replicated over the past decade, and researchers report that Becker's social-learning theory remains remarkably accurate, but that some elements must be modified in light of changes in social context. Today, the majority of users report completing all three stages on first use, because the marijuana available is of better quality, smoking technology has improved, and the stigma attached to marijuana use is now much reduced. See Howard S. Becker, "Becoming a Marihuana User," *American Journal of Sociology* 59 (1953): 395–403; Michael Hallstone, "Updating Howard Becker's Theory of Using Marijuana for Pleasure," *Contemporary Drug Problems* 29 (Winter 2002): 821–45.

Note 17: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 12.

Note 18: For a parallel example in a communal setting, see Barry Laffan, *Communal Organization and Social Transition: A Case Study from the Counterculture of the Sixties and Seventies* (New York: P. Lang, 1997), 65–67.

Note 19: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 17, 30–32.

Note 20: Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987), chaps. 1–8.

Note 21: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 2.

Note 22: Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, chaps. 9–21.

Note 23: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 16–17. On Kesey and the Pranksters, see Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 221–52.

Note 24: Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969). On earlier bohemian responses to alienation in the postwar era, see Richard Cándida Smith, *Utopia and Dissent: Art, Poetry, and Politics in California* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995).

Note 25: Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 77, 272–88, 309–56; David Farber, "The Intoxicated State/Illegal Nation: Drugs in the Sixties Counterculture," in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), 17–40. This edited collection will be cited hereafter as Braunstein and Doyle, *Imagine Nation*.

Note 26: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 25.

Note 27: *Ibid.*, 24–28.

Note 28: Timothy Leary, *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (New York: University Books, 1964).

Note 29: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 62; emphases original.

Note 30: *Ibid.*, 69–71. I use scare quotes for the term "peyote ceremony," here and below, as a comment on the cultural politics of white men "playing Indian"; for analysis, see Philip Deloria, "Counterculture Indians and the New Age," in Braunstein and Doyle, *Imagine Nation*, 159–88. Stewart Brand, a figure deeply committed to the countercultural valorization of Native Americans (as co-author of the multimedia presentation "America Needs Indians," beginning in 1965), offers a laudatory assessment of Euro-Americans' participation in peyote ceremonies in "Indians and the Counterculture, 1960s–1970s," in *History of Indian-White Relations*, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn, vol. 4 in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, 21 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 570–72. On "America Needs Indians," see Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* (New York: Vintage, 1985), 18–19.

Note 31: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 63–66.

Note 32: *Ibid.*, 63–65.

Note 33: *Ibid.*, 66–67; emphases original.

Note 34: *Ibid.*, 67; emphasis original.

Note 35: *Ibid.*, 3–5, 54–55.

Note 36: *Ibid.*, 44–45.

Note 37: *Ibid.*, 226–30.

Note 38: Stephen [Gaskin], *Monday Night Class*, [94]. The approximate date of this experience comes from Kachel, "Hallucinogens," 81; see also the discussion on 90–91.

Note 39: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 109.

Note 40: Deloria, "Counterculture Indians," 159–88. See also the works cited in the introduction at note 33, and Ann Braude, "Making Men by Making Indians: 'Red Men,' Boy

Scouts, and the YMCA," in *New Viewpoints in Women's History: Working Papers from the Schlesinger Library 50th Anniversary Conference*, ed. Susan Ware (Cambridge, Mass.: The Library, 1994), 123–33; on the role of "playing Indian" in the formation of American identity, see Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998).

Note 41: On this recent twist of the Western genre, which I interpret as the influence of countercultural ideas on mass media, see Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 626.

Note 42: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 109.

Note 43: *Ibid.*, 109–110.

Note 44: Corlann Gee Bush, "The Way We Weren't: Images of Women and Men in Cowboy Art," in *The Women's West*, ed. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 19–33; Rebecca Tsosie, "Changing Women: The Crosscurrents of American Indian Feminine Identity," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 508–11.

Note 45: Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 110.

Note 46: *Ibid.*, 110–11.

Note 47: Black Shadow, "Try Gaskin's High," *Good Times* (San Francisco) 2, no. 34 (4 September 1969): 6; Stephen Gaskin, resume; *idem*, *Flashbacks*, 33; *idem*, interview with Kozeny, 4; Stephen [Gaskin] et al., *Hey, Beatnik*, [2–3]; Michael Traugot, *A Short History of The Farm* (Summertown, Tenn.: the author, 1994), 3–4. In his interview with Kozeny, Gaskin recounts his entrance into the Experimental College as immediately subsequent to the expiration of his formal teaching contract (4).

Note 48: Stephen [Gaskin] et al., *Hey, Beatnik*, [4]. In his interview with Kozeny, Gaskin recalled simply that the door to the Gallery Lounge was locked, without attributing the action to particular agents (5). On the Third World Strike at San Francisco State, see William Barlow and Peter Shapiro, *An End to Silence: The San Francisco State College Student Movement in the '60s* (New York: Pegasus, 1971); for views from a faculty perspective, see Robert Smith, Richard Axen, and DeVere Pentony, *By Any Means Necessary: The Revolutionary Struggle at San Francisco State* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970). See also the articles in a special issue of *Amerasia Journal* 15, no. 1 (1989). Stephen Gaskin et al., appellants pro se, v. Tennessee, no. 72-1718, Supreme Court of the United States, October term, 1973, jurisdictional statement, appendix D, p. 5, and appendix E, p. 1; reprinted without new pagination in *The Grass Case* (Summertown, Tenn.: Book Publishing Co., 1974). Many thanks to longtime Farm resident Albert Bates, who took time out from his busy schedule to point out this valuable source, and to tell me the story of its creation. Gaskin mentions the difficulties of the period spent at the Straight Theater, on Haight Street, in *Monday Night Class*, [86].

Note 49: Zug III, "Nonrational Riddle," 82–83.

Note 50: Gaskin, interview with Kozeny, 5–6, 12; Kachel, "Hallucinogens," 95; Traugot, *Short History*, 3–4.

Note 51: For Gaskin's views on hell, see *Monday Night Class*, [84–86].

Note 52: On free will, see *ibid.*, [63, 100, 104, 121, 133–34]; on attachment, [75–80, 90–91, 102–4]; see also [137], quoting Shunryu Suzuki-roshi, no citation; on the nature of God and God's will, [3–4, 7, 35, 75–76, 117–18], but especially [98–99, 108–110 (tantric intercourse yields God-consciousness), 120, 126–29]. On karma, see [35, 45, 62–63, 87, 104, 121, 124–26, 145].

Note 53: *Ibid.*, [3–5].

Note 54: *Ibid.*, [45]. Gaskin's public speaking was accessible relative to Leary's, but the latter's writing proves far more readable. Compare passages in the first edition of *Monday Night Class* (1970, 1971) to Timothy Leary, *The Politics of Ecstasy* (New York: G. P.

Putnam's Sons, 1968). In recent years, Gaskin addressed some of these problems by issuing a revised edition of *Monday Night Class*, with sometimes wry annotations (Summertown, Tenn.: Book Publishing Co., 2005).

Note 55: My thanks to Susan E. Gray, personal communication, 2002, for this insight. In my dissertation, I called Gaskin's spirituality *acid Buddho-Christianity*. I have since abandoned this term, in light of Gray's observation that the Christian terminology that suffused Gaskin's speech functioned principally as metaphor for Buddhist concepts. Recently, I have discovered theologian Arthur Kachel's analysis of Gaskin's stance toward orthodox Christianity; see "Hallucinogens," 124–26.

Note 56: On Leary and Kesey, see the latter chapters of Stevens, *Storming Heaven*. On Gaskin's collection of freewill offerings, see Kachel, "Hallucinogens," 112.

Note 57: On the New Left's counterculture, see Doug Rossinow, "'The Revolution Is About Our Lives': The New Left's Counterculture," in Braunstein and Doyle, *Imagine Nation*, 99–124. On the New Left's new interest in communal living, the presence of a number of New Leftists in the Free Families commune at Black Bear Ranch by 1970 was part of the larger trend noted by Rossinow; see Blue Mountain Ranch Commune, *January Thaw: People at Blue Mountain Ranch Write about Living Together in the Mountains* (New York: Times Change Press, 1974), and Don Monkerud, Malcolm Terence, and Susan Keese, eds., *Free Land, Free Love: Tales of a Wilderness Commune*, (Aptos, Calif.: Black Bear Mining and Publishing, 2000). On food cooperatives, see Craig Cox, *The Storefront Revolution: Food Co-ops and the Counterculture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1994). On these refugee New Leftists' increasing interest in spiritual paths to social change, see Stephen A. Kent, *From Slogans to Mantras: Social Protest and Religious Conversion in the Late Vietnam War Era* (Syracuse Univ. Press, 2001).

With the important exception of Rossinow, most of these sources point to developments in the early 1970s, and my argument concerns Gaskin's preaching in the late 1960s. I am suggesting that Gaskin's self-positioning as conservator of the Haight's early optimism enabled him to benefit from the first trickle of New Left counterculturalists. This is not to say that Gaskin did not encounter leftist opposition; at times, hecklers showed up at the Class (and, later, during the Caravan) to confront his pacifistic stance. See, for example, the exchange described in Cantwell and Gross, "Real Good Understanding," 208.

Note 58: On the Asian mystics who sought their fortunes in the United States in the 1960s, see Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America*, 3d ed. (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), chap. 12; J. Stillson Judah, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974); and Harvey Cox, *Turning East: The Promise and Peril of the New Orientalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977). For a disagreement between a countercultural interviewer and an Asian mystic over the use of drugs, see "Chinmayananda," *San Francisco Oracle* 1, no. 10 (October 1967): 6–7. Gaskin and a number of followers attended the Holy Man Jam in Boulder, Colorado, in the summer of 1969 and encountered some hostility from Asian mystics in attendance. According to former Farm resident Michael Traugot, they were regarded as "upstarts" because their psychedelic spirituality lacked the *gravitas* of Asian religious traditions (Traugot, *Short History*, 8). For Gaskin's account of the proceedings, see *Flashbacks*, 258–63. For later examples of Asian mysticism exported to America for clearly commercial purposes, see Hugh B. Urban, "The Cult of Ecstasy: Tantrism, the New Age, and the Spiritual Logic of Late Capitalism," *History of Religions* 39, no. 3 (February 2000): 268–304.

Note 59: Stephen [Gaskin], *Monday Night Class*, [45]; George Vecsey, "'Family' of 270 Forsakes Coast for a Tennessee Hollow," *New York Times*, 5 April 1971, 27.

Note 60: Stephen [Gaskin], *Monday Night Class*, [89]. Hugh B. Urban argues that American appropriations of tantra, beginning in the 1960s, amounted to "neocolonialism and cultural imperialism" ("Cult of Ecstasy," 304), given their consanguinity "with late capitalist society—a fit not unlike that of Weber's Protestant ethic and early capitalism" (271). While he provides colorful examples, we may ask whether this generalization holds true in the case of the Monday Night Class, given the sincerity of Gaskin's teaching and the serious intent of his group to transform American society, including capitalism.

Note 61: Stephen [Gaskin], *Monday Night Class*, [107].

Note 62: *Ibid.*, [109–111]. In the previous century, John Humphrey Noyes, among

others, had advocated a system of "male continence," the avoidance of ejaculation when couples did not intend to conceive. Noyes saw two advantages in this practice: first, its contraceptive tendency; second—and at least equally important to this discussion—its potential for encouraging men to attend to the pleasure of their partners, and less exclusively to their own. See Lawrence Foster, "Free Love and Community: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Perfectionists," in *America's Communal Utopias*, ed. Donald E. Pitzer (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1997), 257–58; for the original Noyes, see his *Male Incontinence* (Oneida, N.Y.: 1872), reprinted in Charles Rosenberg and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, eds., *Sexual Indulgence and Denial* (New York: Arno Press, 1974). For a contextualization of such techniques in the thought of advocates of free love, see John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 2d ed. (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997), 165; and Hal D. Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 209–10.

Note 63: For Gaskin's disapproval of what might be termed *astral parasitism*—a case of a man who sustained himself psychically by "leeching" the "juice" of a "high-energy woman," see *Monday Night Class*, [8–9].

Note 64: *Ibid.*, [91] (quotation), [93].

Note 65: *Ibid.*, [36]. In acoustics, a combination tone occurs when two tones of sufficient intensity produce a third tone, resulting from the difference between their respective frequencies, and a fourth, resulting from the sum of their frequencies. *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 5th impression revised, 7–8.

Note 66: On the Invisible Circus, see Michael William Doyle, "The Haight-Ashbury Diggers and the Cultural Politics of Utopia, 1965–1968" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell Univ., 1997), 167–76; on reports of sexual activity on the altar of Glide Church, see Perry, *Haight-Ashbury*, 147. The Diggers were not alone in their view of sexual liberation; see also the White Panther party's 1968 manifesto, which called for a "total assault on the culture" through "rock and roll, dope, and fucking in the streets," in John Sinclair, *Guitar Army: Street Writings, Prison Writings* (New York: Douglas, 1972), 67–69, quoted in Beth L. Bailey, "Sexual Revolution(s)," in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, ed. David Farber (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1994), 256.

Note 67: Bailey, "Sexual Revolution(s)," 238–39.

Note 68: Stephen [Gaskin], *Monday Night Class*, [94].

Note 69: On the absence of firm proscriptions against promiscuity and noncommittal cohabitation, see Kachel, "Hallucinogens," 17.

Note 70: *Ibid.*, 163–208.

Note 71: *Ibid.*; source of the epigraphic "how to get up" is Stephen [Gaskin], *Monday Night Class*, [139].

Note 72: Kachel, "Hallucinogens," 203.

Note 73: Lynette Long and Michael Traugot, "Kissing Tree Lodge," in *Voices from The Farm: Adventures in Community Living*, ed. Rupert Fike (Summertown, Tenn.: Book Publishing Co., 1998), 41–42 (this collection is cited hereafter as Fike, *Voices from The Farm*); Traugot, *Short History*, 20. As former resident Michael Traugot testifies, the Farmies bartered for marijuana for their own use with other spiritual hippies. Cultivation, on the other hand, was readily detectable, and would (and did) pit the communards against law-enforcement authorities with whom Gaskin sought to cultivate a relationship of mutual trust. See paragraphs 6–12 in the next chapter for a discussion of The Farm's relationship with local residents and authorities; see Traugot, *Short History*, 19–20, on the commune's use of marijuana.

Note 74: Pat LeDoux, "The History of a Hippie Commune: The Farm" (D.A. diss., Middle Tennessee State Univ., 1992), 29–30.

Note 75: Cf. Stephen Gaskin, interview with Kozeny, 6–7, with Rupert Fike et al., introduction to Fike, *Voices from The Farm*, vii; LeDoux, "The Farm," 9.

Note 76: Dick Gaik, "Gaskin Gasses Up," *Good Times* (San Francisco) 3, no. 41 (16 October 1970): 6. The phrase "Astral Continental Congress" appears in Louis J. Kern, "Pronatalism, Midwifery, and Synergistic Marriage: Spiritual Enlightenment and Sexual Ideology on The Farm (Tennessee)," in *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, ed. Wendy E. Chmielewski, L. J. Kern, and Marlyn Klee-Hartzell (Syracuse Univ. Press, 1993), 202, and in Bryan Pfaffenberger, "A World of Husbands and Mothers: Sex Roles and Their Ideological Context in the Formation of The Farm," in *Sex Roles in Contemporary American Communes*, ed. Jon Wagner (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982), 199.

Note 77: Gaik, "Gaskin Gasses Up," 6; LeDoux, "The Farm," 32–33; Traugot, *Short History*, 10–11.

Note 78: Gaik, "Gaskin Gasses Up," 6; Traugot, *Short History*, 10–12.

Note 79: Traugot, *Short History*, 12, dates this announcement to November 1970, and locates it in Oregon, but according to an earlier source, the Caravan had left Oregon by 16 October, and had already reached North Dakota by 31 October. See Stephen [Gaskin], *The Caravan* (New York: Random House, 1972), [3–5]. Kachel, on the other hand, relies on the text of *The Caravan*, [118–21] to set the date as 29 November ("Hallucinogens," 144).

Note 80: S. Gaskin, *Flashbacks*, 271. For an insightful study of the process by which the group moved away from the sacramental use of LSD, see Kachel, "Hallucinogens." He identifies three stages at 66–67.

Note 81: S. Gaskin, interview with Kozeny, 10, 13–15; Ina May Gaskin, interview with Courtney Shanks, Summertown, Tenn., 13 January 1996, folder 136, CCS transcripts, SCDRL, 8.

Note 82: Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (New York: Free Press, 1991). On the initiation of radical-feminist activism in San Francisco, see Pam Allen, *Free Spaces: A Perspective on the Small Group in Women's Liberation* (New York: Times Change Press, 1970), 5; for an early notice, see the Raisler photographs of picketing of the KYA Bridal Fair, *San Francisco Express Times* 2, no. 7 (18 February 1969): 3.

Note 83: I. Gaskin, interview with Shanks, 8–9. Ina May Gaskin used the term "sisterhood" in reference to the nonseduction agreement among women. It remains uncertain whether she was remembering a term used at the time, or whether her use of it represents a later gloss. If it was used at the time, then it would seem to indicate a response to the rhetoric of the women's liberation movement.

Note 84: Some counterculturalists experimented with home birth as a "groovy" alternative to the hospital-based services offered by the medical Establishment. At least one Digger woman chose to give birth at home, in keeping with the group's anarchist approach to medicine; see [Kirby Doyle], "The Birth of Digger Batman," *Realist*, no. 81 (August 1968): 10–11 (according to Michael William Doyle, "Diggers," 473, original com/co handbill dated 5 July 1967); this was common during the Free Families phase. Other hippies approached home birth from a mystical perspective; see, e.g., Stephen Walzer and Allen Cohen, *Childbirth Is Ecstasy* (Albion, Calif.: Aquarius, 1972). For a historical account of the influence of countercultural birth practices on the home-birth movement, see Lauri Umansky, "The Body as a Holy Land: Feminism, Childbirth, and the Imprint of the Counterculture," chap. 2 in idem, *Motherhood Reconceived: Feminism and the Legacies of the Sixties* (New York Univ. Press, 1996).

Note 85: I. Gaskin, interview with Shanks, 3–4. Vecsey, "'Family' of 270," mentions the *Manual*, but I can find no trace of this publication in library catalogues.

Note 86: Ina May Gaskin and the Farm Midwives, *Spiritual Midwifery* (Summertown, Tenn.: Book Publishing Co., 1975), 12–13.

Note 87: See [Rupert Fike?], "Attention Equals Energy," in Fike, *Voices from The Farm*, 94. For a moment of teaching on the nature of attention, see Stephen [Gaskin], *Monday Night Class*, [19–23]. For the story of Stephen's intervention at the birth, see I. Gaskin et al., *Spiritual Midwifery*, 12–13.

Note 88: S. Gaskin et al. v. Tennessee, appellants' brief, jurisdictional statement, 11–14, in *The Grass Case*.

Note 89: Cantwell and Gross, "Real Good Understanding," 209; Fike et al., introduction to Fike, *Voices from The Farm*, vii; S. Gaskin, interview with Kozeny, 8–9.

Note 90: Stephen [Gaskin], *The Caravan*, [248–49].

Note 91: Pfaffenberger, "Husbands and Mothers," 199–200. Population count comes from S. Gaskin, interview with Kozeny, 14; Kern, "Pronatalism," 202. LeDoux gives 270 as the number ("The Farm," 38). The Farm's web site (<http://www.thefarm.org/general/farmfaq.html>, accessed 9 January 2007) sets the figure at 320. While approximately 250 may have left San Francisco, others may have joined along the way, as was the case on the Caravan.
