

SAN FRANCISCO



**AND THE
LONG
60s**

SARAH HILL

B L O O M S B U R Y

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Sarah Hill

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*For Elena Dôn and Onwy Siân,
my half-American beauties*

History will show, I believe, that the San Francisco dance renaissance played a key role . . . in the socio-cultural and political revolution in which we are involved.

[Ralph Gleason, "Perspectives: San Francisco and the Stars,"
Rolling Stone 14, July 20, 1968, p. 10.]

San Francisco started out as a Spanish mission. But when they discovered gold, people came from every corner of the world, one at a time. Therefore San Francisco is the only place I know of that was built on the individual. Maybe that is its core secret. What makes it so different from everywhere else?

[Marc Arno]

But the practical question remains: why San Francisco? When the studios, the companies, and the heavy music traditions are all plugged in and anchored in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, why a comparatively tiny town on a bay? The answer . . . is something like this: "We don't dig recording as much as playing live music; we don't need or want to sign ourselves away to a record label unless and until we're ready; and fuck tradition."

[Ben Fong-Torres, "San Francisco Going Strong In Spite of Bad-Mouthing,"
Rolling Stone 20, October 26, 1968, p. 1.]

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PREFACE

What follows is a brief history of a small neighborhood in San Francisco. It is not a biography of famous musicians; it is not a tale of illicit sex and hallucinogenic drugs. It is an account of a community that coalesced in the 1960s in search of a new way of living. There are many voices that contribute to this history—contemporary journalists and underground press reporters, music critics, musicians, people who lived in San Francisco in the 1960s, people from elsewhere who found the Haight community, people who have embodied the Haight for the last fifty years. From newspaper reports and published accounts about it, through public celebrations of it, to personal recollections and musical communication, *San Francisco and the Long 60s* interprets a cultural moment and traces its enduring legacy.

1. INTRODUCTION: RIPPLES

There used to be a store in north Berkeley, California, called Black Oak Books. In an industry overrun with corporate predators, for many years Black Oak was part of the empowered minority of independent booksellers in the Bay Area. Historically, the ethos of this network was embodied by one shop: Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore in North Beach, San Francisco, which opened in 1953. In 1955 Ferlinghetti established City Lights Publishers and the Pocket Poets Series; their publication the following year of Allen Ginsberg's epic *Howl* led Ferlinghetti through an ultimately vindicated ordeal of obscenity charges and censorship. Black Oak never boasted the biggest or best selection of books in the Bay Area, but it did offer local color, which, for residents of Berkeley anyway, was a far more important thing.

For most of Black Oak's existence, there hung on the few patches of wall not otherwise covered by bookshelves a series of framed prints celebrating what seemed to be the essence of the place.¹ Among others—a poem by Gary Snyder and one by Richard Wright, an excerpt from Salman Rushdie's *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey*—was the following, by Robert Hunter:²

If my words did glow with the gold of sunshine
And my tunes were played on the harp unstrung
Would you hear my voice come through the music
Would you hold it near as it were your own?

It's a hand-me-down, the thoughts are broken
Perhaps they're better left unsung
I don't know, don't really care
Let there be songs to fill the air

Ripple in still water
When there is no pebble tossed
Nor wind to blow

Reach out your hand if your cup be empty
If your cup is full may it be again
Let it be known there is a fountain
That was not made by the hands of men

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There is a road, no simple highway
Between the dawn and the dark of night
And if you go no one may follow
That path is for your steps alone

Ripple in still water
When there is no pebble tossed
Nor wind to blow

You who choose to lead must follow
But if you fall you fall alone
If you should stand then who's to guide you?
If I knew the way I would take you home

To one browser, this poem would have been a delicate message of hard-earned wisdom, or simply a supportive word from poet to reader. To another browser, this poem would have been a lyric of spiritual enlightenment, and of community ethos, profoundly resonant with the voice of Jerry Garcia, who set the poem to music and sang it with the Grateful Dead. Poet Robert Hunter wrote “Ripple” in London in the early summer of 1970. The Dead first performed “Ripple” live at the Fillmore West in San Francisco that August, and then recorded it for release on their 1970 studio album *American Beauty*.

There are three levels to “Ripple” worth exploring here. The first is “Ripple” as poetry. Unlike some other songs written around 1970,³ these lyrics actually work as a separate entity, as that disembodied poem hanging on the wall in Black Oak Books. There is no obvious meter or established rhyming scheme to the lyric. The poet addresses the reader directly, optimistically, almost conversationally. There is a refrain—a quasi *haiku*, consisting of seventeen syllables, 6+7+4 (rather than the traditional 5+7+5)—that grounds the poem in a mystical sort of spirituality. The refrain brings a stillness to the lyric, encouraging the reader to reflect on the wisdom in the verses. The verses themselves adhere to a rough syllabic pattern, with the occasional alliterative link between lines or verses (own/broken; care/air; follow/alone; follow/alone) but no predictable scansion. The lyric’s symbolism suggests a wide frame of reference, from Psalm 23 (“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want . . . /He leadeth me beside the still waters/ . . . /Thou annointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over”) to the Tao Te Ching (“And, desiring to lead the people, One must, in one’s person, follow behind them”) and Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself” (“Not I—not anyone else, can travel that road for you,/You must travel it for yourself”);⁴ yet is not so oblique as to obscure the underlying message. There are conceptual similarities between the first and final, and penultimate and final verses, but otherwise, the musical references in the first two verses—“and my tunes were played on the harp unstrung,” “let there be songs to fill the air”—are the only obvious acknowledgment of its ultimate context. The lyrics,

in other words, may be divorced from the music and read, as an autonomous work, without any obvious or subconscious sense of pulse or melody.

The second level to “Ripple” is musical. As often happened in the Robert Hunter/Grateful Dead partnership, the lyrics and music for “Ripple” were not composed collaboratively. In this case Robert Hunter’s lyric fit perfectly to a tune that Jerry Garcia had already been forming.⁵ With this tune Garcia had tapped into the continuum of an American musical vernacular and channeled something as familiar and comforting as a folk song. There is an unfussiness about the song: melodically, each halting musical phrase covers rarely more than five syllables of text, and harmonically the song never strays from a solid G Major tonality. It is restrained, thoughtful music, the understated, loping shuffle evoking Saturday morning cowboy films and long evenings rocking on the front porch. The melody is simple; it weaves in and out of itself, potentially infinitely. It is uncluttered enough to allow for Hunter’s shifting syllables, with spaces wide open for the graceful interplay between Garcia’s guitar and David Grisman’s mandolin.⁶ Yet without Hunter’s lyrics, Garcia’s melody would suit another text, or work purely as an instrumental, with enough room for improvisatory exploration.

The third level to “Ripple” is its performance. According to one searchable Grateful Dead setlist archive,⁷ “Ripple” was only performed forty times between 1970 and 1995, so a performance of “Ripple” would have been something of an event. Although the band’s audience faithful generally maintain that the live Dead was the “authentic” Dead, for reasons of brevity I need to stress here the primacy of the band’s studio recording of “Ripple,” for it lays bare a basic truth about the group. Garcia’s voice was unique, though never the most forceful of instruments, so he generally relied on his guitar to do most of his singing for him. In “Ripple,” where his voice is tentative in the first verse, he is joined in the second by band members Phil Lesh and Bob Weir, by David Grisman’s mandolin in the refrain, and so on until the end of the final verse, when the voices of various friends and passersby carry on the wordless melody in a kind of campfire singalong. The performance then becomes the embodiment of the lyrical message itself. Despite the individual strengths of the words and music, the message of “Ripple” really comes across in this performance, and it goes beyond a simple “this is a difficult road you have to travel through life, but support is where you need it.” It is about the Grateful Dead as an extended family—musicians, lyricists, crew members, partners, children, audience—and the values upon which their community was based.

To understand the Dead phenomenon it is important to note a few things about their evolution. From their beginnings in 1965, the Grateful Dead were known locally in San Francisco as a live band. They lived communally in a house at 710 Ashbury Street, in the Haight district of San Francisco, and played innumerable free concerts for neighbors and friends in nearby Golden Gate Park and elsewhere. Like other contemporary Bay Area bands in the mid-60s—Big Brother and the Holding Company, Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish—in their formative

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years the Dead did not have a contract with a major record label, and enjoyed a certain freedom to do whatever they pleased.⁸ The Dead and their contemporaries grew organically out of the student and dropout populations in the Bay Area, were integral members of the Haight community, served that community and others through performances at the major dance halls—the Fillmore, the Avalon, Carousel, Winterland—and helped to define the mid-60s San Francisco popular music “scene.”

When eventually the Dead ventured beyond the Bay Area, their reputation as psychedelically enlightened messengers from the Left Coast attracted increasingly larger audiences across the United States. The reason that this reputation preceded them is by now the stuff of legend, but bears summarizing briefly here.⁹ In 1965, the members of the Grateful Dead fell into company with author Ken Kesey and Neal Cassady, immortalized by Jack Kerouac as Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*. Along with their larger group of friends and Kesey’s Merry Pranksters, their excursions into the underground world of LSD grew into the Acid Tests, a kind of open call to freaks in the Bay Area and beyond to converge on a given location and share in a total, communal, sensory experience.¹⁰

The writer Tom Wolfe shadowed Kesey and the Merry Pranksters and in 1968 published *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, an account of their exploits.¹¹ In the following extended excerpt, Wolfe attempts to recreate the atmosphere and the pulse of December 4, 1965, the night that the Grateful Dead performed at the second Acid Test, in San Jose:

The Dead had an organist called Pig Pen, who had a Hammond electric organ, and they move the electric organ into Big Nig’s ancient house, plus all of the Grateful Dead’s electrified guitars and basses and the Pranksters’ electrified guitars and basses and flutes and horns and the light machines and the movie projectors and the tapes and mikes and hi-fis, all of which pile up in insane coils of wires and gleams of stainless steel and winking amplifier dials before Big Nig’s unbelieving eyes. His house is old and has wiring that would hardly hold a toaster. . . .

They come piling into Big Nig’s, and suddenly acid and the worldcraze were everywhere, the electric organ vibrating through every belly in the place, kids dancing not *rock* dances, not the frug and the—what?—*swim*, mother, but dancing *ecstasy*, leaping, dervishing, throwing their hands over their heads like Daddy Grace’s own stroked-out inner courtiers—yes!—Roy Seburn’s lights washing past every head, Cassady rapping, Paul Foster handing people weird little things out of his Eccentric Bag, old whistles, tin crickets, burnt keys, spectral plastick handles. Everybody’s eyes turn on like lightbulbs, fuses blow, blackness—wowwww!—the things that shake and vibrate and funnel and freak out in this blackness—and then somebody slaps new fuses in and the old hulk of a house shudders back, the wiring writhing

and fragmenting like molting snakes, the organs vibro-massage the belly again, fuses blow, minds scream, heads explode, neighbors call the cops, 200, 300, 400 people from out there drawn into The Movie, into the edge of the pudding at least, a mass closer and higher than any mass in history, it seems most surely, and Kesey makes minute adjustment, small toggle switch here, lubricated with Vaseline No. 634-3 diluted with carbon tetrachloride, and they *ripple*, Major, *ripple*, but with meaning, 400 of the attuned multitude headed toward the pudding, the first mass acid experience, the dawn of the Psychedelic, the Flower Generation and all the rest of it, and Big Nig wants the rent.¹²

That night, the Grateful Dead became the *de facto* house band for the Acid Tests, and from that point onward their philosophy of performance—and their audience's experience of it—was informed by a kind of higher group consciousness. In many accounts, this consciousness approached inter-band telepathy. For the Grateful Dead, this meant that their inevitable free-form group improvisations—the influence not only of Free Jazz, but of local experimental art music¹³—often ended in unplanned yet spontaneous segues into an original number or a rock 'n' roll standard. With each of the band members operating on the same wavelength, their awareness, in each moment, of the direction their music would take was unspoken, telepathic.¹⁴ Acid, in other words, was the key to the Dead's artistic vision.

The role of acid and other hallucinogenic drugs in the creative process has been theorized elsewhere;¹⁵ the simple wonder of the drug was perhaps best summarized by Jerry Garcia, who said:

When LSD hit the streets finally, that was like, “You’re looking for more? Here it is. This is more. This is more than you can imagine.” . . . After that, for me, in my life, there was no turning back. There was no back, not just a turning back, but the idea of backness was gone. It was like all directions were forward from there.¹⁶

The Dead's live performances were deeply encoded with this psychedelic experience, this forward momentum into the unknown,¹⁷ and the audience's understanding of the musical, visual, and lyrical codes was aided by their own hallucinogenic consumption. But it was an experiment that did not last long unadulterated. By late 1966, the sense of vitality in the San Francisco Bay Area musical scene had already been the subject of exposés in the mainstream press; “hippies” had entered the public consciousness; tour companies began to haul busloads of frightened out-of-towners through the Haight-Ashbury in search of flower children. In October 1967, the end of the Summer of Love, members of the head community staged a symbolic funeral for the hippie. Many of the local bands, whose presence had long provided the soundtrack to the neighborhood, left the city and began to live rural lives across the Golden Gate Bridge

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in Marin County and further afield. The Haight began to turn ugly. Those hippies still grasping at remnants of the dream in 1969 found themselves in a waking nightmare at the Altamont Speedway. That forward momentum established in the vital years 1965–66 had dissipated. So what happened to the music?

Needless to say, because the Dead performed upwards of 150 concerts a year, they continued to compose new material, some of which they recorded in the studio. The problem they had was in trying to capture their essence on vinyl. Their early studio recordings—*Anthem of the Sun* (1968) most notably—simply attempted to replicate the live Dead experience. By mixing together four separate live performances, in *Anthem of the Sun* the band played with the idea of subverting the listener's subjective sense of time and equilibrium, as well as the very definition of “studio performance.”¹⁸ But in contrast to their live performances, with those intangible moments of higher consciousness and that enveloping sense of one-ness, their studio albums from 1970 onward betrayed a certain nostalgia, both lyrically and musically. And this is where historicizing the Dead, and historicizing the 1960s, becomes somewhat problematic.

The dawn of “country rock” coincided with a general countercultural motion “back to the land.” Toward the end of the 60s, albums such as *Buffalo Springfield* (1967), Dylan's *John Wesley Harding* (1967), the Band's *Music from Big Pink* (1968) and Crosby, Stills and Nash (1969) heralded this new direction in popular music.¹⁹ Generally speaking, the music revealed little or no evidence of mind-altering chemicals,²⁰ and was characterized above all else by the use of acoustic instruments and the prominence of tight vocal harmonies. This roughly termed “country rock” was a rediscovery of roots, a simplification of music and ideas, an almost willfully dated sound and style.

The life of the rural hippie demanded a shift in musical approach, an antidote to the “urban hippie” sound of hour-long space jams and psychedelic noodling. As Dead manager Rock Scully commented at the time:

After all these years of mind-gumming psychedelics we are all actually beginning to *crave* the normal. We need something to ground us—our hair is talking to us, our shoes have just presented a set of demands, the walls are alive with the sound of intergalactic static. Please remind us whereof we come? Our home planet is what?²¹

This prompted a more general shift in the Dead's musical aesthetic, and soon they were crossing Crosby, Stills, and Nash terrain, emphasizing the voice over the “space.”²² Robert Hunter's return to the fold enabled the Dead to speak more clearly to their fractured and dispersed community, in an idiom appropriate to their new musical direction.

There are two Hunter songs written on either side of this musical shift that illustrate this point: “Dark Star” and “Uncle John's Band.” Written in 1967, “Dark Star” was the

centerpiece of the Dead's live repertoire, and over the band's thirty-year performing career, was never played the same way twice. This makes it the quintessence of the Dead experience, an Acid Test remnant. When asked, in a 1971 *Rolling Stone* interview, to talk about "where 'Dark Star' comes from," Jerry Garcia famously remarked:

You gotta remember that you and I are talking about two different "Dark Stars." You're talking about the "Dark Star" which you have heard formalized on a record, and I'm talking about the "Dark Star" which I have heard in each performance as a completely improvised piece over a long period of time. So I have a long continuum of "Dark Stars" which range in character from each other to real different extremes. "Dark Star" has meant, while I'm playing it, almost as many things as I can sit here and imagine, so all I can do is talk about "Dark Star" as a playing experience.

Reich: Well, yeah, talk about it a little.

Garcia: I can't. It talks about itself.²³

Forever existing in that incomprehensible space, "Dark Star" is an example of the Dead's inter-band telepathy, of their philosophy of performance, and of the openness with which they shared their musical freedom with their audience. Though the lyrics and the musical germ were constant in each performance—the song was based on a two-chord theme,²⁴ for which Robert Hunter wrote the lyrics in the studio—the places that "Dark Star" took the Dead and their audience, in any given moment, were unpredictable.²⁵ But any performance of "Dark Star," such as the one captured on *Live/Dead* (1969), is still only one of 222 possible points on that "Dark Star" continuum.

Hunter invokes a cosmic terminology in this lyric that is grounded in the 1960s search for universal truth, clear in the song's first section:²⁶

Dark star crashes
pouring its light
into ashes

Reason tatters
the forces tear loose
from the axis

Searchlight casting
for faults in the
clouds of delusion

Shall we go,
you and I

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while we can?
Through
the transitive nightfall
of diamonds

Perhaps the most notable aspect of this lyric is its form. Under most conventional rules, this would not be read immediately as a “pop song.” There is no distinction between verse and chorus, no sense of refrain,²⁷ and even the regular syllabic pattern of the first stanza (4+4+4) is disrupted in the second (4+5+4), returning partially in the third (4+4+5), only to disappear entirely in the last (3+3+3+1+6+3). This allows the vocal passages and musical backing to exist interdependently:²⁸ the voice is not welded to the musical germ, nor does it disrupt the flow of the instrumental passages when it emerges from the texture; rather, the lyrics situate the Dead’s musical journey within the larger cosmic questions explored by the hippies more generally outside of the band’s orbit.

By contrast, “Uncle John’s Band,” written two years later, is much less opaque. Here Hunter’s lyrical expression suggests a grounding in earthly, rather than celestial, verse forms:

My purpose in writing song lyrics, besides having nothing better to do and making a living, is the exaltation of my spirit through other spirits. Traditional tools and forms are often apt for the purpose, such as the “Come All Ye” forms so popular in sailor songs and union ballads. When I recommend others “come hear Uncle John’s Band,” I verbalize . . . one of the ongoing agendas of life, the coaxing and cajoling of the forces of generational unity. I don’t say *we* . . . are Uncle John’s Band . . . —the truth is that we as a group also wanted to come hear “UJB,” [*sic*] and to come home, too, if it’s not too much to ask.²⁹

Well, the first days are the hardest days,
Don’t you worry anymore
When life looks like Easy Street
There is danger at your door
Think this through with me
Let me know your mind
Wo-oah, what I want to know is are you kind?
. . .
Come hear Uncle John’s Band
By the riverside
Got some things to talk about here beside the rising tide.

The affective differences between these two songs should be obvious. Musically, “Uncle John’s Band” firmly embraces the country-rock aesthetic; the psychedelic

remnants of “Dark Star,” both musical and lyrical, however, are firmly embedded in another, earlier, moment in time. That is what I will call “the short 60s”:³⁰ the period of psychedelic experimentation that, for some, came to define an entire era. But for San Francisco bands such as the Dead, that psychedelic moment only lasted a couple of years, from the Acid Tests of 1965 to the Death of the Hippie funeral in 1967. LSD was a central component, of course, and it established a direction—“forward”—for self-perception, community awareness, popular music, and cultural meaning. To illustrate, the lyrics of “Dark Star” hint at an experience to which many hearing the song today would not have immediate and personal access. For those people, this song might “mean” the 60s, but it would mean a very short 60s.

For that same audience, “Uncle John’s Band” is much more accessible, lyrically and musically. Though both songs involve direct address—“shall we go, you and I” and “let me know your mind”—it is the latter which holds perhaps the more universal meaning,³¹ and which has the longer-lasting cultural impact. I call this “the long 60s”: the perpetuation of an ideology beyond the confines of geographical or temporal space. In this sense, and specifically in the case of the Grateful Dead, the 60s have already lasted fifty years.³²

“Uncle John’s Band,” while not self-referential, is nonetheless evocative of the Dead themselves.³³ The end of each verse marks a kind of passing of time—the passing of the short 60s—by posing direct questions to the listener: asking “are you kind,” “will you come with me,” “how does the song go,” “where does the time go,” and so on. By the closing verse there is a palpable sense that a community has formed, of people whose understanding of the band’s motives and common experience will allow them to carry on with the unfinished project established at the beginning of the short 60s. The long 60s, the continuation of that ideology, in part begins here. And this is where “Ripple” comes back in.

“Ripple,” recorded in the same year as “Uncle John’s Band,” is a multilayered representation of the long 60s. As an autonomous poem once hanging on the wall in Black Oak Books, it existed to codify the tenets of a particular philosophy, and served to remind the local community, Deadheads and otherwise,³⁴ of a brief moment in Bay Area history, the short 60s. The deeper significance of the lyric is in its very title. In physics, according to the OED, a ripple is “a wave on the surface of a fluid the restoring force for which is provided by surface tension rather than by gravity, and which consequently has a wavelength shorter than that corresponding to the minimum speed of propagation.” In terms of the hippie community, the period 1965–67 was one of enormous social awakening and creative freedom in the San Francisco Bay Area. To stretch a metaphor, 1965 was the seismic moment of initiation, the Acid Tests the initial “plop” in the cultural water. The ripples emanating from that point demarcate later moments of enunciation—the Trips Festival, the Human Be-In, the Death of the Hippie—and suggest a certain cause and effect.

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The contemporary Haight-Ashbury community, shaped by the simple desire to care for the people in one's immediate environment, had become unsustainable by 1967. There were too many people making too many demands on the community's limited resources for it not to implode. It needed to become a virtual community, a kind of Brigadoon that would emerge at certain moments—a Dead concert, a commemoration, a gathering of the tribes—only to disappear again almost without a trace until the next time. In other words, the surface tension of the straight world would be disrupted by the emergence of the virtual community, more of those ripples emanating from 1965. To an outsider, stepping into that Brigadoon could be like stepping back into the 60s, a kind of exercise in ideological time-travel. In the everyday material world, for outsiders browsing the shelves at Black Oak Books, "Ripple" was just a small insight into a protected, yet welcoming, other world, the wavelengths of which have been undulating for half a century.

When Robert Hunter wrote "Ripple" that sunny day in London, his geographical and temporal distance from the ideal Haight community of the mid-1960s enabled a clear vision for the continuation of its legacy. This kind of backward glance, from deep within the long 60s, is a ripple in itself, an idealization of history. Nostalgia is inherent in the song's lyrical form, and in its evocation of the passing of time—"it's a hand-me-down/the thoughts are broken"—but this is not to suggest that everything Hunter wrote referred in some way to the Haight or the Dead community; on the contrary, his lyrics are grounded in much deeper traditions. Like the Dead's brand of country-rock, Hunter's use of American folk poetry forms simply eases the audience's access to his lyrical message. Sometimes that message is couched in metaphor; sometimes it is unmistakable, as in "Scarlet Begonias" (1974):³⁵

As I was walking round Grosvenor Square
Not a chill to the winter but a nip to the air
From the other direction she was calling my eye
It could be an illusion but I might as well try

She had rings on her fingers and bells on her shoes
And I knew without asking she was into the blues
She wore scarlet begonias tucked into her curls
I knew right away she was not like other girls

"She" could be a flower child right out of Golden Gate Park, circa 1966, tripping the light fantastic, leaving the gentlest hint of patchouli as she goes;³⁶ or she could be a proof that a 1960s ethos was alive and well even outside the American Embassy in London in the early 1970s, an earthly embodiment of the long 60s.

To consider the "short" and the "long" 60s is necessarily to consult historical accounts of the time and to talk not only to the people whose experiences have not

yet been recorded, but to revisit those whose experiences form part of the historical palimpsest. The hippie community generated a great deal of interest in the mid-1960s, both journalistic and sociological. Journalistic interest in the hippies from outside their culture perhaps began with Tom Wolfe and *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, continuing with Joan Didion's *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* (1968) and Nicholas von Hoffman's *We Are the People Our Parents Warned Us Against* (1968), and in mainstream magazines such as *Time*, *Life*, and *Variety*. Journalistic interest in the community *from within the culture* found a voice in, among others, the short-lived psychedelic newspaper *The Oracle* and *Rolling Stone* magazine. These papers provide the key source documents for the local community, representing as they do both the short 60s (*The Oracle* published 12 issues between 1966 and 1968) and the long 60s (*Rolling Stone* was founded in San Francisco in 1967, and has now published well over 1,000 issues). Both of these journals are rooted in a specific time and place, and despite *Rolling Stone's* defection to New York in the 1970s, its political bent, nurtured in late-60s San Francisco, has remained sharp through the many musical changes of the ensuing decades.

Sociological interest in the hippies is an interesting phenomenon. Academics, firmly rooted in the "straight" world of the 60s, immersed themselves in the Haight community, logging countless hours of interviews with merchants, students, street people, civic leaders, and others, and reported their findings back to their learned readership. These studies—Burton Wolfe's *The Hippies*, Leonard Wolf's *Voices from the Love Generation* (both 1968), and Helen Swick Perry's *The Human Be-In* (1970), among others—provide a valuable insight into the culture as it was in process. The authors are not uniformly impressed by the lifestyle and ideals of the new generation, but they do provide the earliest source documents of the hippie ideology in the act of its articulation. Significantly, some of the subjects interviewed in those early studies have been interviewed again, by others, at successive moments of inferred import—the 10th anniversary of the Summer of Love, the 25th anniversary, and soon, inevitably, the 50th.

The idea of historical palimpsest is embodied by many of the characters who inhabit the following pages. For example, Teresa Tudury is a singer-songwriter whose name pops up in the acknowledgments of some oral histories of the 60s. She grew up in North Beach during the beatnik 50s, found her voice in the coffee-house folk music circuit of the early 60s, fronted a band called the All-Night Apothecary at the height of the San Francisco "scene," then fluttered off to communal life in Big Sur, wandered around Europe, and was eventually brought back to the States under the protection of her friend, Leonard Cohen. I interviewed her before I had seen her name in print, and I have yet to find in any of those histories a quote directly attributed to her. She's a shadow, in other words, whose experiences of the 60s typified the kind of lifestyle and recreational mind expansion readers expect from accounts of the time. Her "short 60s" were the formative years of her life, but she has no need to embody them outwardly.

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At the other extreme is Wavy Gravy, hippie supremo, clown, humanitarian, ice cream flavor. His presence is guaranteed in any history of the counterculture, and I was eager to interview him for this one. Early in the summer of 2005 he presided over the memorial concert for promoter Chet Helms at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco. At one point during the concert Wavy Gravy said to the assembled throng, “We’re still a tribe. We’ll *always* be a tribe. We are the Hip-Eye Nation.” The continued and unproblematic usage of the term “tribe” is something that intrigues me, so when I met him a few weeks later I asked him to riff on it—and he referred me to the Woodstock movie. Then I asked him where he was between 1965 and 1967:

WAVY GRAVY: I left the Committee [the SF-based improvisational theater group], gave away all my stuff and went to live with the Hopi Indians. It was written in the book of the Hopi that during conditions of emergency, people would gather together on these Mesas and await instructions from the spirit world. Well, these Hopis kind of took pity on me. They said, hey, you’re pretty early. They took me in for a while, and then I went to LA.

While in Los Angeles Wavy Gravy hooked up with Ken Kesey, was involved in the Watts Acid Test and out of that experience formed the Hog Farm Collective. It’s a good, if familiar, story, one in a string of anecdotes that he repeated to me that day, almost verbatim, from his book *Something Good for a Change* (1992). I am certainly not going to fault Wavy Gravy for repeating himself once or twice; the man has fifty years of often brilliant interviews behind him. The problem is that his memories are not so much a palimpsest as a carved stone tablet. When I tried to steer him off course, as it were, he referred to what he calls “the train wreck of the mind”—those gaping holes in memory where data just disappears: a black hole, a dark star.

Wavy Gravy lives up the road from where Black Oak Books used to be. I asked him if he ever noticed the framed print of “Ripple” hanging there on the wall. He said that at Camp Winnarainbow, the summer camp he runs in Mendocino County, the children learn two songs: “Ripple” and “Teach Your Children,” by Crosby, Stills & Nash. Every year since the camp was founded children have been taught these two texts, these two folk songs.³⁷ Singing these two songs connects the children to an ideology codified in the aftermath of the short 60s, and encourages them to live by the codes offered in them. Wavy Gravy said that, rather than making him nostalgic for the 60s, this makes him nostalgic for the future. Then he left me this image:

I see us in our old folks home, that that part of Black Oak Ranch is gonna turn into, and we’ll all be in our rockers singing “Ripple” like those Confederate veterans were singing the Battle Hymn of the Republic.³⁸

Just as musical codes can suggest altered states of consciousness, so can lyrical codes act as a call to collective memory. In considering some of the lyrics Robert Hunter

wrote for the Dead in the early 70s, a distinct pattern emerges: moments of nostalgia, moments of recognition, moments of regret. An online keyword search of the Dead lyric database might reveal a large number of occurrences of the word “sunshine,” for example, or “love,” or “home”; and a cursory reading of the lyrics in the Dead’s 1970s studio albums, *Workingman’s Dead*, *American Beauty*, and *From the Mars Hotel*, reveal clear thematic tendencies. There are references to blues tropes, American folklore, the Dead themselves; there are stories about gambling, driving, meeting the Devil; in short, there is a plundering of the vaguely familiar. Musically, in their 1970s studio albums the Dead remained faithful to a kind of country-rock aesthetic, occasionally dipping into jam band territory. In contrast to early recordings such as *Anthem of the Sun* and *Aoxomoxoa* this later music does not try to replicate the psychedelic experience; it does not attempt to recreate that transcendent moment of total unity, the forward leap into another dimension of consciousness. In the long 60s, the Dead’s music was neither progressive nor psychedelic—the direction might not have been “forward”—but the residual hippie ethos was.

Though live performances provided arguably the more “authentic” Dead experience, the band’s early 70s studio artifacts offer insights into that moment when the 60s became an *idea*. To consider these artifacts many decades later is necessarily to consider local history, community formation, and the power of the written and sung word. The little home truths that Robert Hunter spun are rich with the personal experience of mid-60s San Francisco, and can be read as such. But it is the unquestionably unfashionable way in which Jerry Garcia set those truths to music that poses the challenge to popular music historiography. It demands the suspension of disbelief; it demands an allowance for that one cultural anomaly to ripple occasionally; and it demands that a 60s aesthetic be sustained through an essentially anachronistic musical style. Maybe the Dead’s long 60s were all about recuperating from the short 60s; maybe “Ripple” is just a nice tune about nothing in particular; but fifty years of ideological undulations suggest that in some cases, the linear progression of history is secondary to the prolongation of a moment.

Notes

1. Black Oak Books opened its Shattuck Avenue store in 1983. After two decades of community presence, compelling calendars of events, and welcoming opportunities for late-night browsing, the original owners sold the business. With the sale of the store in 2008 came a shedding of Black Oak’s visual identity: the new owners stripped the walls of their broadsides, and turned the “new” shop into something much more generic and closely aligned with its corporate competitors. After just over a year in its new incarnation, Black Oak Books left its Shattuck Avenue premises in May 2009. Black Oak currently operates a retail space on San Pablo Avenue in West Berkeley, around the corner from Fantasy Studios.
2. “Ripple,” words by Robert Hunter; music by Jerry Garcia.

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3. There is a minefield awaiting one who suggests that song lyrics should “equate” to poetry, but there are some contemporary lyrics of Bob Dylan, for example, which are structured in a similarly free style and are generally held to possess a certain uncommon “artistic” sensibility. Mention should also be made of the lyric to “Teach Your Children” by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, not only as a testament to universal generational (and intergenerational) concerns, but because the version that appears on CSNY’s album *Déjà vu* (Atlantic, 1970) is enhanced by Jerry Garcia’s guest work on pedal steel guitar.
4. For an exhaustive analysis of “Ripple” and the rest of the Dead canon, see David Dodd, *The Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics* (New York: Free Press, 2005), or its online predecessor, arts.ucsc.edu/gdead/agdl/, from which these references are drawn.
5. As Jerry Garcia noted, “‘Ripple’ is one of those things of having two halves . . . come together just perfectly. Bob Weir had a guitar custom-made for himself and I picked it up and that song came out, it just came out. . . . [Then the] next time I saw Hunter he says, ‘Here, I have a couple of songs I’d like you to take a look at,’ and he had ‘Ripple’ and it just . . . all of a sudden, just bam, there it was, it was just perfect.” In Jerry Garcia, Charles Reich and Jann Wenner, *Garcia: A Signpost to New Space* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), pp. 53–54.
6. “Ripple” was not composed with Grisman’s mandolin in mind. David Grisman was invited to join the Dead’s *American Beauty* recording sessions, having recently seen Garcia playing in an informal softball game between the Dead and Jefferson Airplane. Grisman and Garcia had met in the mid-1960s, and formed a bluegrass group, Old and In the Way, in the early 70s. Garcia’s last musical project before his death, a recording of Jimmie Rodgers’ “Blue Yodel #9,” was recorded at Grisman’s studio. Some of their early 90s informal jam sessions were filmed by Grisman’s daughter and released as the documentary film, *Grateful Dawg* (dir. Gillian Grisman, 2000).
7. www.setlists.net.
8. This is a freedom of self-expression they steadfastly maintained even *after* signing a contract with Warner Brothers, a fact that caused no end of stress to the label’s executives, and that served to highlight the philosophical fissures between the musical communities of San Francisco and Los Angeles. See *Anthem to Beauty* (part of the *Classic Albums* series, Rhino Home Video, 1998) for Bob Weir and Phil Lesh’s reflections on this issue.
9. A complete account of the early days of the Grateful Dead may be found in Dennis McNally, *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2002).
10. Lysergic acid diethylamide-25 (LSD-25) was first produced by Albert Hofmann at the Sandoz Laboratories in 1938 as part of a research project into ergot alkaloids. Five years later he synthesized the “relatively uninteresting” LSD-25 for further pharmacological tests, and it was then that Hofmann accidentally took the first acid trip: “a not unpleasant intoxicated-like condition, characterized by an extremely stimulated imagination. In a dream like state, with eyes closed. . . . I perceived an uninterrupted stream of fantastic pictures, extraordinary shapes with intense, kaleidoscopic play of colors. After some two hours this condition faded away.” LSD-25 had great potential for psychotherapeutic research—in the treatment of migraines, alcoholism, psychosis—and was the basis of experimentation through the 1950s. The US military saw LSD as a potential counterespionage tool, and began conducting experiments of its own; one of the subjects of these experiments at the Menlo Park Veterans Hospital was Ken Kesey. Over at

- Harvard, two members of the Psychology faculty, Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, began controlled but nonclinical experiments into the effects of LSD on consciousness; one of the first subjects of these experiments was the poet Allen Ginsberg. See Albert Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child*, trans. Jonathan Ott (Sarasota: Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies [MAPS], 2005), Peter Connors, *White Hand Society: The Psychedelic Partnership of Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2010), and Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain, *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1985).
11. A contemporary review of Wolfe's book dubbed it "a very odd kind of masterpiece," and added that while "there has probably never been a Literary Biography" like it, "there has seldom been this kind of reporting. Wolfe works INSIDE, so far back there that the normal dicta of his craft—the things old journalists set great store by—are forgotten. Like driving from San Francisco to Santa Cruz on the Harbor Freeway, for goshsake." Wolfe captured a *feeling*, in other words, if not in a verifiably accurate kind of way. See Donald Stanley, "A Kandy-Kolored Look at Ken Kesey," *San Francisco Examiner*, August 18, 1968, p. B4.
 12. Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (Farrar, 1968), pp. 210–12.
 13. This is an issue to which I return in Chapter 9.
 14. See McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, pp. 102–06.
 15. See, for example, Marlene Dobkin de Rios and Oscar Janiger, *LSD, Spirituality and the Creative Process* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 2003) and Bernard Aaronson and Humphry Osmond, *Psychedelics: The Uses and Implications of Hallucinogenic Drugs* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1970).
 16. Jerry Garcia, quoted in McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, p. 104.
 17. For more on psychedelic coding and music of the 1960s, see Sheila Whiteley, *The Space Between the Notes: Rock and the Counterculture* (London: Routledge, 1992). The Grateful Dead do not figure significantly in her study, but she rightfully notes that the San Francisco "hippy" scene had effectively ended by the time the mainstream press and music industry had spread the notion of the countercultural ideology beyond its local (and, some would say, natural) habitat.
 18. As Jerry Garcia said, '*Anthem of the Sun* was like a chance for us to try a lot of things, and to see what things might work and might not. Actually, when we mixed it, we mixed it for the hallucinations. And . . . Phil and I performed the mix . . . as though it were an electronic music composition. You know, he would do things and I would do things, we were working over each other, bringing these faders up and those down, and switching these things around. And it was pretty intense. And we performed each side all the way through. . . . The original tapes, our first stereo master tapes, preserved some of that quality when you had a good enough playback system to really hear, but . . . when the disc came out, it sounded muddy and it was terrible, and . . . you know, all the things that we put together so carefully [just] didn't make it across.' See *Anthem to Beauty*.
 19. For more on late 1960s communes, see Jerome Judson, *Families of Eden: Communes and the New Anarchism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974). See Greil Marcus, *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* (New York: Picador, 1997) for a study of the "old, weird America" accessed in the 1968 shift to country rock.
 20. Lyrically, however, there are still occasional suggestions of expanded consciousness and other recreational pursuits.

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21. Rock Scully, quoted in McNally, *A Long Strange Trip*, p. 319.
22. The 1969 formation of New Riders of the Purple Sage is also emblematic of this shift.
23. Garcia, Reich, and Wenner, *A Signpost to New Space*, p. 58.
24. See Phil Lesh, *Searching for the Sound: My Life with the Grateful Dead* (New York: Little, Brown, 2005), p. 101.
25. Graeme Boone has published a comprehensive and insightful series of analyses of “Dark Star.” See in particular his “Tonal and Expressive Ambiguity of ‘Dark Star’” in John Covach and Graeme Boone, eds., *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 171–210. David Malvinni’s exploration of “Dark Star” is an important addition to the literature on psychedelic music. See his *Grateful Dead and the Art of Rock Improvisation* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013).
26. “Dark Star,” words by Robert Hunter; music by Garcia, Kreutzmann, Lesh, McKernan, and Weir.
27. When the voice returns for the second section it becomes clear that “shall we go/you and I while we can . . .” acts as a refrain across the longer span of the song. Though the second section follows the same line structure as the first, the syllabic pattern is different: “Mirror shatters/in formless reflections/of matter//Glass hand dissolving/to ice petal flowers/revolving//Lady in velvet/recedes/in the nights of goodbye//Shall we go,/you and I/while we can?/Through/the transitive nightfall/of diamonds.”
28. On *Live/Dead* the vocal passages emerge at 6:04–7:02 and 21:26–22:25.
29. Robert Hunter, “Introduction,” *The Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics*, pp. xix–xx. “Uncle John’s Band,” words by Robert Hunter; music by Jerry Garcia.
30. The notion of the 1960s as a chronological block has been debated at length elsewhere, for example, in Fredric Jameson’s “Periodizing the 60s,” in his *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971–1986*. Vol. 2: *The Syntax of History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 178–208, and more recently in Jeremy Varon, Michael S. Foley, and John McMillian’s editorial, “Time is an ocean: The past and future of the Sixties,” in *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* 1/1 (June 2008): 1–7. What I aim to do here is problematize the “short” and the “long” in locally specific terms, substantiated in the following chapters. I am aware of the irony in the fact that the “short 60s” here are longer than the “long 60s.” The chronicle of events in the years 1965–69 take a finite amount of space, however, while the “long 60s,” I argue, are still being written.
31. The greater “accessibility” of “Uncle John’s Band” should not deny the immediacy of the reference in “Dark Star” to T. S. Eliot’s “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” which is, needless to say, understandable even without the assistance of hallucinogenic drugs.
32. Though the Grateful Dead officially disbanded after the death of Jerry Garcia in 1995, as this book goes to press they are preparing to celebrate their fiftieth anniversary with “farewell” performances in Chicago and Santa Clara. I return to this point in Chapter 13.
33. Perhaps the most autobiographical song in the Dead canon is “Truckin’” (*American Beauty*, 1970), which recounts a number of run-ins with the law that the Dead endured during one of their US tours.
34. The term “Dead Head” was first used on the inside cover of the live album *Grateful Dead* (Warner Brothers, 1971) in an invitation for fans to get in touch.
35. “Scarlet Begonias,” words by Robert Hunter; music by Jerry Garcia.

36. Robert Hunter actually admitted that this song was written for his wife. See *The Complete Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics*, p. 231.
37. The fact that children are taught these songs at Camp Winnarainbow, that they are in a sense passed from generation to generation, justifies my use of “folk” to suggest a music “of the people” in a contemporary oral tradition.
38. Black Oak Ranch is the name of the Hog Farm property in Laytonville where Camp Winnarainbow is held.

THE SHORT 60s



We wore white t-shirts with nothing on them. There was never anything on those t-shirts. Never anything. If you were creative, you rolled the sleeve of the t-shirt up. You know? Everyone wore 501 Levi jeans and hi-top Keds sneakers. That was the 50s. That was it, you know? You look at a tie-dyed shirt, you look at a white shirt. The white shirt was a decade of Dwight Eisenhower and everything for me—and then the tie-dyed shirt. And that was just like, yeah, ok, this is gonna be fun.

[Country Joe McDonald]

2. PRELUDE: *CITY SCALE*

Whether we dig Instant Theater or not doesn't really matter. What matters is that San Francisco, with its Mime Troupe, Tape Music Center, Contemporary Dancers and far-out Happenings, is becoming an exciting creative playground as well as a cultural one.¹

It is a hand-drawn "score," stretching across thirty-six inches of paper, outlining the main events in a six-hour "happening" that took place in San Francisco on March 9, 1963.² It has no absolute coordinates, street names, directions, tempos, or timing; stipulations for performance include "time: weekend night" and "full moon." It is site-specific, stretching out from the home of the San Francisco Tape Music Center at 1537 Jones Street. *City Scale* was conceived by Tape Music Center colleagues, composer Ramon Sender, playwright Ken Dewey, and visual artist Anthony Martin. Their intention was to utilize the environment around them for what Sender imagined "would sensitize the viewers, the audience, to look more carefully at everything" around them, and to play "with that sort of chaotic edge, that is between order and chaos. Isn't that where all the good stuff happens?"³

Both order and chaos were divided into clear sections: opening, development, return, then coda.

I. Audience arrives at the Tape Music Center, unaware of the evening's program. As they enter a small enclosure they are asked a simple question: "How do you get by?" Their answers, spoken into a microphone, are recorded on a machine in another space. Outside the enclosure are a number of suspended metallic objects, the sounds of which are recorded on another machine. The audience moves quickly into a larger space, where they are invited to draw or write or paint on the butcher paper hung on all the walls of the room. Finally, audience members tear paper into their own shape and are ushered out, passing "a taker of the shapes," described in the score as "a somewhat terrifying personage." The audience is directed toward one of two routes comprising the second section. Meanwhile, the composer begins preparing a sound collage from the recordings to play back at section III.

II. The events in section II should "appear quite natural and unprepared." The score is dotted with encircled numbers, each indicating an event that the audience witnesses: an undressing model; "a parked car, radio on, man eating celery"; two pairs of lovers, in two different places; a man and his wife in a convertible, stalled in a particular intersection, arguing. The audience moves to "an elevated view of city"

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for the reappearance of the Shape Taker. From this vantage point on Russian Hill the audience would overlook a “car ballet”: in the North Beach grid below, cars move in a prearranged choreography. The audience would become gradually aware of this organized movement, as the cars, gels on their headlights, then “lined up in front of Coit Tower facing the audience; and . . . blinked their headlights with firecrackers going off in the bushes under [the audience].”⁴ All the while, a “hidden but hearable” band is stationed in the nearby Broadway Tunnel.⁵ In the transition to section III the audience walks past a soprano singing in a storefront window, wearing a dressing gown, her accompanist dressed in tails.

III. The audience reassembles at the Tape Music Center to hear a playback of the sound collage. Refreshments are served. The audience is then transported in two trucks, each with its own hostess, and driven to a desolate park where the audience inflates weather balloons. The vans take the audience to a number of specific sites: a coffee house, where the Shape Taker is again stationed; City Lights book store, where the audience “returns” books, “preferably in Arabic,” handed to them en route; walks past the arguing couple; then proceeds to the nearby Wells Fargo Bank, where a movie is being projected onto the building’s side wall. The celery man returns. And here begins the coda. On paper, the score fades into an impressionistic cityscape scribble with two indications: “a list of spots, places throughout the city is provided for either individual or small group journeys”; and more intriguingly, in much larger print, “THE EVENING SHOULD GET MORE AND MORE EXPLORATIVE.” The piece ends at dawn.

City Scale was the final performance in a season that explored the relationships between audience and performer. Tony Martin described the work as an opportunity for people “to express themselves [and] to exchange feelings, thoughts, and expressions between each other.”⁶ Some “performers” in *City Scale* had no direct audience contact:⁷ for the trombonist in the tunnel, the musicians in the shop window, the couple arguing in the car, their individual spaces were contextualized not by their surroundings, but by their actions. For the non-audience passersby—residential neighbors on Jones Street, the drivers of the cars in the tunnel, shoppers at City Lights—their spaces were utilized in a conventional sense, for their intended purpose. The encroachment of “theatre” into the everyday, into the otherwise normalized nocturnal environment of the city, necessitated a reimagining of the individual’s place in the collective.

City Scale was one of many “happenings” in the early 1960s that blurred the lines between audience and performer, and acts as a symbolic opening of the “short 60s” in San Francisco. It was the first time Ramon Sender had encountered liquid light projections, which soon gave the experimental electronic music of the Tape Music Center a vital visual dimension. In a very short space of time, liquid lights, experimental music, and a dismantling of the fourth wall between “stage” and “audience” defined the new musical culture that coalesced in the city’s ballrooms, a new soundtrack for

this new creative playground. From this point onward, everything did indeed get “more and more explorative.”

Notes

1. Merla Zellerbach, “The Meaning of What’s Happening,” *San Francisco Chronicle* April 4, 1964, p. 35.
2. The score for *City Scale* was published in *Tulane Drama Review* 10 (Winter 1965), and reproduced in Mariellen R. Sandford, ed., *Happenings and Other Acts* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 142–50, and David Bernstein and John Rockwell, eds., *The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture and the Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
3. Ramon Sender, quoted in Bernstein, *Tape Music Center*, p. 63.
4. Ibid.
5. On this particular night, trombonist Stuart Dempster: “There was a lot of traffic [in the tunnel], I remember, and there was that little kind of a sidewalk where you can walk along and do whatever I did. . . . I think I just . . . played with the echo and amused myself as I pretty much wished to.” Stuart Dempster, quoted in Ibid., p. 255.
6. Tony Martin, quoted in Ibid., p. 153.
7. See Sender’s introductory remarks to the score in Sandford, *Happenings*, p. 142.