

## Consciousness on the Charles

BY DAVID KAISER\*

Don Lattin. *The Harvard Psychedelic Club: How Timothy Leary, Ram Dass, Huston Smith, and Andrew Weil Killed the Fifties and Ushered in a New Age for America*. New York: HarperOne, 2010. ix + 256 pp., illus., index. ISBN 978-0061-65593-7. \$24.99 (hardcover).

If you remember the 1960s historiography, then you probably weren't there. While Americanists were laying down the grooves of what would become historians' standard storyline for that turbulent time, most historians of science and technology—especially those of us who focus on physical sciences in the United States—had our heads squarely in the 1940s and 1950s, examining “big science” and the military-industrial-academic complex.<sup>1</sup> Historians of science and technology came late to the 1960s party. Only after the basic historiographic arc had been solidified (one might say, reified) in scores of books by “mainstream” American historians did we realize that we, too, have interesting questions to ask about that period. How did specialists in high-tech defense fields like aerospace refashion themselves as credible experts in urban planning,

\*Program in Science, Technology, and Society, and Department of Physics, E51-185, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139; dikaiser@mit.edu.

1. See, e.g., Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Martin Lee and Bruce Shlain, *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties, and Beyond*, 2nd ed. (New York: Grove, 1992 [1985]); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987); and James Miller, *“Democracy Is in the Streets”: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987). Compare with, e.g., Paul Forman, “Behind Quantum Electronics: National Security as Basis for Physical Research in the United States, 1940–1960,” *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences* 18, no. 1 (1987): 149–229; Everett Mendelsohn, M. Roe Smith, and Peter Weingart, eds., *Science, Technology, and the Military* (Boston: Kluwer, 1988); Peter Galison and Bruce Hevly, eds., *Big Science: The Growth of Large-Scale Research* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992); and Stuart W. Leslie, *The Cold War and American Science: The Military-Industrial-Academic Complex at MIT and Stanford* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

---

*Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences*, Vol. 41, Number 2, pps. 265–275. ISSN 1939-1811, electronic ISSN 1939-182X. © 2011 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions website, <http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintinfo>. asp. DOI: 10.1525/hsns.2011.41.2.265.

while race riots engulfed inner cities across the nation? How did anthropologists, with generous funding from military sponsors, differentiate between disinterested academic inquiry and mission-oriented studies of revolution and counterinsurgency, in places from South America to Southeast Asia? How might we account for New Left splinter groups like Science for the People, which drew most of their ranks from young, disaffected scientists and engineers? Recent studies of these and related topics have largely been playing catch-up, trotting out fascinating episodes to place along American historians' well-worn timeline.<sup>2</sup>

American historians have discovered the 1970s of late—now *that* has become “the pivotal decade” for understanding the United States and the world during the years since World War II—and this time, historians of science and technology are contributing to the historiography in real time. A spate of recent books has tackled the entwining of science, technology, culture, and political economy during the “long” 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Against that backdrop, one may consider Don Lattin's *Harvard Psychedelic Club*.

*The Harvard Psychedelic Club* focuses on several individuals who became iconic figures of the counterculture during the 1960s and 1970s. Each was

2. Jennifer Light, *From Warfare to Welfare: Defense Intellectuals and Urban Problems in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Mark Solovey, “Project Camelot and the 1960s Epistemological Revolution: Rethinking the Politics-Patronage-Social Science Nexus,” *Social Studies of Science* 31 (2001): 171–206; Matt Wisnioski, “Inside ‘the System’: Engineers, Scientists, and the Boundaries of Social Protest in the Long 1960s,” *History and Technology* 19 (2003): 313–33; and Kelly Moore, *Disrupting Science: Social Movements, American Scientists, and the Politics of the Military, 1945–1975* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

3. Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Eric J. Vettel, *Biotech: The Countercultural Origins of an Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Andrew Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2007); Andrew Pickering, *The Cybernetic Brain: Sketches of Another Future* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); and David Kaiser, *How the Hippies Saved Physics: Science, Counterculture, and the Quantum Revival* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011). Cf. Peter N. Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970s*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990 [1982]); Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Beth Bailey and David Farber, eds., *America in the Seventies* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004); Edward D. Berkowitz, *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008); Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel J. Sargent, eds., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); and Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

associated with psychedelic drugs and efforts to understand the nature of human consciousness. The four protagonists include Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert (who later changed his name to Ram Dass), Andrew Weil, and Huston Smith. They knew each other in and around Harvard University during the early 1960s, before they entered the international spotlight in the 1970s. As Lattin sees it, “the men of the Harvard Psychedelic Club, each in his own way, changed the way Americans think, practice medicine, and view religion; that is, they changed nothing less than the way we look at mind, body, and spirit” (3).

Lattin builds his narrative by following each of the protagonists closely, as they weaved into and out of each other’s lives. Timothy Leary had built a name for himself as an academic psychologist specializing in personality research before he was recruited to Harvard’s Department of Social Relations in 1960. Upon arriving at Harvard, Leary established a “Harvard Psilocybin Project,” named for the hallucinogen found in “magic mushrooms.” (He had first sampled the drug’s effects in August 1960 during a trip to rural Mexico, just before joining the Harvard faculty.) Drawing inspiration from an earlier Harvard psychologist, William James, Leary developed a research plan that involved self-experimentation as well as close observation of test subjects. James, after all, famously had experimented with alcohol and nitrous oxide at the turn of the century, eager to see if those substances could reproduce the sensations of rapture or elation commonly associated with religious experience.<sup>4</sup> Richard Alpert, a clinical psychologist, was already teaching at Harvard with a joint appointment in Social Relations and in Education when Leary arrived. He quickly joined the project, and before long they were dosing volunteers from throughout their academic community, including graduate students and faculty colleagues.

Andrew Weil arrived at Harvard as an undergraduate in 1960. Even before he met Leary and Alpert, his interest in the nature of consciousness had been piqued by a high-school trip to India, during which he met an ascetic holy man in a Hindu temple. He had also been inspired by Aldous Huxley’s account of the strange effects of the drug mescaline in *The Doors of Perception* (1954).<sup>5</sup> Huxley provided a link for the final member of Lattin’s cast as well. Huston Smith, raised

4. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1902). Cf. Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), chap. 4.

5. Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (New York: Harper, 1954). See also Steven Novak, “LSD before Leary: Sidney Cohen’s Critique of 1950s Psychedelic Drug Research,” *Isis* 88 (1997): 87–110.

in China by Methodist missionary parents, followed his own ordination as a Methodist minister with academic study of comparative religions. By the late 1950s he had published a groundbreaking book, *The Religions of Man* (1958)—which sold 2.5 million copies worldwide—and made frequent appearances on television to lecture about religious experience and spirituality around the world. Early in his studies, a mutual acquaintance introduced him to Huxley. The two quickly recognized their shared interest in the subjective experience of ecstasy. With Huxley, Smith wondered whether psychedelics like mescaline could recreate the phenomenology of religious experience. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology recruited Smith to teach comparative religion in the late 1950s, and soon after arriving he arranged an invitation for Huxley to visit Cambridge as part of MIT's centenary celebrations in 1960–61. Smith introduced Huxley to Leary during that visit. Leary, in turn, introduced Smith to psilocybin. Soon Smith joined the Leary-Alpert team.

By spring 1961, after the group had branched out beyond psilocybin to include drugs like lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), Leary renamed the research group the Harvard Psychedelic Project. The list of test subjects expanded as well. Lattin provides detailed descriptions of two of the group's most famous experiments in his third chapter. In one of these experiments, Leary and his graduate students sought to test whether psychedelics, when used in conjunction with group-therapy counseling, could reduce recidivism rates among prisoners in a state penitentiary. Leary was convinced that the drugs would only achieve maximum effect if administered in an egalitarian atmosphere, with little trace of the cold, clinical environment usually associated with drug trials, so he insisted that several researchers take the drugs along with the inmates. After comparing results with a control group of prisoners who had received neither the drugs nor the counseling, Leary concluded that the full-bore psychological intervention had cut recidivism rates in half.

In another experiment, Leary and his students gathered twenty student-volunteers from a local theological seminary in a chapel for a Good Friday service. Half received a dose of psilocybin while the others received a placebo. The goal had been to observe whether psychedelics could simulate an authentic religious experience. That research question was quickly abandoned, however, when one drug-addled subject escaped from the chapel and ran down Commonwealth Avenue shouting about a coming Messianic Age while the others were reduced to crawling around the floor in a state of stupor.

Both experiments sound outlandish today; Lattin rightly notes that they were controversial at the time as well. Yet neither was beyond the pale, given

evolving psychological research practices at the time. Psychologists had been experimenting with psychedelics for years. Prevailing wisdom had been that substances like LSD could temporarily induce psychotic states in test subjects, facilitating the study of abnormal psychology in a controlled setting without (it was supposed) producing any long-term side effects. Drugs like LSD weren't outlawed in the United States until 1966; possession was only bumped up to a felony offense in 1968.<sup>6</sup> Advocates of "humanistic psychology," meanwhile, had been calling for "naturalistic" experiments, outside the behaviorists' contrived laboratory spaces, in order to observe human behavior in everyday settings. They also advocated an egalitarian relationship between patient and clinician, precisely the psychological level playing field that Leary sought to establish by taking drugs along with his test subjects.<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, Leary's and Alpert's project grew controversial on campus. Faculty within Harvard's Department of Social Relations debated whether the Leary-Alpert studies employed appropriate controls or comparison groups, without which critics placed little confidence in the robustness or statistical significance of various experimental findings.<sup>8</sup> That internal debate exploded into public view during the spring of 1963, amid allegations that Alpert had given psychedelics to undergraduates and that Leary had abandoned his professional responsibilities altogether. Alpert was fired and Leary was reprimanded. Leary, who was back in Mexico at the time, never returned to his Harvard position.

Lattin assigns each of his four protagonists a moniker based on their post-Harvard activities. Leary, the best-known of the bunch, became an international celebrity and semi-professional iconoclast by the late 1960s, championing the power of psychedelic drugs like LSD to free one's mind from the shackles of conformist, middle-class norms. (Hence Leary's most famous *cri de coeur*: "tune in, turn on, and drop out.") He ran a mock campaign for governor of California in 1969 against incumbent Ronald Reagan; the Beatles recorded the song "Come Together" for his campaign rallies. He then spent the early 1970s

6. Lee and Shlain, *Acid Dreams* (ref. 1), 119; Novak, "LSD before Leary" (ref. 5).

7. Robin Wasserman, *Tuning In: Timothy Leary, Harvard, and the Boundaries of Experimental Psychology* (A.B. thesis, Harvard University, 2000), 15–21; Pickering, *Cybernetic Brain* (ref. 3), chap. 5.

8. Wasserman, *Tuning In* (ref. 7), chap. 4. Critics have returned to Leary's claims of effectiveness in the 1962 Concord Prison project and discerned sloppy or possibly fraudulent mishandling of data and statistics: Rick Doblin, "Dr. Leary's Concord Prison Experiment: A 34-Year Follow-up Study," *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 30 (1998): 419–26.

in jail on drug charges or on the lam. Even his legal troubles became iconic: he was aided in one jailbreak by the Weather Underground, after which he laid low for a while with Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria. Lattin dubs Leary the “trickster.”

Alpert followed a different path. After a painful split with Leary—based, in part, on Leary’s inability to accept Alpert’s homosexuality—Alpert set off for India in 1967, where he met a Hindu guru in Kathmandu and had a transcendental experience. He came back to the United States several months later calling himself “Ram Dass,” and began lecturing on Eastern mystical enlightenment. His book, *Be Here Now* (1971), became a cult classic among the burgeoning New Age set. To Lattin, Alpert had become the “seeker.”

Weil had been working as a reporter for the *Harvard Crimson* student newspaper in the early 1960s when he began leaking information to the Harvard administration that Alpert had given psychedelics to undergraduates. No stranger to drug use himself, Weil went after Leary and Alpert largely because they had failed to include him in their research project or social circle. His reporting, combined with his behind-the-scenes espionage on behalf of the deans, brought the controversy over the Harvard Psychedelic Project to a head. Soon after the drama, Weil attended Harvard Medical School and conducted intensive studies of the physiological and psychological effects of marijuana use among college students—research that was published in leading journals like *Science*, *Nature*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*. After moving to San Francisco and acculturating to the hippie scene, he published *The Natural Mind: A New Way of Looking at Drugs and the Higher Consciousness* (1971), promoting what he considered to be the positive effects of psychedelics and hallucinogens. He traveled to Ecuador and Colombia in the early 1970s to learn about ethnobotanical practices among indigenous peoples. When he returned to the United States he became a leading spokesperson for the “alternative medicine” movement. Lattin calls Weil the “healer.”

Smith consulted on several of the Leary-Alpert projects, including the Good Friday experiment of 1962 (during which he was dosed—again—with psilocybin) but made a public break with his former colleagues a few years later. Leary’s incessant promotion of psychedelics, Smith concluded, had devolved from serious academic study or spiritual seeking into reckless hedonism. Smith pressed more deeply into his scholarship, publishing fifteen more books on world religions and spirituality. To Lattin, Smith was the “teacher.”

This book is marred by some obvious shortcomings, beginning with the plain fact that there never was anything called the “Harvard Psychedelic Club.”

Leary's and Alpert's short-lived Harvard Psychedelic Project had been set up as an interdisciplinary academic research project, borrowing an organizational form that was, by that time, thoroughly typical across the social sciences in the United States.<sup>9</sup> There was no "club": no secret handshakes, no funny hats, no embroidered jerseys. One of the main protagonists of the book (Weil) was never admitted into the project, while another (Smith) became one of the project's most outspoken critics. If that constitutes a "club"—four individuals, two of whom spent most of their time criticizing the others—one can only imagine what the clubhouse meetings would have been like.

Far more serious, the entire book can be read as a 200-page exercise in the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy. (It seems that Lattin has forgotten his Latin.) Just because individuals A, B, and C took actions X, Y, and Z, after which changes 1, 2, and 3 occurred, hardly means that A, B, and C caused 1, 2, and 3. Put another way, Lattin never connects his protagonists with any of the wider cultural shifts he is so eager to attribute to them. Timothy Leary didn't cause "the Sixties"; neither Richard Alpert nor Huston Smith single-handedly changed Americans' religious sensibilities—at least not without some serious help from far grander, sweeping changes in the spheres of politics, the economy, and large-scale institutions.

To Lattin's narrow focus on individuals, one might counter with the Bogart Maxim of History: "It doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world."<sup>10</sup> The people at the heart of this book were certainly colorful figures, often held up at the time as trendsetters (either for esteem or ridicule). But to make an argument about top-to-bottom cultural change stick, one must rely on more than anecdote and hearsay. One must engage with scales of activity and types of factors that span far beyond any tiny collection of individuals. The Vietnam War and the roiling protests it inspired are mentioned a scant four times. Economic turmoil and the onset of "stagflation" escape unscathed by any mention at all, as does the fracturing of campus dissent into New Left and New Age.<sup>11</sup> Surely changing

9. Hunter Crowther-Heyck, "Patrons of the Revolution: Ideals and Institutions in Postwar Behavioral Science," *Isis* 97 (2006): 420–46; Jamie Cohen-Cole, "Instituting the Science of Mind: Intellectual Economics and Disciplinary Exchange at Harvard's Center for Cognitive Studies," *British Journal for the History of Science* 40 (2007): 567–97.

10. Howard Koch, *Casablanca: Script and Legend* (New York: Overlook, 1992), 219.

11. See esp. recent synthetic works including David Farber and Beth Bailey, eds., *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, eds., *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture in the 1960s and '70s*

immigration laws (such as the 1965 revision of the U.S. Immigration Act, which loosened tight quotas on immigration from Asia) and sweeping demographic shifts (baby boom, anyone?) were at least as significant in stimulating young Americans' interest in Eastern spirituality as Ram Dass's personal journey and bookselling prowess.<sup>12</sup>

As with explanans, so with explanandum. Not only is the causal agency implied in Lattin's account dubious; so, too, are the grand cultural changes that the four protagonists supposedly caused. In place of richly sourced renderings of the halting, stilted transitions in American life during the postwar decades, Lattin offers *Zeitgeistische* caricatures. As Lattin sees it, the 1950s were exclusively about "unquestioning conformity," while the 1960s unleashed "emphatic individualism [and] a nonconformist mentality." Using only the broadest of brushstrokes, Lattin gestures toward "the social journey from *Death of a Salesman* to *Easy Rider*" (26; see also 175, 220–21). Such threadbare characterizations might have worked once, but they hardly suffice in the face of twenty years of detailed scholarship on American political and cultural history of that period.

Despite these rather obvious shortcomings, there is much to admire in the book. Lattin is a gifted writer, and he has done considerable homework. He has succeeded in a most impressive feat: rescuing these four individuals from decades of hardened mythologizing. He has painted believable, (all too) human portraits of these iconic figures. Lattin breathes life into these people as conflicted, passionate, and driven, and he helps to frame the famous clowning and manic public outbursts in a larger portrait of their personal ambitions and struggles.

Lattin is at his best when untangling the messy story of how Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert left Harvard. The "Harvard drug scandal" made national headlines at the time, far beyond the *Harvard Crimson*. Based on new interviews and good sleuthing, Lattin has pieced together the backstory behind the larger-than-life events. In the end, the provocative (though hardly unique) Harvard project was brought down thanks to hurt feelings, petty jealousies,

---

(New York: Routledge, 2002); and Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

12. On the interplay between changing immigration laws and the burgeoning countercultural interest in Eastern spirituality within the United States, see J. Gordon Melton, "New Thought and the New Age," in *Perspectives on the New Age*, ed. James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 15–29, on 20; and Richard Kyle, *The New Age Movement in American Culture* (New York: University Press of America, 1995), 157.



and small-scale betrayals—those constants of the human condition. Neither the putative power of psychedelics nor competing views on the nature of human consciousness played much role at all.

Lattin also succeeds in reminding readers about the very real hopes of these individuals and untold others at the time: perhaps we really *were* on the precipice of a revolution in understanding human consciousness, with all the intellectual and spiritual dividends such knowledge might entail. Psychotropics like LSD had long fascinated academic researchers at prestigious universities and their backers at the Central Intelligence Agency and other outposts of the military-industrial complex, as well as the long-haired hippies commonly associated with the drug-addled counterculture. (The two groups were hardly orthogonal, as several recent studies have emphasized.)<sup>13</sup> Lattin doesn't spend much effort giving a wider view of the state of research at the time—for that historians are better served by other work—but by restoring psychologists like Leary and Alpert to some semblance of three-dimensional researchers rather than two-dimensional placards for some diffuse "movement," Lattin does remind readers that the circus antics for which certain individuals are remembered came late in the day.<sup>14</sup>

When one looks beyond Lattin's main protagonists to the larger question of science and counterculture, however, the book tends to disappoint. The bad old caricature, which is in danger of hardening into the historiographical conventional wisdom, is that the American counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s sprang from a deep-seated distrust of science and technology. Theodore Roszak planted the idea in his *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969), arguing that the burgeoning youth movement coalesced not just in revolt against technocracy, but against the very notion of modern science itself. Several religious and cultural historians, who have begun to work on the United States during the 1970s, have largely followed Roszak's line.<sup>15</sup> Lattin accepts the

13. See esp. Jon Ronson, *The Men Who Stare at Goats* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004); D. Graham Burnett, "Games of Chance," *Cabinet* 34 (2009): 59–65; D. Graham Burnett, "A Mind in the Water," *Orion* 29 (2010): 48–51; and Kaiser, *Hippies Saved Physics* (ref. 3).

14. Cf. John Marks, *The Search for the "Manchurian Candidate": The CIA and Mind Control* (New York: Times Books, 1979); Lee and Shlain, *Acid Dreams* (ref. 1); Novak, "LSD before Leary" (ref. 5); Wasserman, *Tuning In* (ref. 7); and Rebecca Lemov, *World as Laboratory: Experiments with Mice, Mazes, and Men* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005).

15. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1969), 7–8, 50, 215. See also Kyle, *New Age Movement* (ref. 12), chaps. 6–7; Carroll, *Seemed Like Nothing Happened* (ref. 3), 236–238; and Schulman, *The Seventies* (ref. 3), 96–101.

commonsense dichotomy—counterculture versus science—as well. He writes that after their “consciousness-expanding encounters” with psychedelic drugs, each of his four main characters “turned from intellect to intuition, from mechanistic thinking to mysticism, from the scholarly to the spiritual, from the scientific to the shamanic” (3).

Jump-started by Fred Turner’s fascinating book on Stewart Brand and the countercultural roots of personal computing, however, a growing literature by historians of science and technology has challenged the counterculture-as-antisience truism. Examples range from the resurgent environmental movement, to the nascent biotechnology field, to cybernetics, theoretical physics, and beyond.<sup>16</sup> We now know that many of the most important figures of the counterculture and New Age movements were enamored of modern science and technology. They actively sought out the latest advances in quantum mechanics, chaos theory, and cybernetics, paying handsomely to encourage the work and learn of it firsthand. Their interests tended toward the small-scale, “appropriate technology” variety rather than the hulking projects of Sputnik-era gigantism.<sup>17</sup> When Leary solicited essays from “tuned in” physicists on quantum entanglement and nonlocality in 1976, for example—while sitting in a California jail on drug charges—he was seeking the large-scale worldviews of modern science, not the room-sized mainframes of Cold War technoscience; but his tastes can hardly be dismissed as “anti-scientific” for all that.<sup>18</sup> The long-haired free-thinkers who bought the makings for Buckminster Fuller–inspired geodesic domes from Brand’s *Whole Earth Catalog*, or who eagerly snatched up copies of popular books about cybernetics and the brain by

16. Turner, *Counterculture to Cyberculture* (ref. 3). See also Timothy Moy, “Culture, Technology, and the Cult of Tech in the 1970s,” in Bailey and Farber, *America in the Seventies* (ref. 3), 208–27; John Markoff, *What the Dormouse Said: How the Sixties Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer Industry* (New York: Penguin, 2005); Vettel, *Biotech* (ref. 3); Kirk, *Counterculture Green* (ref. 3); Jeffrey Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Lambert Williams and William Thomas, “The Epistemologies of Non-Forecasting Simulations, Part II: Climate, Chaos, Computing Style, and the Contextual Plasticity of Error,” *Science in Context* 22 (2009): 271–310; Burnett, “Games of Chance” (ref. 13); Burnett, “Mind in the Water” (ref. 13); Pickering, *Cybernetic Brain* (ref. 3); and Kaiser, *Hippies Saved Physics* (ref. 3).

17. On Cold War gigantism in science and technology, see the recent review essay by Cyrus Mody, “How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, the Nuclear Reactor, the Computer, Ham Radio, and Recombinant DNA,” *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 38, no. 3 (2008): 451–61.

18. Timothy Leary, ed., *Communication with Higher Intelligence*, published as a special issue of *Spit in the Ocean* 3 (1977): 8–141; cf. Kaiser, *Hippies Saved Physics* (ref. 3).

Grey Walter, Ross Ashby, and Stafford Beer, were hardly seeking the “subversion of the scientific world view,” as Roszak would have it, nor fleeing from modern science “as if from a place inhabited by plague.”<sup>19</sup>

The French theorists taught us long ago that “the author is dead.”<sup>20</sup> Setting aside the Ouija boards, incense, and Tarot cards, we may read Lattin’s book with profit, albeit against the intended grain. Like the best of the recent books on science, technology, and counterculture, *The Harvard Psychedelic Club* reminds us of some of the ideas (about human consciousness) and instruments (such as laboratory-synthesized psychedelics) behind the hue and cry of the inchoate youth movement. For that, and for restoring several fascinating individuals to a basic, believable humanity, Lattin’s book is one groovy read.

19. Roszak, *Making of a Counter Culture* (ref. 15), quotes on 50, 215; cf. Turner, *Counterculture to Cyberculture* (ref. 3); Kirk, *Counterculture Green* (ref. 3); and Pickering, *Cybernetic Brain* (ref. 3).

20. Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142–48; Barthes’s essay originally appeared in 1967.