One of the great myths perpetrated by activists in the American student movement of the 1960s was their historical uniqueness. It was central to the New Left's view of itself that it had burst on the scene as if from nowhere and that the "Old" Left, connecting back to the labor movement and political activism of the 1930s, had begun to evaporate after the Second World War and had largely disappeared by the 1950s. The wider social movements of the 1960s and beyond generally followed this ahistorical tack, stressing their break with the past and glorifying their spontaneity and "newness." As a result, the multifarious impacts of the new social movements on American society have tended to be downplayed by later analysts, and the sixties have all too often been depicted as a brief and somewhat strange historical parenthesis.

For the generation of Americans who grew up in the 1950s, a sense of being at the end of history seemed confirmed by personal experience. For the two of us, living in Brooklyn and suburban New Jersey, the 1950s were a quiet time, when baseball and basketball determined the seasons of our lives. The media focus on family values and patriotism far overshadowed the McCarthy hearings and the early stirrings of the civil rights movement. Even with the weekly civil defense drills at school, the world of politics seemed far away. For us, as for so many of our contemporaries, the links to the collective dreams of the 1930s had been effectively broken.

This book, then, is at once a voyage of self-discovery and an attempt to identify some of the intellectual roots of our generation. Our
topic is the transformation of critical public discourse, what we call the critical process, in those quiescent cold war years. We do this through recounting the lives and works of fifteen persons who in the 1950s reinvented traditions of partisanship in American intellectual life. Our choice of individuals reflects the personal nature of this book. In most cases, the people we have chosen have been influential in our own personal development. There are many others we could have included—Paul Goodman, Pete Seeger, Dwight Macdonald, Irving Howe, Kenneth Boulding, Barry Commoner, Paul Sweezy, Lewis Coser, Leonard Bernstein, Ella Baker, Maya Angelou, and even Billie Holiday were all considered—and perhaps we will return to some of them on a later occasion. At this point, we merely want to stress that our book does not pretend to be comprehensive. Through the selective portrayal of individuals, we have sought to highlight a historical process. We do not claim that those individuals presented here were the only "few brave men and women" (Horkheimer) who stood up against the flowing tide, against the grain. They were not an intellectual elite who, in traditional aristocratic fashion, sought to distinguish themselves from their peers and the subservient masses. Rather, by describing the activities of these fifteen people, we want to remember the intellectual connections between radical generations and to begin to restore a sense of history—a usable past—for our own generation.

*Seeds of the Sixties* has been a very personal book to write. It began as part of a larger reflection on the significance of social movements in processes of social transformation, which, in two earlier books, *The Making of the New Environmental Consciousness* (1990) and *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach* (1991), we approached in more detached sociological fashion. We directed our arguments primarily to our fellow social scientists, who until recently have tended to ignore the role of social movements in broader patterns of development. What became increasingly clear as our thinking progressed, however, was how difficult it was to separate our own engagement in the social movements we were discussing from the academic issues involved. From different routes we had both been active in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s—the student movement and its various offshoots in the United States and Europe—and we wanted to find a way to bring that experience directly into our analysis. This, in turn, in-
spurred a search for the roots of our own partisan stance and a reflection on our intellectual heritage. The book you are about to read is the result.

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