

**NEW JOURNALISM
AS A WINDOW ONTO THE 1960s
COUNTERCULTURE**

UNIVERSITY OF BIAŁYSTOK, FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY

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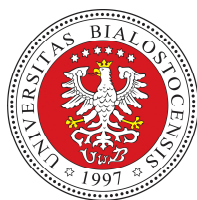
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Introduction

The sixties in the United States was a time of enormous cultural and social changes, sexual revolution, students' protests, anti-war demonstrations and assassinations. One could say 'America' in general was confused, unable to embrace the chaos and overwhelming changes of the period. During this time a new group of writers appeared. Coined the New Journalists¹ they tried to make sense of an increasingly chaotic American culture and impose some order on the mayhem of the time, interpreting the changing social norms of the early sixties to mid-seventies using seemingly liberated styles. They presented facts, commentaries and analyses of a complicated American social reality in non-fictional accounts written for the press, at the same time providing readers with entertainment achieved by means of novels or short stories. The New Journalists described a fast-developing popular culture and became the main chroniclers of the counterculture and hippie revolution.

¹ This category of writing is not well-defined and the many terms are used to describe it: art-journalism, literary nonfiction, factual fiction, literary journalism. However, the New Journalists or the New Journalism are the most widely used terms.

My study is an attempt to facilitate an understanding of the American counterculture² of the 1960s and to re-examine its social and cultural dimensions by means of works created by the New Journalists, who combined techniques borrowed from fiction with the detailed observation of journalism. Their work is used as a window through which the cultural milieu of the counterculture is captured. New Journalists' texts were not strictly literary, they also connected with the reflections of social scientists and historians. Not only does the analysis of the texts allow for the characterization of the counterculture but it also permits us to see the situation of the time in a more visible and direct perspective. Suffice it to say that in contrast to the counterculture press, New Journalism was not lacking in quality, was not self-celebratory and did not angle the context of its works toward the tastes and preferences of a sympathetic audience. New Journalism spoke for an era, illuminated ethical dilemmas, conveyed major concerns of the counterculture and affirmed a moral position of society. Its vivid, subjective, lively and engaging prose may in fact prove to be of greater force in presenting the counterculture, more so than any official history.

Counterculture criticism focuses its attention largely on strictly historical and sociological measurements of the movement while often ignoring equally important literary

² Terms such as cultural revolution, the hippie movement and the psychedelic movement will be used interchangeably in this book. The term 'counterculture' is used in this form, but some of the cited authors use it differently, e.g. counter culture.

manifestations of the period. In view of the postulates of new historicism, the study of counterculture would seem to be limited without the perspective of literary works which are artifacts of those times. New historicists tend to read literary texts as material products and components of specific historical conditions. By refusing to make the distinction between literature and history and claiming that they are inseparable, they open up a dialog between them. These critics postulate that creative texts mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations and argue that the literature of the period expresses the spirit of the age. For them, literature is an active part of a particular historical moment (Brannigan 1998: 1-5). This stand is the inspiration for the research undertaken in this book. Moreover, different scholars underline the importance of literary texts in cultural studies, treating literature as a medium of memory, an external, material memory which saves the content from oblivion (cf. Assmann 2012).

When scholars begin to analyse the counterculture, a broad spectrum is manifested, making it important to bear in mind that counterculture did not only consist of the non-violent hippie movement. There were civil rights activists, politically oriented rebels who fought against the Vietnam War, the Black Panther Party³ and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)⁴ or the Weather Underground⁵.

³ An African-American revolutionary leftist organization.

⁴ A student activist movement, a representation of the New Left.

⁵ A radical left organization whose aim was to create a revolutionary party and overthrow the government.

This list is not exhaustive and yet it shows counterculture's different facets. This book, however, will focus only on the hippies and psychedelic movement, which received the New Journalists' broad interest.

Following an introduction, this book is divided into two parts. The first part is more sociologically and historically focused. In order to provide some context for the analysis, the first chapter briefly sketches the historical background and traces the first signs of rebellion among the 1940s' hipsters and The Beat Generation before finally concentrating on the counterculture of the sixties. The aim of this part of the study is to determine the precedents of the cultural revolution, the general social mood, the historical setting and the most important events of the era. The phenomenon of the counterculture will be analyzed in this study through the voices of the key New Journalists: Tom Wolfe, Hunter Thompson, Joan Didion, and Richard Goldstein. Additionally, selected texts of Norman Mailer, Nicholas Von Hoffman and Sara Davidson shall be discussed. The second chapter is devoted to the history of New Journalism, its major representatives, main characteristics such as scene-by-scene construction, extended dialogs, interior monologues, and use of the subjective voice; the impact it had on the form of presenting the news in the decade of the 1960s and its offshoot form called gonzo journalism, which was Hunter Thompson's subjective and drug-fueled style of writing based on William Faulkner's idea that the best fiction is far more true than any kind of journalism. The third chapter describes the profiles of Tom

Wolfe, Hunter Thompson, Richard Goldstein and Joan Didion and it traces the origins of the texts that are under discussion in the second part of this book.

The second part of the study attempts to create an informed view of the counterculture based on Tom Wolfe's novel *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Hunter Thompson's novel *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, his three articles: "Why Boys Will Be Girls", "The Hippies", "The Hashbury Is the Capital of the Hippies", Joan Didion's essay "Slouching Towards Bethlehem", Richard Goldstein's articles: "The Psychedelic Psell", "Catcher in The Haight", "San Francisco Bray" and "Love: A Groovy Idea While He Lasted". Other sources, which belong to the New Journalism school of writing will be used as supplementary material such as Hunter S. Thompson's *Hell's Angels*, Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*, Tom Wolfe's article "The Me Decade and the Third Great Awakening", Nicholas Von Hoffman's *We Are the People Our Parents Warned Us Against* and Sara Davidson's *Loose Change*. The content of the works examined here reflects and explores some of the more notable facets of hippie philosophy, culture, and lifestyle. Promiscuity, the use of drugs, communes, outrageous clothes and rock music are classic examples of the pivotal elements of the hippie rebellion. The second part consists of two chapters. Chapter One is divided into six subchapters. The first, analyzing Tom Wolfe's novel *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, discusses the beginnings of 1960s psychedelia and the role of LSD, it chronicles the formation of Ken Kesey's commune called Merry Pranksters

and articulates their importance in developing counterculture attitudes on drug use. The second subchapter captures the essential aspects of the Merry Pranksters' story, examines the countercultural drug use, Ken Kesey's acid tests, which can be described as a series of parties centered entirely on experimentation with LSD, also known as 'acid'. The second subchapter also discusses the importance of traveling, based on Merry Pranksters' cross-country psychedelic journey on a bus called *Furthur*. The third subchapter articulates the phenomenon of community life that constituted an important aspect of the hippie revolution, as it gave hippies an alternative to 'the establishment' and the possibility of abandoning it. The fourth subchapter examines hippie fashion as another tool of rebellion in that the new styles and colors distinguished the love generation from that of the conservative rules of a conformist society. The fifth subchapter analyses the sexual liberation of hippies, their open attitudes towards nakedness, marriage, relationships and premarital sex. The last subchapter discusses the countercultural music and festivals as a unique medium for cultural communication. Anti-establishment lyrics with drug connotations challenged both civil and religious authority and gave voice to their movement. Chapter Two focuses on the commentary regarding the nature of the United States at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s when the ideals of the sixties' counterculture went into decline due to problems with the commercialization of the movement and media exploitation, anarchy, drug dependence, teenage pregnancy,

venereal diseases and unsanitary living conditions. The second part of this book is an attempt to facilitate an understanding of the decline of the hippie era. Each subchapter offers conclusions about the positive and negative aspects of the hippie movement and its legacy.

The main criterion for the selection of texts under analysis was the countercultural content of the works and their authors' affiliation with New Journalism. It is beyond doubt that the texts which were created by the New Journalists are not only aesthetic artifacts, but also a rich source of knowledge about the counterculture and constitute an important part of the history of the United States.

PART I

1. Historical background

The history of the world is the history not of individuals, but of groups.

(Du Bois in Watson 1998: xi)

1.1. The meaning of the term counterculture

The term counterculture became widely used in the 1960s but it was first used in 1951 by Talcott Parsons, who discussed ideologies of subcultures in his book *The Social System* (Parsons 1991: 350). In 1960 J. M. Yinger⁶ introduced the term *contraculture* to explain a situation of conflict of values of a particular group of people in relation to a surrounding dominant culture (Yinger 1960: 625-635). This newly coined word changed in the process of entering common use and has been accepted into mainstream language as counterculture, which became a term attributed to Theodore Roszak⁷ for whom the counterculture meant:

⁶ John M. Yinger (1916-2011) was an American sociologist.

⁷ Theodore Roszak (1933-2011) is best known for *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1968), which chronicled and gave explanation to the European and North American counterculture of the 1960s.

... a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of barbaric intrusion. (Roszak 1995: 42)

By the end of the 1960s the fight over values, morality and the fundamental nature of American life inflamed the country, and one of the forms it took was the counterculture, which was everywhere, hard to define and thus difficult to stop. What characterized this kind of movement was that its aims and premises were boundless. Some people were even unable to name it and would say in the words of Jerry Hopkins that something was happening, something “weird and wooly and scary and alive” (Hopkins 1968: 11), which wanted to offer the country “its last chance for salvation” (Hopkins 1968: 11). The people who were a part of this movement were called hippies, flower children, peaceniks, heads or freaks. When they talked about their generation, words like love, revolution and psychedelic preceded it. Richard Neville, a co-editor of a countercultural magazine *Oz*, offered a one-word description and called it a ‘youth-quake’. This youth-quake was a “profound and reflective alienation of the spirit from a system cancerous with racism, exploitation and its own aggressive expansion” (Horowitz, Lerner and Pyes 1972: 159). The counterculture, as it was mainly called, was a way of life, a free, cooperative, drug-consuming counter-community. To some people it was a revolution, whose weapons were music, love and drugs

(Cohn in Kimball 2000: 173). Its members were refugees from the official anti-war and students movements because they had found them too stifling, resembling the society they were trying to transform. Because of the overwhelming complexity of the countercultural movement, hippies are often separated from other groups; however, the divisions may seem arbitrary as each group blended and mixed with others.

Some hippies did not support the civil rights movement because, they claimed, black people were fighting for what they rejected. Others supported the anti-war movement, participated in rallies and sometimes mingled at demonstrations with the New Left and antiwar activists. That may be the reason why the media and the public had difficulty distinguishing between political activists and radical groups and leaderless and unorganized counterculture participants who wanted to ridicule the Establishment (McWilliams 2000: 66). However, the counterculture should not be identified too closely with The New Left. Many within the hippie community were apolitical and embraced no ideology, having no aspirations to change laws or policies (Gair 2007: 8). Additionally, hippies were initially criticized by the members of The New Left due to their lack of stability and intellectual weakness (McWilliams 2000: 14).

It soon became obvious that few hippies cared at all for the difference between political left and right, much less between the New Left and the Old Left. "Flower

power” [...] was nonpolitical. And the New Left quickly responded with charges that hippies were “intellectually flabby”, that they lacked “energy” and “stability”, that they were actually “nihilists” whose concept of love was “so generalized and impersonal as to be meaningless”. (Thompson 1968: online)

Counterculture was not a social struggle for specific, limited objectives, but a phenomenon of unique importance, different in kind from all other struggles known to history, a cataclysm from which the world was to emerge completely transformed and free. The ‘members’ of the counterculture shared no particular goals or ideas. They lacked programs and common objectives, except for the desire to seek freedom through sex, drugs and music (Jankowski 2003: 73, 120, 188).

The young generation associated with counterculture was not a monolithic entity composed predominantly of the young who used LSD and wore flowers in their hair. Hippies’ lifestyle, their outrageous behavior and clothes made them media favorites. Mass media focused on a minority, and although real counterculture types were relatively few in number, a stereotypical notion was created that a small number of the younger generation represented the majority (McWilliams 2000: 12,87). Lewis Yablonsky estimated that in 1968 there were about 200,000 hippie drop-outs in the United States and another 200,000 part-time and weekend hippies (Yablonsky 2000: 37).

The counterculture constituted a part of a very busy decade called 'the sixties', which was so amorphous and fluid that determining its start and end is almost as impossible as defining exactly what constituted the counterculture. The events that shaped this human experience are not so easily demarcated, thus it is a very difficult task to mark the beginning of the counterculture and state the exact time of the emergence of hippies. However, dates such as January 1966 Trips Festival, or the Human Be-In are paradoxically proposed as the beginning of the 1960s. A columnist Jonathan Yardley claimed the sixties began around 1965 and ended a decade later (Morgan 2010: 14). Some scholars focus almost entirely on the decade of the 1960s. Some, like Abe Peck, define the beginning of the decade by the Greensboro sit-in, when in February 1960 four black students from North Carolina college insisted on being served at a segregated lunch counter (Peck 1985: 19). The exact dates are unimportant here. What appears important is not to construct a chronology but more so to look at the events and try to understand them. What is of interest in this book is the stages of emergence and consecutive phases of the counterculture. Without the pioneers to point the way, the hippies might never have emerged to fascinate and outrage America.

1.2. The roots of dissent and the first sign of rebellion – Hipsters and the Beat Generation

Our search for the rebels of the generation led us to the hipster. [...] his main goal is to keep out of a society which, he thinks, is trying to make everyone over its own image. He takes marijuana because it supplies him with experiences that can't be shared with 'squares'. (Bird in Mailer 1961:282)

Although the word hipster was first used in 1951 or 1952, the history of hipsters dates back to 1930s black folk who were contemptuous of the white world that continuously excluded them. Vital to the hipster experience was jazz and marijuana which helped them exist in the hostile surroundings and described the character of their existence (Matusow 1984: 280).

By the mid 1940s, the term hipster ceased to be restricted to blacks only and it found an imitator in the generation of young white people who identified with “the Negro”, who lived on the margins of the society, suffering injustice and cruelty. In New York and other big cities, disaffiliated young whites found the hipster so expressive of their own alienation that they adopted it as their own. They absorbed the lesson of disillusionment, they shared disbelief in the words of men who had too much money and power. They also “envied the Negro his spontaneity, his soul, his cool” (Matusow 1984: 285). This new group created a little

world of their own with their own viewpoint, code of behavior, and argot. Norman Mailer, who saw the hipsters as the only significant new group of rebels in America created 'white Negro' as a term to describe them. Norman Mailer

[...] celebrated the hipster as the subterranean risk taker, who in an age when socialism was passé but cultural revolts were rumbling, might play the same role that Marx once credited to the proletariat – the spark of the revolution. And he waxed lyrically on modern jazz as the language of this revolt [...]. (Kaplan 2009: 18)

Almost a decade later came Jack Kerouac's success with *On the Road* and the term Beat Generation was adopted by the mass media, and the period of the 1950s was called the beatnik era (Mailer 1961: 281). It could be argued that the beatniks were hipsters, merely coming a decade later. Jack Kerouac's words prove that they shared a lot: "[...] they kept talking about the same things I liked, long outlines of personal experience and vision, nightlong confessions full of hope that became illicit and repressed [...]" (Matusow 1984: 284). Although there were both differences (social background) and similarities (marijuana, jazz, lack of money) between them, they constituted a phase of the rebellion that climaxed in the 1960s.

Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Gary Snyder, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and other writers and "sources" of inspiration like Neal Cassady were outlaws, rebels, outsiders, spiritual seekers, psychedelic

drug users. They formed a movement which emerged during the 1950s and early 1960s. The Beat Generation, as they were called, can be seen as the first modern subculture and the first fully American literary movement since the Transcendentalists. The original circle met at Columbia University and soon became good friends. They lived on the fringes of the university as students or dropouts, rebelled against the official culture, and were engaged in resistance to mass consumption and mass acquiescence. In reaction, they created their literature from raw experience. They were introduced by Herbert Huncke to the hipster underground and they absorbed its jive, jazz, drugs and unconventional sexual habits. Although the Beat movement originally emerged in New York, it flourished around Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore in North Beach in San Francisco (Matusow 1984: 284). The writers of the Beat Generation were almost exclusively white males, but they nevertheless represented an impressive variety of experiences and accomplishments. They were generally literate and well-read. Calling this relatively small group of struggling writers, students and drug addicts a "generation" was to make the claim that they were representative and important (Tytell 1976: 3).

The Beats lived in the era when the United States was the most powerful nation on earth. World War II ended the Great Depression and unleashed a prosperous postwar era. Unemployment stabilized at a uniquely low level and most Americans reveled in a new economic privilege with all segments of the population improving their position. New

American factories were being built, thereby shrinking unemployment to relatively negligible proportions. The flush of prosperity translated into a baby boom which was the extension of the economic boom. Americans were acquiring consumer goods at an unprecedented pace (Gitlin 1993: 13). The period has been called the “fabulous fifties”, a golden age of simplicity and innocence – the days of bobby sox and soda fountains, of hot rods and Elvis Presley. Despite the Cold War, there were no real wars, no riots, no protests. The breadwinners were scourged by the memories of the Depression and were aware of how hard they had worked to afford all the goods now within their reach, so they felt gratitude and relief and expected their children to feel the same. However, for many young people the decade was hardly a time of enthusiasm and contentment. For teenagers and young adults there was an enforcement of conformity, a transparency of sexual morals and a crisis of spirit. The adult world was phony and hypocritical (Inciardi 1987: 401). And as Gary Snyder wrote in *Buddhist Anarchism*, the Beats believed that:

[m]odern America has become economically dependent on a fantastic system of stimulation of greed which cannot be fulfilled, sexual desire which cannot be satiated, and hatred which has no outlet except against oneself or the persons one is supposed to love. The conditions of the cold war have turned all modern societies, Soviet included, into hopeless brainstainers, creating populations of ‘preta’ – hungry ghosts – with giant appetites and throats no bigger than needles. The

soil and forests, and all animal life are being wrecked to feed these cancerous mechanisms. (Snyder in Roszak 1986: 13)

The above mentioned cancerous mechanism was the society of the Beat Generation, the society of oppression they were angry with and wanted to disengage from. The emotions that accompanied their desires to seek freedom and express themselves creatively are encapsulated in the word *beat*.

There are many theories about the creation of the term *beat*. Apparently, Herbert Huncke borrowed it from the drug world, where it meant robbed or cheated, and it was first used by Jack Kerouac, who is regarded as the king of the Beats (Watson 1998: 3). The word expressed both exhaustion and beatification in the writers who were tired of a conventional, crass and corrupt society, and were disgusted by it. Beat writers presented a lack of interest in industrial and technological progress, a lack of confidence in the Church or political parties. They were deeply concerned with non-puritan and non-bourgeois responses to the family, to the body, to love and to friendship. They were opposed to the characteristic American evaluation of life by property and formal educational achievements. The Beat movement was a crystallization of a sweeping discontent with American “virtues” of progress and power. For them, the 1950s was a suffocating age, when economic affluence brought mental barrenness, when people had been mercilessly deprived of social freedom, when the respect for

individuality had been denied. The economic boom and technical development was tantamount to the decline of spiritual values and mechanization of society and domination of man and his environment (Durczak 2003: 53-65).

The Beats saw themselves as outcasts, exiles within a hostile culture given to the censorship of artists and filmmakers and the regimentation of the average man. They could still nostalgically recall the time when one could bargain for an article purchased in a general store, when one bought a plot of land rather than paper shares in huge corporations, when listening to the radio and using air travel represented occasions for tremendous excitement.

The Beats lived in the times of the Cold War insecurity and they reacted to those insecurities that had quelled the spirit of a generation. They were profoundly alienated from dominant American values. Each of their works represented a major departure in literary form, as well as a courageous response to the dominating passivity of the age. Their books were seen as a confirmation that there were too many things wrong within the American society. What did the Beats rebel against? The answer can be found in Ginsberg's poem *Howl*:

Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! [...] Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul is electricity and banks. (Ginsberg 1984: 128)

The above quotation suggests that the Beats rebelled against a materialistic society, social sanctions and the law.

They also withdrew from conventional life by rejecting materialism, competition, monogamy, permanent job, good behavior, and eventually, in opposition to the affluence of the fifties, chose voluntary poverty. Feeling cramped by the postwar cornucopia, they wanted to escape, to travel and find spiritual bedrock, as confirmed by Todd Gitlin:

They aimed to refute the ranch house and the barbecue pit with plain apartments and strewn mattresses. They unplugged from the standard circuits of family, job, and good behavior in order to overthrow sexual taboos, to commit uncivil disobedience against a national dress code which required trimmed minds to match trimmed lawns. (Gitlin 1993: 46)

The Beats were regarded as madmen and they suffered the consequences – public ridicule, censorship, even imprisonment. In the beginning, the media, for a short period of time, created a stereotype of a beatnik, who was perceived as an aggressive hooligan, a dangerous rebel without a cause. Soon, the image of the member of Beat Generation was cast as the bearded existentialist, who wore black turtlenecks, and who was more interested in listening to jazz and smoking marijuana than engaging in activities that could be seen as a threat to social order.

The older generation looked at the Beats as obscene misfits, dirty delinquents, permanently smoking marijuana, influenced by Zen and driving recklessly round the United States, and spending most of their time writing obscene poetry, which was incomprehensible to many people since it

had no respect for convention or syntax, was spontaneous, and lacking control (Leech 1973: 29-31). And even if mainstream society did not refuse to listen to them, those who adhered to societal norms still would not understand the passage from Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*:

At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Welton in the Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night. I wish I were a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, anything but what I so drearily was, a 'white man' disillusioned. (Kerouac 1991: 180)

The Beats were in exile from mainstream society and in constant search for identity and salvation. The magic of the open road and being on the constant move helped them in searching for the truth. The car, being their central symbol, had a major impact on their lifestyle. Meditation, marijuana, peyote, mescaline, barbiturates were the vehicles of their spiritual experiments and ecstasies. The Beats induced their madness with drugs, with criminal excess, and the pursuits of ecstasy, which they regarded as a proper perspective from which to see. In addition to alcohol which was common in American life, they were also interested in marijuana, benzedrine, and opiates such as morphine. Drugs for them were a whole way of life where they could create their own set of rules, it was the main thing that made them different from the rest of the world. Their intensive life, full of drugs,

incentives and excitement gradually separated them from a hypocritical society and created an alternative to the safe, materialistic and monotonous life of the fifties (Durczak 2003: 53-65).

Granted the fact that Jack Kerouac was a frequent user of mind-altering substances, he is a good example of the influence drugs had on writing. He first took amphetamine while he was at Columbia University. From 1945 onward, he began experimenting with Benzedrine inhalers, treated them as tools for writing and stayed up for days at a time, wandering around the city, taking notes for his first novel and saying, “Benny has made me see a lot”:

[He] felt he was blasting so high that he was experiencing real insights and facing real fears. With Benzedrine he felt he was embarking on a journey of self-discovery, climbing up from one level to the next, following his insights...Benzedrine intensified his awareness and made him feel more clever. (Plant 2001: 120)

Even thrombophlebitis in his leg, caused by excessive drinking and amphetamine use, did not discourage him from his later experiments. *On the Road* has been described as one of the first drug novels in American literature. Kerouac’s characters use addictive substances freely, especially alcohol and marijuana, but the drug that vibrates throughout the book is amphetamine, especially visible in the choice of vocabulary and style. “Speed” and “rush” are always present:

...the only people for me are the mad ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, and to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars... (Kerouac 1991: 8)

Although Kerouac is known particularly as a drinker and amphetamine user, several of his books were written with the assistance of marijuana. According to Allen Ginsberg, Kerouac wrote *Mexico City Blues* by drinking coffee, smoking joints, and writing down whatever came into his head. Many of the Beats used other psychedelic drugs, such as LSD or hallucinogenic plants: peyote, yage⁸. William Burroughs tried yage in the Putumayo region of Colombia, and in Peru, where after sampling the drug he produced passages which later became part of *Naked Lunch*. Allen Ginsberg followed in Burroughs's footsteps and even obtained an official license from the Peruvian government to bring a gallon of yage to New York, which he shared with Kerouac and Peter Orlovsky, who was his lover at that time. But there was always strong intellectual and artistic motivation behind their pursuit of drugs. Ginsberg highlighted that it was not a party drug scene, "it was aesthetic, more of a curiosity as to the nature, the texture, of conscious itself" (Torgoff 2005: 17-67). His interest in

⁸ Yage is a brew made out of the *Banisteriopsis caapi* (Ayahuasca) vine and other ingredients; it is used as a spiritual medicine in ceremonies among the indigenous people of the Amazon basin.

drugs was at the beginning an interest in enhancing his creativity, later he saw drugs as political agents capable of altering mass consciousness. However, he was against Kerouac's amphetamine use, believing that it had a destructive effect on his writing and that his spontaneous prose was influenced by chemicals.

Ginsberg always identified the experience of marijuana smoking as "educational" in his life, the members of the Beat Generation saw drug-taking as a legitimate avenue of self-expression, a way to facilitate extensive note-taking and discussion. They used psychoactive substances to enhance their creative abilities. Drugs helped them create literature which was not limited by strictures of language or morality, or any styles of established literature. Mainstream society did not accept people who altered their consciousness and the Beats knew the trouble they could get into, but their curiosity and what the experience had to offer outweighed the dangers.

The Beats were perceived as cynics, addicted to drugs, and given to crimes and homosexuality. The life they chose was not accepted by the prevailing American middle-class society for which the Beats showed strong contempt. They were downtrodden and cursed, they were the most despised and persecuted outcasts of the society, next to black people and poor immigrants. They wanted to escape from that worldly uproar through drugs, adventure and a morbid craze which they described in their writings. Their books and poems were considered controversial and obscene, many of their writings dealt with subjects such as the use of

forbidden substances, the functioning of the underworld, drug subcultures and immorality. The members of the Beat Generation were “finding the highest spirituality among the marginal and the dispossessed, establishing the links between art and pathology, and seeking truth in visions, dreams, and other nonrational states” (Watson 1998: 6).

Unfortunately, a hard lesson awaited them because the craving necessity of a constant supply of drugs drove many of them to crime, humiliation, self-destruction and premature death. However, the Beat Generation phenomenon survived artistically, the works of its members became classic literature for successive generations and, as Steven Watson suggests, “it’s unlikely that such a various group might ever again be found and even if they were, I cannot believe they would prove to have such genius as these clearly did” (Watson 1998: 311).

1.3. The rebellion of the sixties

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way. (Dickens 1903: 1)

The rapidly expanding Beat culture with the youth rebellion underwent a transformation and evolved into The Sixties Counterculture, which was accompanied by a shift in public terminology from "beatnik" to "hippie". The Beats in general had immensely influenced members of the new counterculture, which is often referred to as the inheritor of Beat Generation sensibilities of the late 1940s and 1950s. The beat message was transmitted to young people through cheap paperback novels and independent publications like semi-underground City Lights poem pamphlets published by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Throughout the 1960s, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder and a few others passed their wisdom on to the new generation of seekers. Their words penetrated every counterculture enclave. Beat writers taught young people that the state of intoxication and psychic exploration were necessary to achieve higher wisdom.

However, some of the Beats looked down on the hippies as imitation bohemians who were only interested in getting intoxicated and having a good time rather than doing something serious, like writing poetry or playing jazz. Another grievance was that while the Beats lacked sufficient money, the hippies seemed to have it (Perry 2005: 5). Although the hippies were heirs of a long tradition of rebellion and a direct outgrowth of the disillusioned Beats, they differed because they embraced no ideology or intellectual pretensions (Labin 1972: 24). The hippies copied the idea of bohemia as a social group holding outsider political and philosophical values in common. They inherited the use of drugs as well, though they rejected much of the Beat style, especially the pessimistic attitude, fear and resentment (Perry 2005: 241). One more difference is connected with official harassment. The Beats represented a tiny rebellion and were not perceived as a visible threat to the status quo; however, hippies were no longer hidden from the public eye.

Hippies did not choose this name for themselves. The term has several possible origins (McWilliams 2000: 79). The label stuck when Michael Fallon, a reporter for the *San Francisco Examiner*, used it in a 1965 story about the new bohemian lifestyle that was developing in the city's Haight–Ashbury district. Fallon coined the name by shortening Norman Mailer's term *hipster*, and he applied it to the second generation of beatniks who had moved from nearby North Beach into the Haight–Ashbury district. In connection with extreme use of the term 'hippie' in the mass media, Lewis Yablonsky speculates that the article *The Social*

History of the Hippies stimulated interest in the new movement (Yablonsky 2000: 28).

The Victorian neighborhood of Haight–Ashbury became the new capital of the freshly christened hippies, the drug culture, and the epicenter of the counterculture which was a protest that was grounded in the success of a highly industrial economy. It arose not out of misery, but out of plenty. From the quotation below, conclusions can be drawn as to how prosperous mainstream society was:

Each home had its own eighth of an acre of lawn needing the attention of a power mower; each had its spotless kitchen focused on a stuffed refrigerator as big as a boxcar. And there, scurrying about among the gleaming appliances and humming gadgets, was the housewife and mother, eternally smiling, eternally aproned, with never a hair out of place, devoting herself to the daily fight against floor-wax build-up. [...] After dinner, with the breadwinning father comfortably back at home, we imagine this family settling down to watch one of the give-away quiz shows, where the parade of merchandise mattered more than the questions or the answers of the contestants. (Roszak 1995: xvii)

Many children of the baby boom generation became disillusioned with the conventions and restrictions of their parents' society. Despite the fact that they came from white middle or upper-middle classes, were children of privilege and had lives in which they had clear advantages, they started to question the entire system of values and

institutions of their country. These young people felt prisoners of goals set for them by the Corporate State. They wanted to regain the ability to choose a way of life and its values, to liberate themselves from the world of their parents, the pressures of school, career and the draft. They were against the economy that produced and advertised consumer goods as ultimate happiness and fulfillment; and they were against the government for its involvement in the Vietnam War, which became an object of criticism increased by the compulsory military draft. Hippies attacked the banality of mainstream society, its hollowness, artificiality and isolation from nature (Current, et. al. 1987: 889). They wanted nothing to do with the mundane materialistic environment around them. Exploiting the security permitted by the general affluence, this generation began to demand freedom, self-expression and enjoyment because they saw life as something more than getting and spending. In the times of the hippie movement, the ethos of the American Dream was seen for the first time not in terms of career and material status, but in terms of personal fulfillment, liberty, community and harmony. The youth of the 1960s saw evil in the Corporate State which spent large amounts of money on defense, destruction of the environment, corruption, and production of unnecessary goods. They accused the American Corporate State of moral failure, impoverishment of life, violence, injustice, artificiality, hypocrisy, lack of democracy and liberty. Everywhere they saw plastic lives in plastic homes, competitiveness, commercialism, loneliness and materialism. They observed

fellow Americans and felt that the system deprived people of virility, manhood, and intellect. The criticism was intensified because of the Vietnam War, which along with human loss of life and the destruction of the environment, was the embodiment of all the evils of the society. Young people perfectly understood the message of Mario Savio, the leader of the Free Speech Movement, who said:

There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part. And you've got to put your body on the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers and upon the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop [...] and you've got to indicate to the people who run it ... that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all. (Singleton 1999: 193)

The new generation was certain that Americans had lost control of the machinery of their society and they believed that they could change it by means of new values and a new culture. They started a revolution, the aim of which was to change individual people and the culture. Their revolution did not require violence and promised a more humane and liberal community (Reich 1971: 2-7). Charles A. Reich, in his bestselling book *The Greening of America* wrote:

This is the revolution of the new generation. Their protest and rebellion, their culture, clothes, music, drugs, ways of thought, and liberated life-style are not a

passing fad or a form of dissent and refusal, nor are they in any sense irrational. The whole emerging pattern, from ideals to campus demonstrations to beads and bell bottoms to the Woodstock Festival, makes sense and is part of a consistent philosophy. It is both necessary and inevitable, and in time it will include not only youth, but all people in America. (Reich 1971: 2)

One understood the need for such a revolution observing all the things that were wrong in the American society: the terror of Vietnam, the threat of nuclear annihilation, racial and social inequalities, consumerism, commercialization of culture, the overwhelming power of institutions and corporations, competition, hostility and alienation of individuals. The logic and emotions of the new generation must be seen in light of the rise of the Corporate State, its domination, exploitation, dehumanization. The only realistic plan to change the society and restore control of their own lives, lost to the power of the Corporate State, was revolution by consciousness with the power of new values and a new way of life, without violence, without seizure of political power. The law and the government would be the last things to be changed. The transformation of culture and consciousness were to lead the way to the State consequently submitting to the will of the new values. And these values were adventure, travel, sex, nature, harmony, responding to one's own needs, clothes which expressed various moods, music as a part of daily life, and mind-expanding drugs. Hippies wanted a new society based

on peace, love, pleasure, compassion and human fellowship. Theodore Roszak claims they believed that

Beatnik poets and Greenwich Village folksingers were better role models than fathers who had sold their souls to General Motors or mothers who racked their brains all day to bake a better biscuit. They dreamed of being on the road rather than on the job. (Roszak 1995: xxiii)

In the 1960s, material abundance was commonplace, but every city had slums and the country was at war. Young people started both questioning and seeing through the contradictions of American life.

Members of the counterculture showed their dissent through personal expression – they dressed differently: long hair, outrageous clothing, flowers in their hair, beads around their necks, bells tinkling from their waists. The clothes of the new generation expressed freedom because they were inexpensive, original, comfortable. They expressed rejection of uniformity. Using dirty words, having sex out of marriage, smoking a joint – all this became gestures of disaffiliation and meant dissent. Due to such antisocial behavior, people could feel alive in a society that was considered to be dead. The feeling of being an outsider freed the person from temptations of the Corporate State. Counterculture created a social world of its own with characteristic food, shops, nightclubs, music and visual arts, sexual habits, unconventional political attitudes and ways of making a living. Music helped the children of the revolution

express their entire culture, it represented the longings and aspirations of the new generation, while criticizing the society at a profound level. Music had the power to speak to a man, to illustrate what was wrong with the society; it was moving and warming to the spirit. In particular, Jefferson Airplane and Bob Dylan expressed in their lyrics many of the things the new generation wanted to say. The times of the cultural revolution of the 1960s were supposed to be the times when relationships with others, friendship, companionship, love and human community were held up as the highest values. It seemed to be in opposition to the Establishment, which was perceived as an overwhelming machine. The hippies chose a different direction, that of nature, mysticism, freedom and psychedelic drugs. As they were also preoccupied with love and a sense of community, they were constantly searching for ways to be together. The new generation was full of energy, enthusiasm and hope and was open to new experiences. The implicit purpose of their style was to prolong the freedom and playfulness of childhood, and a desire for innocence. They made a conscious effort to ignore accepted social values and goals through the use of psychedelic drugs. The sixties was a time when

drugs were seen as an integral part of a political-cultural-spiritual agenda, [...] psychedelic experience was intended to cleanse the doors of perception so that everything might be seen as holy in a culture where it seemed that nothing about

the human soul or the natural world was any longer sacred (Roszak 1995: xxvi).

Simply by using marijuana, young people expressed cultural liberation, gave demonstration of the irrationality of the society, and maintained their own community. The point of drug use was to open up a new space where people could take refuge from the Vietnam War, terror and anguish. The ideal of an aesthetic existence seemed within reach, planting utopia in people's minds, infiltrating the culture of teenagers with grander ideals: freedom, religiosity and a love for the community.

1.4. The drug culture

Central to the counterculture was marijuana smoking. It was easy to grow, inexpensive and produced a pleasant intoxication. However, a more potent hallucinogen – LSD⁹, certainly made a mark on the hippie culture and was visible in music, colors, patterns and designs of those days. Sadie Plant sums up the role of LSD:

[it] brought love to the West Coast summers, washing California in Day-Glo light; it inspired Vietnam War protests, crazy warehouse parties, vast festivals, trips to Mexico, and trails to India. LSD challenged all accepted notions of sanity, normality, and identity, presenting itself as a solution to the madness and alienation of [...] “bomb culture”, an era that believed it was about to disappear into a mushroom cloud and was filled with demands for total revolution. (Plant 2001: 134)

A research chemist from Sandoz Pharmaceuticals in Switzerland, Doctor Albert Hofmann first synthesized LSD in 1938. He was in charge of ergot, a fungus that grew on diseased kernels of rye and was the cause of St. Anthony’s Fire (ergot poisoning) in the Middle Ages. Ingestion of contaminated grain caused a condition in which the tissue of the feet, legs and hands became dry and black. The limbs eventually fell off without loss of blood. Dr. Albert Hofmann worked on a series of ergot compounds in search

⁹ Lysergic acid diethylamide.

for active chemicals that might be of medical value. He did not notice anything unusual about the product, so he stored it in a bottle on a laboratory shelf. In 1943, when he was checking in detail, some synthetic compounds he had earlier worked on, he then began further tests of what would become known as LSD. A small amount must have somehow entered Hofmann's blood (Stevens 1988: 3-12). He noted:

Last Friday, April 16, 1943, I was forced to stop my work in the laboratory in the middle of the afternoon and to go home, as I was seized by a peculiar restlessness associated with a sensation of mild dizziness. Having reached home, I lay down and sank in a kind of drunkenness which was not unpleasant and which was characterized by extreme activity of imagination. As I lay in dazed condition with my eyes closed (I experienced daylight as disagreeably bright), there surged upon me an uninterrupted stream of fantastic images of extraordinary plasticity and vividness and accompanied by an intense, kaleidoscope-like play of colors. The condition gradually passed off after about two hours. (Hofmann 1979: online)

Hofmann thought the experience was probably caused by the chemical he had been working with and decided to try an amount of it (259 millionths of a gram). He then realized that LSD was one of the most potent chemicals known to man. Having tested it on a variety of animals and people, Sandoz offered to supply LSD to selected researchers. Thus it reached the United States in 1949.

Hofmann was extremely content that the scientific community used the drug in their studies of the mind. He did not expect, however, that his “problem child”, as he later referred to LSD, would have such enormous social and cultural impact in the years to come. Nor could he have foreseen that one day he would become a near-mythic figure of the psychedelic generation (Lee and Shlain 1985: xv).

It was Aldous Huxley who was “prescient enough to imagine before 1960 that LSD and mescaline would rise to higher social visibility or become a larger cultural phenomenon than nitrous oxide or cannabis had been in the nineteenth century” (Grinspoon and Bakalar 1979: 25). In 1955 Huxley talked about metaphysically starving youth reaching out for beatific visions through drugs, and he said:

... with these drugs your perception is altered enough that you find yourself looking out of completely strange eyeholes. All of us have a great deal of our minds locked shut. We’re shut off from our own world. And these drugs seem to be the key to open these locked doors. (Wolfe 1993: 44)

Huxley proposed the use of LSD and psilocybin to discover new sources of energy. He claimed that with their help an individual could selectively adapt to his culture, reject the undesirable, the stupid and the senseless, while accepting with gratitude the treasures of accumulated knowledge, rationality, compassion, and practical wisdom. Huxley’s ideas had taken root more or less firmly in some parts of Princeton, Chicago, Harvard, Yale, Berkeley, and

other North American universities, feeding the image of a counterculture movement. The interest in psychedelic drugs had sources in research in which medical doctors and psychiatrists tried LSD themselves, as well as gave it to their friends and patients. Huxley's prophecies were fulfilled when college students wanted to free themselves from the stuffy complacency of the 1950s and fell under the influence of academic and literary figures who promoted psychedelic drugs as a means of transformation of consciousness. The drug use common among hippies was a controversial element in their lifestyle, but many insisted that it was an essential part of their rejection of the Establishment. One of the biggest promoters of the drug was Timothy Leary, a professor at Harvard University, who popularized the use of LSD and introduced it to many of his students. He would come to his "LSD camp meetings with all the solemnity of the risen Christ, replete with white cotton pajamas..." (Roszak 1995: 166). Leary taught thousands of college students and adolescents that

getting turned on is not a kind of childish mischief; it is the sacred rite of a new age. They know [...] that somewhere behind the forbidden experience lie rich and exotic religious traditions, occult powers, salvation – which, of course, the adult society fails to understand and indeed fears. (Roszak 1995: 167)

He described the experience of LSD taking as involving unbelievable intensification of all senses and of all mental processes. Leary believed that the key to the psychedelic

movement was individual freedom. He claimed that drugs were the religion of the twenty-first century and called people to “turn on, tune in, drop out”, (Leary 1999: 3) he promoted self-reliance, commitment to mobility and change, being sensitive to various levels of consciousness and harmonious interaction with the surrounding world. Sadly, his explanations were often misinterpreted as a call to get intoxicated, to abandon all constructive activity, to withdraw from established society and to leave one’s job, school or family and join the movement (Torgoff 2005: 209). Pointing to the great creativity and happiness of those who took hallucinogenic drugs regularly, Leary organized the Harvard Psychedelic Research Project where the educated rich, scholars and artists were “sharing psychedelic experiences conducted in an atmosphere of aesthetic inquiry, inner search, philosophical inquiry, courage, openness, and always with a lot of humor” (Torgoff 2005: 209). Soon after the college authorities realized that Leary and his associate Dick Alpert were allowing undergraduates to share drugs, they were dismissed as members of staff. In 1963, some people helped Leary acquire a baroque sixty-four room, four-story mansion in the town of Millbrook, where he could continue his experiments (Whitmer and VanWyngarden 1987: 36). Whitmer and VanWyngarden write:

Millbrook was like a ship on the high seas of the most adventurous thing you could imagine. The place quickly started filling up /.../ Soon the whole cultural and intellectual world began coming through, all the great poets, writers, artists – everybody – forty people to

dinner every night [...] Everyone taking LSD in this incredible experience. (Whitmer and VanWyngarden 1987: 104)

Leary argued that psychedelics, used with the right dosage, set and setting, and with the guidance of psychology professionals, could alter behavior in unprecedented and beneficial ways. He said that the LSD kick is a religious pilgrimage and a spiritual ecstasy, and that “psychedelic experience is the way to groove the music of God’s great song” (Roszak 1995: 167). And “the sacrament that will put you in touch with the ancient two million year old wisdom inside you” and “to the next stage, which is the revolutionary timelessness...” (Roszak 1995: 167). After this fashion, the “politics of ecstasy”¹⁰ became the wave of the future, moving to achieve the social revolution. The drug so eagerly promoted by Timothy Leary expanded the population of the hippies far beyond that of genuine literary and artistic bohemians. It can be assumed beyond any doubt that he was unaware of the then unstudied, harmful effects of LSD consumption.

The first real signs of an emerging hippie culture came in 1963, when a young writer Ken Kesey bought a six-acre home in the rural town of La Honda, on the outskirts of San Francisco, where his friends gathered to experiment with drugs on their own and initiated great happenings: the

¹⁰ The title of Leary’s book in which he includes his early pronouncements on the psychedelic movement, for example that drugs are the religion of the twenty-first century and that the fifth freedom is the right to get high.

psychedelic theatre of life. He had set a fashion for calling LSD acid and his parties ‘Acid Tests’, which he organized with his friends called Merry Pranksters, who, as Watson suggests:

[...] were part of the generation that succeeded the Beats, joyously conspiring to disrupt the Establishment with the bravado of an elite military unit, thriving on psychedelics, risk, and games. They had no platform, but, as Kesey said, “What we hoped was that we could stop the coming end of the world.” (Watson 1998: 289)

The Acid Tests were “one of those outrages, one of those scandals, that create a new style or a new world view”, wrote Tom Wolfe, “the epoch of the psychedelic style and practically everything that has gone into it” (Wolfe 1993: 222-223). Merry Pranksters together with Ken Kesey helped shape the developing character of the 1960s counterculture when, during the summer of 1964, they went on board a psychedelic Day-Glo painted bus named *Furthur* with Neal Cassady as a driver, and thus started a cross-country journey. The purpose of the trip was to make a movie “in which the fourteen passengers were all going to be ensemble players and the LSD they were carrying in an orange-juice container in their little refrigerator would become the main prop of the production” (Torgoff 2005: 115). For Allen Ginsberg, Kesey’s trip was a cultural signal of awakening and change, signaling the news that something was about to happen.

1.5. The peak of the counterculture

It is said that the hippie movement reached its peak in 1967, which became known as the Summer of Love. Over 100,000 youth came to Haight–Ashbury to watch this chaotic and wonderful festival and participate in the new culture of music, including experimentation with psychedelic drugs and alternative lifestyles. The Council for the Summer of Love released the announcement:

This summer, the youth of the world are making a holy pilgrimage to our city, to affirm and celebrate a new spiritual dawn... The activity of the youth of the nation which has given birth to Haight–Ashbury is a small part of a worldwide spiritual awakening. Our city has become the momentary focus of this awakening. The reasons for this do not matter. It is a gift from God which we may take, nourish and treasure. (Perry 2005: 185)

On January 14, 1967 a Human Be-In (known alternatively as Pow Wow or The Gathering of Tribes) concert provided the initial spark for the Summer of Love. The idea was to bring together political activists and the hippies to celebrate “a union of love”, as it was advertised in a weekly underground newspaper, *The Berkeley Barb*:

The spiritual revolution will be manifest and proven. In unity we shall shower the country with waves of ecstasy and purification. Fear will be washed away; ignorance

will be exposed to sunlight; profits and empire will lie dying on deserted beaches; violence will be submerged and transmuted in rhythm and dancing. (Miles 2004: 186)

The Be-In's creators wanted to show the world the beauty of what was happening in San Francisco and had correctly calculated that the media would readily cooperate in disseminating the message.

Crowds of mostly young people sat and listened to the poetry, danced, smoked marijuana, and ingested LSD. The Diggers distributed free food and the most notorious outlaw bikers, The Hell's Angels, provided security. Timothy Leary gave a speech about getting "...western man out of the cities and back to the tribes and villages" (Stevens 1988: 331). The Be-In, that magnificent party with twenty thousand participants, was the next step of the cultural revolution, and an invitation to Haight-Ashbury for the Summer of Love.

Be-Ins were organized in cities all over the country, and the media discovered the story of a generation that was rejecting the American Dream for the LSD and crash pads of the Haight. Favorable and unfavorable publicity in the mass media, peace and sexual openness of the flower children were equally effective in spreading the use of psychedelic drugs and garnering recruits for the drug culture. The Summer of Love had an effect on mainstream culture, and by the time it ended, thousands of newly recruited hippies went back home carrying new styles, ideas

and behaviors to all major US cities and soon after to many major capitals of European countries.

The San Francisco Be-In and the Summer of Love helped initiate similar actions on the East Coast. On October 21 Jerry Rubin¹¹ and Abbie Hoffman¹² organized a march in an attempt to exorcise the Pentagon¹³. In August 1968, Rubin and his Youth International Party (Yippies) started spreading their political message. Their rally, which was organized to disrupt the Democratic Convention in Chicago, blended revolutionary politics with pranks and attracted thirty thousand gatherers. It represented a mixture of the hippie philosophy with a more serious activist movement. The Democratic Convention of 1968 was the climax of the Yippies' activities. They staged a party called the "Youth Festival"; however, they failed to disrupt the convention as the Chicago police arrested the members, including Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, and charged them with conspiracy to incite rioting. The resulting trial was called the Chicago Seven trial and became the political hippie event of the era. It lasted almost a year and resulted in direct conflict between the hippies and the political system (Issit 2009: 11).

¹¹ American social activist.

¹² Political and social activist; co-founder of the Youth International Party – Yippies

¹³ For a detailed discussion, see part II, subchapter 1.4.

1.6. Counterculture in New York

Although New York was so large, with so much happening, and had a scene that was more driven by intellectual activism, New York Lower East Side also had a hippie scene with areas alive with communal apartments, psychedelic drugs and spiritual seekers. In New York the hippies gathered in Greenwich Village and occupied the length of Macdougall Street, St. Mark's Place or the waterless fountain in Washington Square and Tompkins Square Park (Issit 2009: 8-9). Next to Tompkins Square there was supposedly the world's first hippie store called the Psychedelicatessen (Miles 2004: 158). The East Village teemed with old tenements where hippies found places to establish their communes. The scene in New York was different, though. The New York underground was a classic example of amphetamine subculture. The history of amphetamine in the United States reflects widespread usage of the drug:

Never before had so powerful a drug been introduced in such quantities and in so short a time, and never before had a drug with such a high addictive potential and capability of causing irreversible physical and psychological damage been so enthusiastically embraced by the medical profession as panacea or so and extravagantly promoted by the drug industry. (Grinspoon and Hedblom in Torgoff 2005: 160)

It would appear that almost everybody took “speed” (as amphetamine came to be called) in every conceivable form. In the artistic world Andy Warhol seemed as ubiquitous as did amphetamine. The Factory was Andy Warhol’s original studio from 1963 to 1968, located in Midtown Manhattan. It was a cultural epicenter, a kind of underground atelier. The studio was teeming with artists, photographers, writers, editors, models, dancers, filmmakers and movie stars. Everything swirled together with sexual deviance and drug use. Amphetamine was called the ego drug of the 1960s. It made people feel perfectly thrilled with themselves, as if they were gods. They must have felt as if they were better, bigger, stronger, smarter and quicker. Countless books, films and songs came out of the experience of a whole group going through that altered state of mind. It seems nobody ever went to sleep and Andy Warhol claimed the people who used the drug as a way of life “believed in throwing themselves into every extreme – sing until you choke, dance until you drop, brush your hair till you sprain your arm” (Torgoff 2005: 165). It was precisely that quality that would make Warhol’s entourage a perfect subject for his films. People started to take seriously the art he was producing, he was making more and more money and the atmosphere around his artists became supercharged with even more drugs and sex. There were already casualties of the scene and Warhol understood that it had all become inseparable from the behavior of the people around him, which put the Factory under siege from police and the media. Warhol wanted to show what the world around him had become.

He created *Chelsea Girls* – the first work of the New York underground cinema ever to be distributed commercially across the country. In his film he showed lost souls whimpering in a psychedelic movement, he showed the reverse image of the peace and love ethos of the 1960s, he showed the Age of Aquarius as a world of malignant drug maniacs. Andy Warhol's cast indulged in the most aberrant behavior possible, they went deeper into the drug culture but also many of them survived because they managed to embrace the decision to quit drugs. Warhol, himself, after an almost fatal shooting changed the image of his Factory. In this new atmosphere, the “amphetamine crazies” who had fed the artist's creativity since 1964 found themselves less and less welcome.

Since New York was the capital of the avant-garde, hippies wanted to experience its atmosphere, especially after Andy Warhol's show *Plastic Exploding Inevitable*¹⁴ received an invitation to the Fillmore Auditorium¹⁵. Hippies quickly learned that the scene and the bands were quite different. In New York they also learned about the Velvet Underground, which was a very influential 1960s band; however, their drugs of choice such as amphetamine and heroin, set them apart from the hippies. The Velvet Underground with its members: Lou Reed, John Cale and Sterling Morrison was joined by Andy Warhol for purely commercial reasons (Miles 2004: 148-152). They performed together in April

¹⁴ A series of multimedia events organized between 1966 and 1967.

¹⁵ A historic music venue in San Francisco, which in the 1960s became the focal point for psychedelic music and counterculture.

1966 at the Polski Dom Narodowy on St. Mark's Place (Miles 2004: 156) and they created the multimedia light and sound performances called the Exploding Plastic Inevitable. The San Francisco hippies failed to understand the latest New York aesthetic. This created a wider gap between the two underground scenes (Miles 2004: 152). Additionally, the Velvet Underground sang about perversion and heroin addiction. The psychedelic crowd found in New York hard drugs, vanity, and definitely nothing of a breakthrough magnitude. The difference between the New York and San Francisco scenes is visible in the comment of one of the Warhol's superstars, Mary Woronov:

“We spoke two completely different languages because we were on amphetamine and they were on acid,” [...] “They were so slow to speak, with these wide eyes – ‘Oh, wow!’ – so into their vibrations; we spoke in rapid-machine-gun fire about books and paintings and movies. They were into free and the American Indian and going back to the land and trying to be some kind of true, authentic person; we could not have cared less about that. [...] They were barefoot; we had platform boots. They were eating bread they had baked themselves – and we never ate at all!” (Torgoff 2005: 158-159)

1.7. The final stage of the 1960s counterculture

In the early days psychedelic drugs were not treated with the peculiar moralistic severity reserved for substances classified as narcotics. Until 1963 LSD, mescaline, and psilocybin were easy to obtain for clinical and experimental research, and until 1966 there were no state or federal criminal penalties for unauthorized possession, manufacture and sale. Prior to October 6th, 1966, LSD was available legally in the United States as an experimental psychiatric drug. Only after 1966, when Sandoz took its LSD off the market in response to new laws, was most of the LSD in circulation produced in clandestine laboratories. The decline of the psychedelic movement was attributed to the loss of its sacrament, but it was not the only factor. The character of Haight–Ashbury began to change, the streets were filled with bad acid, junkie thieves, physically dangerous amphetamine addicts, the use of methamphetamine began to spread and the criminal element grew. Theft and rape occurred on a daily basis, the elements of destruction had suddenly entered this beautiful street party and people realized that life encountered on the street was cruel and disillusioning. The media were unable to distinguish between this new state of events and the original hippie behavior. The presence of the police was frequent. The arrival of hard drugs gave them an excuse to repress The Haight. Once peaceful antiwar protests had grown increasingly violent. The general opinion was that the sixties

had died and that the free concert at the Altamont Raceway, near Berkeley, California on December 6, 1969 was the proverbial nail in the coffin. The Rolling Stones' managers hired the outlaw motorcycle gang Hell's Angels to provide security for the audience of three thousand people. Instead of maintaining safety, the Angels stormed the stage, harassed the crowd and stabbed and beat to death an eighteen-year-old man named Meredith Hunter (Greene 2010: 158-159).

The audience provoked the doctors who were helping them recover from bad trips, intoxicated fans were crawling over one another to get closer to the stage. There was the feeling of anxiety and despair. The Grateful Dead, the organizers of the concert, left horrified at what had become of a once peaceful, loving counterculture. The venue failed to spread the message of peace and love, and it was seen by many observers as a violent end to a violent decade. The 'beautiful people' from the golden days of the hippie era began to be contrasted with the image of a Chicano boy from The Altamont Speedway Free Festival:

[...] this grotesquely fat Chicano kid tripping his brains out, who took off his clothes and began dancing, flabby breasts and flaccid penis jouncing as he stomped, oblivious to those around him. If the freedom of Woodstock had been personified by the Newsweek cover of a beautiful hippie who looked like a sinewy Aztec warrior in loin cloth, gyrating ecstatically up against a nubile girl, Altamont generated a very

different image: this naked fat boy and what happened next. (Torgoff 2005: 239-240)

Charles Manson, an ex-convict turned hippie conman, used the atmosphere of the cultural revolution and established a commune whose members committed a string of murders. The most infamous of which happened on August 9, 1969, when they entered the house at Cielo Drive in Los Angeles stabbing to death five people including Roman Polanski's wife, who was nine-months pregnant. The following night Leno and Rosemary LaBianca were killed on Manson's orders. The public was shocked with the unimaginable savagery of the murders. Mainstream Americans who had once seen hippies as fairly benign began to consider them to be a threat to social order. And it was at this junction when the era of the hippies started to truly decline (Grinspoon and Bakalar 1979: 300-320).

The Beat icon, Neal Cassady died in 1968, the role model of the hippies – Jack Kerouac died in 1969, the year that brought the decisive decline of the hippie aura. The year 1970 took a toll on hippie music. The giants of psychedelic rock, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix died that year, followed by Jim Morrison in 1971. Their deaths were also symbolic of the state of the West Coast scene with hard drugs. The idealistic and dedicated hippies started fleeing areas like Haight–Ashbury to avoid violence (Torgoff 2005: 243-245).

2. The New Journalism

The only thing I ever saw that came close to Objective Journalism was a closed-circuit TV setup that watched shoplifters in the General Store at Woody Creek, Colorado. I always admired that machine, but I noticed that nobody paid much attention to it.

(Thompson 1973: 48)

2.1. Writers in response to the 1960s

As has already been indicated, the sixties and seventies were the times of tremendous cultural and social changes, times of war, assassinations, rock, sexual permissiveness, drugs, hippies and illegal and secret activities undertaken by Richard Nixon. Many writers at that time believed that a traditional reporter could not provide readers with neat and congruent stories because they were unable to make sense of all this chaos, and their tools of reporting were inadequate to chronicle the tremendous changes of the period. During those days of rage a new group of writers came into view. Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Hunter S. Thompson, Joan

Didion appeared to impose some order on the mayhem of that time and to find ways to tell people stories about life in the sixties and seventies. Not only were these new voices needed to document the nation's growing pains, but also to make sense of an increasingly chaotic American culture. These writers interpreted the changing social norms of the early sixties to mid-seventies using seemingly liberated styles (Sims 2007: 220). They presented facts, commentaries and analyses of a complicated American social reality, at the same time providing the readers with entertainment achieved by means of novels or short stories. This was important, given the fact that descriptions of the reality in the 1960s posed a serious challenge for novelists (Durczak 2003: 329-336). Philip Roth expressed the frustration of the writers in the article *Writing American Fiction* (1961):

The American writer in the middle of the 20th century has his hands full in trying to understand, then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality. It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's own meager imagination. The actuality is continually outdoing our talents, and the culture tosses up figures almost daily that are the envy of any novelists. (Roth 1975: 120)

Ronald Weber claimed that fiction was perceived by many as a nineteenth-century diversion, which failed to offer the voice needed to write about the times adequately (Weber 1980: 9). Moreover, the novelists who wrote in the 1960s were more interested in the creative process,

imagination or linguistic reflection. Experimentation labeled postmodernity was one of the answers to the quest for novelty in fiction. The sixties was a time of growing popularity of antirealistic literature based on experiments and the presentation of unreal worlds. Those were the times when writers such as Thomas Pynchon, John Barth and Robert Coover made their debut. Experimentations with language and form flourished.

The documentation of social and cultural changes was largely left to journalists, and some of them were to create the greatest journalism of the twentieth century and write the stories that would change the way readers perceived the world (Durczak 2003: 330). Their movement was called New Journalism. There was little agreement as to what New Journalism was and when it actually began, but a tremendous interest in it began in the world of writers and critics (Hough 3rd 1975: 114).

Tom Wolfe, one of the major representatives of New Journalism, first heard the term “new journalism” in 1965. He was not sure who coined it and he did not like the phrase because, as he said, anything tagged ‘new’ was destined for failure. Wolfe was not the only person who rejected the term; other critics and scholars believed it was not a satisfactory name and suggested such names as ‘literary journalism’ or ‘new nonfiction’ (Dennis and Rivers 1974: v). Nevertheless, the term New Journalism caught on and a decade later Wolfe made an anthology titled *The New Journalism* (1973) featuring pieces by Talese, Thompson, Didion, Mailer and others (Weingarten 2005: 6-8).

The leaders of the movement attempted to do more than merely provide a non-subjective course of events of traditional journalism. They agreed that something more was needed if journalism was to precisely represent new cultural styles, the changing sexual and gender roles, rock'n'roll music, the Vietnam War and associated unrest. Countercultural activities, such as peace demonstrations, the psychedelic movement, flower children and all other subjects that were ignored or misinterpreted by the traditional mainstream press were covered by the New Journalists. Many good writers realized that standard reporting or even standard fiction could not present the complexity of the modern world. They looked for new ways to interpret public events. They did so by presenting life through their own filters, exploring the perspectives of the characters involved, and they gave the events a context against the cultural and historical background, using liberated style and techniques not available to standard reporters (Sims 2007: 221). The New Journalists departed from straight reporting to a subjective, personal, creative style of reportage and commentary, claiming that objectivity was inconceivable, and that all journalists filter and process information through their personal experience. They believed that objectivity insulated the truth, and it was the truth that most interested them (Kallan 1975: 106-107).

Tom Wolfe wrote that the most important literature in America by the end of the sixties was nonfiction and submitted that he knew why the New Journalists had 'seized power'. He claimed that they did what the novelists had

once done, but that they had now done so in an even better manner (Weber 1980: 19). According to Wolfe, the major advantage of the new nonfiction was that the readers knew that what they were reading about had actually happened (Weber 1980: 19).

2.2. The methods of New Journalism

The greatest New Journalists applied their skills to the tools of reporting and produced nonfiction that read like the best fiction. They worked with some of the most respected magazine editors and they could provide longer and better prepared texts, and spent more time researching their material. In so doing, they were able to reveal the hidden complexities of American life. Although each of these writers used his or her own distinctive manner, some common rules applied to their style of writing (Weingarten 2005: 6-8).

The first basic device used by the New Journalists was scene-by-scene construction. They did not rely on a historical narrative but told the story moving from scene to scene. The second device was the extensive use of dialog. They preferred conversational speech rather than quotations and statements because it was a brilliant method to reveal character. The third device was the third-person point of view. Like novelists, the New Journalists put themselves inside the minds of their characters to show what went on in their thoughts. They achieved it by asking better questions and interviewing people about their thoughts and emotions. Such techniques can be observed in Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), John Sack's *M* (1966) or Gay Talese's *Honor Thy Father* (1971) (Wolfe 1975: 47). One of the best examples of this technique was a New Journalism antecedent written by John Hershey. In his story

Hiroshima (1946), he introduces all six characters by describing exactly what they were doing and feeling at the moment of the bomb's explosion. He depicts his characters' internal reactions and the thoughts running through their heads. *Hiroshima* was a radical piece of writing for 1946. In 1999, New York University's Department of Journalism named it the most important news story of the twentieth century (Weingarten 2005: 23-24). The fourth device was recording everyday details such as background colors, noises, tastes, possessions, clothing, hair styles, brand names, gestures, and even someone's manner of walking. It allowed writers to engage other senses such as taste, smell, hearing and enabled the readers to come as close as possible to experiencing events firsthand (McKeen 1995: 35-57). The application of these four specific devices of realistic fiction to materials gathered by exhaustive reportage seems to be a good explanation of the nature of New Journalism; however, major works of this genre reveal a far more diverse and innovative experiment (Hellman 1981: 22).

To Wolfe, there was nothing new about New Journalism. He claimed that the technique he used had existed for over two hundred years. He compared journalists of his times to Dickens, Balzac, Fielding, Boswell and Thackeray, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century giants who had given true pictures of their times in social realist fiction. They were Wolfe's idols and provided the models for New Journalism. Tom Wolfe was fond of citing *Sketches* by Boz (Dickens' pen name) as an example of a writer using fictional techniques to tell true stories, and using the

technique of extensive dialog to show the nature of Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield* (1849). The fourth device used by New Journalists was one that Balzac had mastered. This being descriptions of all the details pertaining to manners, personal belongings, and eating habits; all described before he presented the main characters (for example in *Cousin Bette*) so that the readers could feel as if they were “inside” the novel (Wolfe 1975: 45-47).

This new group of journalists had the courage, energy and determination to get inside of any social environment, even a closed one, and to stay there until scenes took place before their own eyes. The way they worked and gathered their material was more ambitious, more intensive, it took much more time and was more detailed. The writers remained with their protagonists as long as it was necessary. However, before the invention of the term New Journalism, some writers had already been working in that way. The rapid rise of modern capitalism at the beginning of the twentieth century created a new class of protest writers, determined to record with documentary accuracy the indignities of those who dwelled on the margins of society. To write *The People of the Abyss* (1903), Jack London went into the underworld of London’s most depraved slums. To gather experiences for his writing during his work for the *New Adelphi Journal*, George Orwell enrolled in the Imperial Police Force, serving in Burma for five years. When he returned to London he wrote about the oppressed class. He submerged himself into the city’s forsaken underworld. Orwell abandoned his former middle class life in London

and stayed in a common lodging house in the same East End slum where Jack London had done his research. He made friends with tramps and manual workers and together with them looked for sustainable work. Orwell gave an account of his experience in a book *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) (Weingarten 2005: 14-15).

It was not uncommon among the New Journalists to work in a similar way. Over thirty years later, George Plimpton joined the training camp of the 1963 Detroit Lions, trying out to be the team's quarterback. The players were unaware of the deception until it became clear that Plimpton did not really know how to receive the snap from center. He described his experiences as a footballer in *Paper Lion* (1966). A year later John Sack published the first great Vietnam book, entitled *M*, which was memorable for its famous cover line – "Oh my God – we hit a little girl.". *M* is a legendary account of one company of American soldiers in Fort Dix, New Jersey, who trained for war and went to fight in South Vietnam fifty days later. Plimpton went to Vietnam as a correspondent to write about the combat, to show what the life of a soldier really entailed. Every day the journalist woke up at 4 am with the soldiers and stayed with them until 9 pm, and when they headed into the jungles of Southeast Asia, he also risked his life with them (Weingarten 2005: 14-15).

Norman Mailer, since his speech¹⁶, in which he ridiculed President Lyndon Johnson, had become a

¹⁶ The speech was delivered on Vietnam Day at Berkeley in 1965. Mailer was cut off by the university radio station after ten minutes.

spokesperson for the antiwar movement. He also decided to participate in the Vietnam War march. Mailer risked a few hours in jail, but together with 250,000 people he wanted to storm the halls of Pentagon. He described those experiences in *The Armies of the Night* (1967) writing about himself in the third person. It was a rare and highly eccentric device to use in 1967. However, it “enabled him to transition freely between public events and interiority and write as discursively as he pleased” (Weingarten 2005: 192). It also allowed him to write about himself as a protagonist in the march. *The Armies of the Night* won the Pulitzer Prize and reestablished Mailer as a major literary figure, and also as a New Journalist. Mailer, however, tried to distance himself from New Journalism, adding to his book a subtitle – *History as a Novel; The Novel as History*.

To write a story on the rebellious band of motorcycle outlaws and national menace called Hell’s Angels, Hunter S. Thompson felt that he had to join the club. He spent a year living and riding along with the gang until an argument in which they nearly killed him after brutal beating. The Hell’s Angels had been exploited by the mainstream media, in pulp novels and in low-budget commercial movies, but it was only Thompson that had bothered to work his way through the fabrications, to hang in there long enough to gain their confidence and ask them questions. *Hell’s Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga* was published in 1967 and brought Thompson out of freelance exile. Finally, magazine editors discovered him. But three years earlier they had also found out about a new form of journalism. It is important to

trace the chronology of the origins of the movement (Weingarten 2005: 123-124).

Tom Wolfe claims that the first journalist who started to write in a different way and did things no one had ever done before in journalism was Gay Talese, whose contribution to New Journalism was the use of interior monologue. His piece about a sports star entitled “Joe Luis – The King as a Middle-Aged Man” (1962), opened with the tone and mood of a short story on the one hand, on the other, reporting on things such as intimate scenes between a man and his wife. Tom Wolfe read it with disbelief thinking that the journalist had concocted the whole story. “The funny thing was, that was precisely the reaction that countless journalists and literary intellectuals would have over the next nine years as the New Journalism picked up momentum” (Wolfe 1975: 24). Reading this article, Tom Wolfe was awakened to the possibilities of what could happen when journalism used the techniques of the fiction writer. Below is a fragment of Gay Talese’s piece, which is a good illustration of the New Journalists’ second device of extensive use of dialog:

“Hi, sweetheart!’ Joe Louis called to his wife, spotting her waiting for him at the Los Angeles airport.

She smiled, walked toward him, and was about to stretch up on her toes and kiss him, but suddenly stopped.

‘Joe,’ she said, ‘where’s your tie?’

‘Aw, sweetie,’ he said, shrugging, ‘I stayed out all night in New York and didn’t have time.’

‘All night!’ she cut in. ‘When you’re out here all you do is sleep, sleep, sleep.’

‘Sweetie,’ Joe Louis said, with a tired grin, ‘I’m an ole man.’

‘Yes,’ she agreed, ‘but when you go to New York you try to be young again.’” (Talese in Dennis and Rivers 1974: 5)

Another revolutionary discovery was made by Jimmy Breslin. It was unheard of among newspaper columnists to leave the building, and do the reporting. Jimmy Breslin was the first to do this. He would arrive on the scene long before the main event in order to gather off-camera material, byplay, all those ‘novelistic’ details that would help him to create a character. He wrote about the deprived, about Southern blacks on freedom marches, and soldiers dying in the jungles of Indochina. Breslin usually wrote about people on the periphery of the main event. He wrote, for example, about a surgeon who tried to save President Kennedy’s life or a piece about the man who dug the President’s grave in Arlington National Cemetery, giving a uniquely human impression to an aspect of monumental crisis. A good illustration being the quotation from “Digging JFK Grave Was His Honor” (1963), from *The New York Herald Tribune* in which Breslin approaches the burial of John Fitzgerald Kennedy from the perspective of his grave digger:

Clifton Pollard was pretty sure he was going to be working on Sunday, so when he woke up at 9 a.m., in his three-room apartment on Corcoran Street, he put

on khaki overalls before going into the kitchen for breakfast. His wife, Hettie, made bacon and eggs for him. Pollard was in the middle of eating them when he received the phone call he had been expecting. It was from Mazo Kawalchik, who is the foreman of the gravediggers at Arlington National Cemetery, which is where Pollard works for a living. "Polly, could you please be here by eleven o'clock this morning?" Kawalchik asked. "I guess you know what it's for." Pollard did.

He hung up the phone, finished breakfast, and left his apartment so he could spend Sunday digging a grave for John Fitzgerald Kennedy. (Breslin 1963: online)

Breslin's work was also met with complaints that he sometimes sacrificed accuracy, consciously or otherwise, to achieve emotional impact in his pieces.

In the spring of 1963 Tom Wolfe found his style and made his own entry into this new arena. He was supposed to write an article for *Esquire* magazine. The topic was hot rod culture. Wolfe went to Los Angeles to describe the phenomenon of automobiles which dominated the society. The journalist spent many days doing interviews and finding out everything he could about cars. He gathered an abundance of material but he failed to organize it into a cohesive story. One day when the deadline was close, he panicked and began typing a forty-nine-page memo that described everything he had seen and turned it in to the *Esquire* editor who published the whole story only crossing out the salutation. "There Goes (Varoom! Varoom!) That

Kandy-Kolored (Thphhhhhh!) Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby (Rahghhh!) Around the Bend (Brummmmmmm)...” was later contracted to *The Kandy Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* and published as a book of Wolfe’s collected essays in July 1965. Let the quote below serve to constitute an example of the device of recording everyday details that Wolfe used in the aforementioned piece:

Anyway, about noon you drive up to a place that looks like an outdoor amusement park, and there are three serious looking kids, like the cafeteria committee in high school, taking tickets, but the scene inside is quite mad. Inside, two things hit you. The first is a huge platform a good seven feet off the ground with a hully-gully band – everything is electrified, the bass, the guitars, the saxophones – and then behind the band, on the platform, about two hundred kids are doing frantic dances called the hully-gully, the bird and the shampoo. As I said it’s noontime. The dances the kids are doing are very jerky. The boys and kids don’t touch, not even with their hands. They just ricochet around. Then you notice that all the girls are dressed exactly alike. They have bouffant hairdos—all of them... (Wolfe 1966: 68)

The Kandy Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby was an immediate hit, which began a new style of writing in journalism and made Wolfe the historian of the movement. It also marked the beginning of severe criticism. Journalism was an extremely conservative domain before the new nonfiction emerged and the ferment it created triggered

scathing responses of critics who were convinced of the inviolability of the previously established rules (Paryż 2011: 165-180). By many this new style was called a “bastard form [...] exploiting the factual authority of journalism and the atmospheric license of fiction” (Weingarten 2005: 5). Critics said that entertainment alone was the aim of such articles, that their “information was largely misinformation, their facts often non-facts and the style [...] neither orderly nor meaningful” (Weingarten 2005: 6). In their critical remarks they also concentrated on Wolfe’s free use of dots, italics, exclamation points, and onomatopoeic words.

The major shortcoming for the critics was New Journalism’s indeterminate meaning. Jack Newfield even insisted that such literary narrative could not exist because the variety of kinds of writing it contained was too overwhelming (Durczak 1988: 12).

It is true that there is no fixed definition of New Journalism probably because of the stylistic and thematic differences of the writers. It simply “reads like fiction and rings with the truth of reported fact” (Weingarten 2005: 132), which was another reason for severe criticism. Dwight Macdonald accused New Journalism of turning reporting of the news into entertainment, of distorting the facts, lacking in objectivity and fictionalizing of the end product. Gay Talese defended the new form and cautioned that it was as reliable as the most reliable reportage, that it sought a larger truth by compiling facts and using direct quotations (Dennis and Rivers 1974: 6). This new “bastard form” caused some sort of artistic excitement in journalism, it was claimed that

it dethroned the novel, caused panic and wreaked havoc in the literary world, which for the first time, began to talk about nonfiction as a serious artistic form. It showed journalists the possibility of using literary devices to excite the reader intellectually and emotionally (Wolfe 1975: 39-40).

Another influential piece and one of the best examples of mastery of New Journalism was written by Gay Talese in 1966. The article was titled "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" and gave a detailed portrait of the singer without ever interviewing him. Instead, Talese observed Sinatra as he tried to tape a television program while battling a cold. The journalist accumulated 200 neatly typed pages of notes from which readers learned more about the singer than they would have from the interview (McKeen 1995: 35-57). Articles which Talese began writing for *Esquire* redefined the celebrity interview.

Truman Capote appeared on the scene at that time. Although he was an author of conventional fiction, he switched to writing in the style of New Journalism. He never wanted his work to be compared to Wolfe's school of narration and called his work of journalism, *In Cold Blood* (1966), a "nonfiction novel". Capote claimed to have invented a new literary genre. It was a work that was both a documentary and a piece of "creative writing". In his book, he wrote about the events he had not witnessed, used dialog that he received secondhand (through official records, interviews with the killers, or his own footwork), and created interior monologues that required a fair amount of creative license on his part (McKeen 1995: 35-57).

Undeniably, many of the key works of New Journalism were contributed by male writers; however, there were some women who also played significant roles. One of them was Joan Didion. She served as a sort of anti-Mailer because she was present in the story but remained inconspicuous: a dispassionate observer. She used this device only to provide a point of reference. Didion was a remarkable observer of the American cultural scene. In the sixties, when the counter-revolution was in full bloom she took measure of the hippie scene. She saw disorder, drug addled flower children, and runaways organizing their lives around acid trips. She saw villages of lost children, where drugs became an end in themselves, permeating every aspect of their lives. She painted this bleak picture of the counterculture in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968) (Weingarten 2005: 119-121).

Three years after his publication of *Hell's Angels*, Hunter Thompson was assigned to write a story about the Kentucky Derby in his hometown Louisville. It was supposed to be an article for *Scanlan's* magazine, in which Thompson wanted to show up the senseless rituals of the South's ruling class and expose how distasteful it really was. He felt it would be better if the story was accompanied by illustrations, so he made the trip with the British illustrator Ralph Steadman in tow. Neither of them witnessed any of the races and they spent their time drinking for a week. When Thompson returned to New York he could not remember most of what had happened, he only recollected wild drinking bouts and had some notes in his notebook. He broke down, unable to

provide traditional narration. He produced the article with no special effort or care, believing that he would never get a decent magazine assignment again. However, *Scanlan's* published the piece as Thompson had transmitted it. The article ran in the June issue in 1970 and had the caption: "Written under duress by Hunter S. Thompson" and "Sketched with eyebrow pencil and lipstick by Ralph Steadman" (Weingarten 2005: 119-121). "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved" showed the moral decline of the South and revealed how uptight, stiff and hermetic it was. The story was "the first piece ever written about the Derby that was brave enough to admit that the ritual had little to do with ladies in sun hats fanning themselves with programs and men in seersucker suits sipping mint juleps" (Weingarten 2005: 233). Thompson's friend and the editor of the *Boston Globe* Sunday magazine said it was so outrageous that it needed its own name and called it "pure gonzo" (Weingarten 2005: 229-235). The device of recording everyday details can be illustrated by this fragment of Thompson's article:

Some people spend most of their time in the paddock; they can hunker down at one of the many wooden tables, lean back in a comfortable chair and watch ever-changing odds flash up and down on the big tote board outside the window. Black waiters in white serving jackets move through the crowd with trays of drinks, while the experts ponder their racing forms and the hunch bettors pick lucky numbers or scan the lineup for right-sounding names. There is a constant flow of

traffic to and from the parimutuel windows outside the wooden corridors. Then, as post time nears, the crowd thins out as people go back to their boxes. (Thompson in Wolfe 1973: 202)

The authors mentioned in this subchapter are the most celebrated New Journalists, chiefly responsible for developing the new nonfiction; however, another dozen or so writers were closely associated with this style. Among them are Richard Goldstein, Ed Sanders, Michael Herr and Lillian Ross.

Before the appearance of New Journalism, only novelists, playwrights and poets ranked first in the status in the literary world. Then there were essayists and at the bottom came journalists whose usefulness was only to present raw data. Breaking out of this status brought journalists more attention and improved their standard in the hierarchy. What is more, in earning an enormous sum of money for *In Cold Blood*, which sold to the tune of six hundred thousand copies (Sims 2007: 237), Capote had put a work of literary journalism on the same financial level as a blockbuster novel, showing that the most important literature that was written in the sixties was nonfiction, in the form that was ungracefully tagged New Journalism. However, nonfiction did not dethrone the novel, but it did draw new interest and gained higher literary status. Its popularity was also seen in magazines, which until the mid 1960s printed one-third of fiction and two-thirds of nonfiction. This trend saw a reverse and a rise in memoirs,

autobiographies, documentary forms, eyewitness reports and confessional narratives was observed in consecutive decades (Hollowell 1977: 5-9). Undoubtedly, the popularity of New Journalism was linked to the decade of the rebellious sixties; however, writers did not abandon its form in the years which followed, and similar works of nonfiction, although without such fame and breakthrough, continued to appear.

2.3. Gonzo Journalism

Gonzo rids us of the pain of reading sterile fish wrapper news and events and allows us to see them from the gutter out: not always a clean clear view, but one that is usually interesting, often perceptive and always entertaining. (Green 1975: 204)

The publication of “The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved” gave Thompson’s style a name and launched his gonzo journalism career; however, his first true piece of gonzo writing was delivered in 1969 to *Rampants* magazine. It was an article about Jean-Claude Killy, an Olympic skier, who was making commercials for Chevrolet. Thompson made himself the centerpiece of the story and described difficulties in developing a story from a boring character. It was a piece where the writer was not objective but subjective, where his personality and impressions of the situation came out and became central figures. *Rampants* magazine was the first to recognize that Thompson was changing the mentality of the press by doing something new and exciting. In “The Temptations of Jean-Claude Killy” Thompson showed the basic components that defined his style: the writer as the focal point of the story; the story as the centerpiece of the narrative; the use of fantasy and exaggeration, and the use of a companion. The author’s

struggles and preoccupation with getting the story were also a part of his new, liberating style (McKeen 2008: 132-138).

Thompson's style of reporting rejected objectivity and mixed fictional and non-fictional elements. It differed from the New Journalism of Tom Wolfe in the sense that Thompson tried to be as involved as possible, whereas Wolfe was a re-creator of facts (Green 1975: 204).

New Journalism was ten years old when Hunter Thompson found his own bold and brazen style of writing called gonzo journalism. It was an offshoot and extreme version of New Journalism.

Thompson differentiates between gonzo and New Journalism, à la Wolfe, in that he (Thompson) never sets out to reconstruct a story. Wolfe is a better reporter, a re-creator of facts. Thompson says "I like to get right in the middle of whatever I'm writing about, as personally involved as possible." Within the method of pure gonzo is spontaneity ... no rewriting allowed...the first draft screeds must stand. (Green 1975: 206)

Thompson's own definitions changed over the years; however, he always claimed that a good gonzo journalist "needs the talent of a master journalist, the eye of an artist/photographer and the heavy balls of an actor" (Carroll 1993: 149) and that gonzo is a "style of reporting based on William Faulkner's idea that the best fiction is far more true than any kind of journalism" (Carroll 1993: 146). Many

critics have attempted to define gonzo. Thompson's biographer McKeen favors a definition given by Louisville reporter John Filiatreau:

[Gonzo] can only be defined as what Hunter Thompson does...It generally consists of the fusion of reality and stark fantasy in a way that amuses the author and outrages his audience. It is Point of View Run Wild. [...] Gonzo requires virtually no rewriting, with the reporter and the quest for information as the focal point. Notes, snatches from other articles, transcribed interviews, verbatim telephone conversations, telegrams – these are elements of a piece of gonzo journalism. (Evans 1991: online)

Also Jerome Klinkowitz, a literary critic, seems to have captured the essence of gonzo as he characterizes Thompson's style of writing:

The quick cut, the strategic use of digression, the ability to propel himself through a narrative like a stunt driver, steering with the skids so that the most improbable intentions result in the smoothest maneuvers, the attitude of having one's personal craziness pale before contemporary American life... (Carroll 1993: 302)

Gonzo is a style of reporting where a reporter immerses himself in the action to such a degree that he becomes a central figure of his stories and he cannot remove himself from the subject under investigation. It is done because the

purpose of gonzo journalism is to produce a brutally honest or highly subjective journalistic piece based on the real experience of a trained reporter writing from the inside. Thompson almost always wrote in the first person, he used his own experiences and emotions to color the story he was following and to exaggerate events to make them more entertaining.

Thompson's style of writing is characterized by a drug-fueled stream of consciousness technique: themes of alcohol, violence, sex, sports and politics, the use of vulgarity and sarcasm, careful and detailed descriptions of situations, a tendency to move away from the topic, references to public people. Since gonzo journalism was based on the idea that fidelity to fact did not always lead to truth, one of its features was to blur the distinctions between fiction and nonfiction, suggesting that a deeper truth could be found in the ambiguous zones between fact and fiction (Othitis 1994: online).

It is clear that gonzo first came into the spotlight in the writing of Hunter S. Thompson, but its earlier history is obscure and there is no clear or definitive explanation of its linguistic origins. What is certain is that the word was first used by Thompson's friend Bill Cardoso but there is some doubt as to where he encountered the term. In his interview with Thompson's biographer E. Jean Carroll, Cardoso explained that the word is of French Canadian origin (*gonzeaux*) and means 'a shining path'. According to another Thompson's biographer, the term comes from

“South Boston Irish slang and is used to describe the guts and stamina of the last man standing at the end of a marathon drinking bout” (Whitmer 1993: 168). To Hunter Thompson the word meant intense, demented involvement (Lukas 1975: 184). Despite different and contradictory etymologies, the term gonzo found its way into the second edition of Random House dictionary (1987) which uses such words as bizarre, crazy and eccentric to define it (Mitgang 1988, 17N). Merriam Webster dictionary defines gonzo journalism as idiosyncratically subjective but the origin is listed as unknown (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary 1998: 791). Collins English dictionary has a definition in two parts: wild and crazy, and used of journalism, explicitly including the writer’s feelings at the time of witnessing the events or undergoing the experiences written about (Collins English Dictionary 2009: 49).

Hunter Thompson always wanted to be a novelist but having written *The Rum Diary* and *Prince Jellyfish*, he could not find a publisher, did not have money and continued to be frustrated by his inability to get into the publishing world. To be able to maintain himself, he retreated to journalism. In 1962 Thompson set out for South America and finally, from that distant place, his voice was heard in American journalism. The writer was unaware that he was part of a free moving, supple, and flexible movement soon to be called New Journalism. At that time Hunter Thompson was writing for the *National Observer* about drug smugglers, tin miners, jungle bandits, misfits and outcasts, deer hunters

and Indian-rights activists. He was unaware of this new kind of nonfiction writing and was far away from New York where Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, John Sack, Jimmy Breslin and George Plimpton were changing the definitions of daily journalism in major newspapers (McKeen 2008: 77).

3. Writers and texts under discussion

The Novelist in passing his baton to the Historian has a happy smile [...] if you would see the horizon from a forest, you must build a tower. If the horizon will reveal most of what is significant, an hour of examination can yet do the job – it is the tower which takes months to build. So the Novelist working in secret collaboration with the Historian has perhaps tried to build with his novel a tower fully equipped with telescopes to study [...] our own horizon. Of course the tower is crooked, and the telescopes warped, but the instruments of all sciences [...] are always constructed in small or large error; what supports the use of them now is that our intimacy with the master builder of the tower, and the lens grinder of the telescopes [...] has given some advantage for correcting the error of the instruments and the imbalance of his tower. (Mailer 1994: 219)

One of the critics of Norman Mailer's work observed that a "[...] historical approach must always be 'exterior' whereas a novelistic treatment can deal with the interiority of the events and the people involved in them" (Radford 1975: 120) and that is why both the literary and historical

character of the text allows readers to see “what the history may disclose” (Mailer 1994: 220). The New Journalists’ articles and novels analyzed in this book represent such an approach. This combination allows for accurate presentation of the complexity of the political and cultural climate of the sixties.

There has been an attempt in Chapter Two, to present the history of New Journalism and the impact it had on the form of presenting the news in the decade of the 1960s. It has also been argued that New Journalism played a vital role in describing and interpreting the counterculture. Tom Wolfe, Hunter Thompson, Richard Goldstein and Joan Didion were commentators of the new movement, their books and articles mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural events of the 1960s and express the spirit of the counterculture. In this context it seems important to present the profiles of the authors and the origins of their texts.

3.1. Tom Wolfe on the bus

Tom Wolfe, as a child, dreamed of becoming a great American novelist. His parents had a hard time convincing him that Thomas Wolfe, the author of *Look Homeward, Angel*, was not his relative. As an eight-year-old boy Tom Wolfe was fascinated with the Polish writer Emil Ludwig, whose book, a biography of Napoleon, he plagiarized,

transcribing passages as his own. Russian avant-garde writers also had a profound influence on him, especially Eugene Zamiatin. Wolfe first became charmed with the writing life while observing his father drafting articles for a farm periodical. Wolfe followed in his father's footsteps and became a co-editor of a school magazine. At university he published short stories in a college literary magazine. He majored in English at Washington and Lee University and received a doctorate in American Studies from Yale University. Although he was offered teaching jobs in the scholarly world, he decided to pursue a career in journalism. He longed for the competition and adrenaline boost of urban newspaper work and, in 1962, found it all in *New York Herald Tribune* (Weingarten 2005: 82-84).

From the beginning he attracted the attention of his colleagues. First of all, because of his eccentric appearance. This southern outsider wore custom-tailored three-piece suits with pocket squares and extra wide ties on which an enormous sum of money was spent. The important thing for Wolfe was to make everyone think: "Who in the name of God does he think he is?" However, not only was his appearance controversial but also his style of writing was distinct. Wolfe was not concerned primarily with the most important facts of the story. Although he had them all in place, the idea was to set the scene by describing details which were crucial to the event. He claimed to have learned the technique from Gay Talese (Weingarten 2005: 87).

Wolfe's language was florid, full of pathos, with sweetened speech patterns, lurid metaphors, onomatopoeia and whimsical

adjectives. In this particular style he wrote for the most talked-about magazines in America – *Herald Tribune* and *Esquire*, and produced some of the most vibrant journalism of the decade. It exerted an impact on a national level, made him famous, earned him the name of leader of a journalistic revolution, provided job security, and transformed him into a cultural icon. Wolfe was anxious to chronicle all the social changes which his country was undergoing; because of that he was also named a spokesperson of the counterculture.

Having written a large number of newspaper articles and book collections, the writer decided to work on a novel he longed to write (Weingarten 2005: 87). In July 1966, Tom Wolfe found a subject for his own book, when Ed McClanahan¹⁷ sent him correspondence between the two novelists Larry McMurtry and Ken Kesey. The sender hoped that Tom Wolfe would write something about the author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), who had been arrested for marijuana possession, absconded from the United States and was an outlaw in Mexico. McClanahan also thought that Wolfe's style went perfectly well with what Kesey was doing. The letters intrigued the journalist because they were wild and ironic, full of descriptions of paranoia, running from the police and taking drugs. Wolfe did not know much about Ken Kesey apart from the fact that his novel about corruption in a mental institution was a bestseller. Now he learned that the novelist's life story was also absorbing and fascinating. Because Kesey's case intrigued Wolfe, he decided to go to Mexico City to meet

¹⁷ American writer, Ken Kesey's friend.

with the writer and file a story about his life in exile. However, Kesey made it easier for him. Having attempted to cross the border illegally, he was arrested and sent back to California, where Wolfe was allowed to have a ten-minute visit with him. Wolfe was attracted by Kesey's appearance and magnetism but he did not understand him and was not getting the answers he was looking for.

Having left Kesey, Wolfe continued his journalistic efforts and started to investigate the environment of the Merry Pranksters. At that time the group was preparing for something called the Acid Test Graduation, in which the writer, who had been released from jail on bail, would tell his followers to move "beyond acid" and incorporate the insights achieved with the drug into their everyday lives. This was Kesey's last spectacular party with his group of followers. A couple of weeks later he was sentenced to a prison work farm, which gave Tom Wolfe's story a desirable culmination point. What he had was a three-part article that was published in three issues of *New York* in 1967. However, Ken Kesey was not impressed with what he had read and claimed that because Wolfe had not delved deep enough, he had failed to fully capture the real substance of the Merry Pranksters' world. Presenting Prankster characteristics and an explanation of their reality was impossible without describing the effects of acid trips on the group. When Wolfe started to rewrite his pieces about Kesey, he saw the potential of a book and decided to visit the West Coast once again and gather more interesting and amusing stories of the Merry Pranksters while examining their lives more thoroughly.

The journalist began the story at the end, with Kesey's return from Mexico. In this way he had his first chapter and the ending, what he needed was to fill the space between and show Kesey's transformation from a simple and provincial man to a cult leader of a new religion, which was founded on drugs. The 1964 trip the Pranksters made traveling on the *Furthur* bus would provide Wolfe's story with the bulk of its narrative. He had to re-create the whole bus excursion of nearly three years earlier and create the sensation of being "on the bus" and inside the Pranksters' minds. He gathered all the material from diaries, photographs, correspondence and interviews in which he asked members of the group and their fellow travelers about visions they had had while on the drug and how it had altered their perception. Because the Pranksters used different multimedia to document their experiences, Wolfe had at his disposal an enormous number of films and audio recordings they had made of different Acid Tests and parties. The movies allowed Wolfe to describe scenes and the clothes people wore at that time. Hunter S. Thompson provided interview tapes and other recordings of the Hell's Angels at Kesey's place (Shafer 2006: 54-57).

What Wolfe tried to do was to re-create a scene from a triple point of view: the subject's point of view, his own, and that of other people watching, often within a single paragraph. For Wolfe, the Pranksters did not function in conventional narrative time. Because of all the drugs they had ingested, the book could not be restricted to linear storytelling. That is why instead of the third-person voice,

Wolfe shifted points of view and used interior monologues (Shafer 2006: 56). Extraordinary punctuation helped him recreate in writing the way people on drugs think. Wolfe made himself a character in the book, thinking that the readers might want a point of reference, a more comprehensible person and through this person's eyes they could witness the craziness of the 400 pages of the book. Nevertheless, he was sure that no matter how large an amount of research he would do, nothing would make him approach closer to the feeling of an acid trip. He would not be able to write about the experience so expressively unless he took the drugs himself. Wolfe felt it was his duty. He was given 125 milligrams of LSD and was certain that he had had a heart attack and had later become part of the carpet in his friend's apartment. The journalist did not like the experience and he never wanted to repeat it.

Before writing each chapter, the author reviewed his notes and closed his eyes in order to imagine himself in the mental states of his protagonists. Wolfe produced most of his book within four intense months in 1968. He started his work on the project at the height of the psychedelic movement. He feared that people's interest in LSD and the widespread use of drugs would soon fade away before his book was published. Nevertheless, he produced *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* so quickly that it still constituted a part of its time. His "docudrama novel employing fictional techniques" (McEneaney 2009: 25) became a most colorful and vivid literary account and major cultural relic of the era. It was immediately recognized as one of the definitive books

about America in the 1960s, when people were divided into two groups – those who were on the bus, and those who were part of the Establishment.

After the success of *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Wolfe started thinking about longer projects. One of them, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987), absorbed him for most of the decade of the seventies. At that time he also produced one of his masterworks of journalism, *The Right Stuff* (1979). Since then, he has continued writing for magazines, has documented the culture for nearly fifty years and remains a social critic of American letters (McKeen 2008: 69).

3.2. Hunter S. Thompson's savage journey

His writing has always been in the shadow of his larger-than-life persona. Even people who didn't read books knew who he was: that crazy dude who took all those drugs and was played in the movies by Johnny Depp and Bill Murray, that wild man who showed up on TV now and then, mumbling so much you couldn't understand a word.

(McKeen 2008: xiv)

Hunter S. Thompson gained his first national fame as a journalist who went on the road with the outlaw motorcycle gang Hell's Angels. As his biographer claims, he had a lot in common with them. He called himself an outlaw because he did not follow the same rules as everyone else. Hunter Thompson was difficult from the moment of his birth, he was fearless, had a powerful personality, great charisma and magnetism. One of his schoolmates said that he almost had demonic powers (Gates 2008: 59). At the age of nine Thompson committed a federal crime, destroying a mailbox. He was not a juvenile delinquent type but he often got into trouble either with his parents, friends' parents or the police. He quickly learned how to obtain alcohol and he was thirteen when he first got intoxicated. Two weeks before high school graduation he was sentenced to sixty days in prison for a robbery and rape threat.

In his childhood days Thompson showed an interest in reading and writing. As a fourth grade student he started a neighborhood newspaper. In high school he belonged to a literary association from which he was expelled because of his criminal record. In the Air Force base newspaper he was offered a sports-writing job, and it was there where he started breaking all the rules of American journalism because of his sports jargon, strong verbs, outrageous spelling and random punctuation. Having been honorably discharged from the Air Force, he had several jobs in different newspapers and magazines (Gilmore 2005: 44-47). Nevertheless, with a great ego and ambitions, Thompson was always restless and hungry for more, and wanted to go to New York which according to him was the heartbeat of the world. There he registered at Columbia University courses in literary style and short-story writing. He continued to read and educate himself. He admired Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, Henry Miller, Aldous Huxley and Scott Fitzgerald. As a young writer he typed out pages from Hemingway and Faulkner to absorb their style (Gates 2008: 59).

In 1959 Thompson was hired as a reporter in the *Daily Record*. However, he was soon removed from the job because of his inability to comply with the rules (he refused to wear shoes in the newsroom), as well as for destroying a vending machine. At this point, he learned that his idiosyncrasies outweighed his talent. From that moment on, unemployment became the way of Thompson's life until he went to Puerto Rico to write for the *Sportivo*.

When Carey McWilliams, the editor of the *Nation*, suggested that Thompson should write a story of an outlaw motorcycle gang. It attracted Thompson's interest and changed his life's course. While working on a book about the gang, he met the author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, whom he admired. Both of them had a lot in common: writing, drugs and alcohol. Even the Angels liked him right away, and in turn, Kesey invited them to a party at his La Honda cabin. The Angels entered the hippie paradise and Kesey and other people offered them LSD. The drug was still legal then but Thompson had been warned by his friends not to try it. He had heard about violent tendencies that came out after ingesting acid and he did not want things to turn dangerous. Nevertheless, the day came when Thompson decided it was time to experiment with the drug. He took the dose and from that moment on his fascination with LSD began (McKeen 2008: 105-107).

After the publication of *Hell's Angels*, Thompson became a leading authority on the motorcycle gang, his popularity began to grow, the book also allowed for his credibility in the world of mainstream journalism. He began to write articles for different newspapers and magazines. Thompson was given an assignment from *New York Times Magazine* to write a piece on the hippie scene, which was already a bygone phenomenon in San Francisco but had begun entering American mass culture. Thompson took time to comprehend the hippie culture and explain it to a mainstream audience. He did so without being judgmental or sentimental. His piece is a completely honest, documented

truth about the psychedelic world. “The Hashbury Is the Capital of the Hippies” (1967) was an extremely successful article and it again opened the door not only to *The New York Times* but also to such magazines as *Nation*, *Reader’s Digest* or *Pageant*. Their general-interest approach did not interest Thompson much, but they paid well. For the latter magazine, he wrote an article entitled “Why Boys Will Be Girls” (1967) on androgyny in the hippie culture (McKeen 2008: 108-116).

In 1966 Thompson moved to Aspen, where he met Oscar Zeta Acosta, an attorney and well-known Hispanic activist from Los Angeles. He soon became Thompson’s close friend and a frequent visitor in his house – Owl Farm. They were both political radicals, loved food, alcohol and drugs. Acosta was a heavy user of different psychoactive substances, which, as he claimed, developed his consciousness. It was Acosta who first gave Thompson mescaline, which the writer loved from the first moment of consuming it, and which became a regular part of his drug diet. It was also Acosta who drew Thompson’s attention to Ruben Salazar’s murder. He wanted his friend to write a story about this reporter who had died during a riot in Los Angeles. Acosta saw conspiracy in his death and believed he had been silenced. Thompson needed more details of the story but he was not able to work in Beverly Hills. Then the possibility of earning easy money appeared. Thompson was assigned a freelance task from *Sports Illustrated* to write an essay about a motorcycle race in Las Vegas called Mint 400. This presented an excellent opportunity to leave Los Angeles

together with Oscar Acosta, do some reporting and get the private time he needed on the cost of the magazine. They went to Las Vegas and what happened there became the source of Thompson's most famous book – *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas. A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* (1971) (Weingarten 2005: 242-252).

Thompson approached the task in the same way he approached every other story. He did not make hotel reservations, did not have press credentials, the only thing he needed was expense money and an assignment to report on what he witnessed at the race. The story was only worthy for him when he risked his well-being to get it and immersed his body and soul into it. And this was the main difference between him and Tom Wolfe, who always kept a discreet distance and never got his suit dirty (McKeen 2008: 163-168).

In Las Vegas, Hunter Thompson and Oscar Zeta Acosta spent most of their time in bars and casinos in a rented Chrysler convertible with a gigantic supply of drugs and alcohol. To be sure his drug binge marathon would be remembered, because he carried with him a notebook and a tape recorder everywhere. After a few days in Vegas, Thompson came back to New York with the possibility to sign a contract with Random House to publish the book provided that he wrote more material. Following that he drove back to Vegas to observe the National District Attorney's Conference on Drug Abuse. Having returned home, Thompson started writing until all he had seen in Nevada became meaningful and coherent. For a reporter

who always presented himself as a man tormented by deadlines and writing articles about the agony of reporting, for the first time the process of creating a piece was not painful. Almost to the contrary – he was writing for his own amusement. Thompson knew that there was only one person who could catch the madness of his story. It was Ralph Steadman who gave frightening and memorable life to Thompson’s images. In his work, Thompson disguised himself as Raul Duke, a journalist; and Acosta was changed into Dr. Gonzo, a manic 300-pound Samoan attorney.

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas was published by Random House in July 1972 and sold millions of copies. Thompson was proud of it and he himself called it a masterwork. He classified *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* as a nonfiction novel because almost all the things described in the book were true. He also claimed that the book is as good as *The Great Gatsby* and better than *The Sun Also Rises*. Undoubtedly, the book was the greatest achievement in Thompson’s fifteen-year career; it was lauded by many critics as phenomenally good, with not even one word misplaced. Tom Wolfe declared it a masterpiece of New Journalism, compared Thompson to Mark Twain and called him “the greatest comic writer of the twentieth century” (Gates 2008: 58). However, Thompson did not do journalism, but presented his view of the world around him and that was why his writing was so interesting and different. His appearance was also different from that of a usual reporter. Converse tennis shoes, a safari hat, dark aviator sunglasses, a Hawaiian shirt and a long metal cigarette holder with a

cigarette were things that made Thompson recognizable and presented him as a manic and somewhat incompetent, and clumsy reporter, which was a clever way to mask his cunning and intelligent style.

In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* Thompson injects himself into the frame of his stories to represent his journalistic practice, and himself. It takes the form of a compressed literary autobiography. The author moves away from the objective, camera-eye model and its entrenched relationship with journalistic objectivity and professionalism, towards a more integrated and less alienated literary-journalistic practice consistent with the spirit of the San Francisco acid culture. The author as narrator as journalist as character is a self-conscious literary construct. The often hapless disconnection from the journalist's professional role is a convention of the genre and the postmodern phenomenon of the sixties. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is a monument to Thompson's philosophy of journalism and the creative process, it illustrates his philosophy that "fiction' and 'journalism' are artificial categories" and that the most truthful reportage is a marriage of these two forms. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, then, is his monument to this style of truthful reporting. Thompson's gonzo employs a verb-driven, "running" syntax, metaphors, fragments, allusions, ellipses, abrupt transitions, and gaps, all of which model the narrator's feelings of desperation, degradation, and despair (Russel 2012: 38, Mosser 2012: 86-88).

The period from 1968 to 1976 was successful for Hunter Thompson. He published *Hell's Angels*, produced *Fear and*

Loathing in Las Vegas and an impressive coverage of the 1972 presidential campaign for *Rolling Stone* magazine. He was revolutionizing nonfiction through his writing and reporting, and began to be a cult figure. Autograph seekers were harassing him, his celebrity was too great and he could not work as a reporter in his home country. He was horrified by this sort of attention and considered it an invasion of privacy. The worst came when the writer was ridiculed in a comic strip called *Doonesbury* as fictional Uncle Duke. It humiliated Thompson, fame suffocated him and made it impossible for him to do his work. He took more drugs, abused alcohol, and by many was perceived as the acid gobbling character which he had created in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. But his fans knew the character, not the man; in fact, he was a much deeper and more serious person than the public suspected. After the success in the seventies, he created other important articles, books and collections of essays like *The Great Shark Hunt* (1979), *Generation of Swine* (1988) or *Songs of the Doomed* (1990). In 1998 a film was made out of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* with Johnny Depp as Raul Duke and Benicio del Toro as Dr. Gonzo. Although the critical reaction to the film was mixed, Thompson loved the movie, which later achieved cult status.

When the time for retirement came, Hunter Thompson became frustrated and angry because he could not tolerate his aging, the physical pain and dependence on other people. He was horrified and ashamed of who he had become, he felt that his writing was not perfect and that he would never become the great American writer he had

wanted to be. Even though he was surrounded by caring friends and a young, loving wife, he committed suicide. And this is how this news was presented on television:

A giant of the written word has died. Hunter S. Thompson was a lot of things: a journalist, an author, a patriot, a professional troublemaker, a complex walking monument to misbehavior, who apparently took his own life with a gun last night. (Gibney 2008)

According to his wishes, in 2005 he was cremated and his ashes were blasted from a cannon atop a tower with a double-thumbed gonzo fist clutching a peyote button while a huge loudspeaker played his favorite song – Bob Dylan’s “Mr. Tambourine Man” – “I’m ready to go anywhere, I’m ready for to fade into my own parade...” (Dylan 1965: online).

Thompson developed a reputation of being a drug consuming heavy drinker, with a wild and crazy persona, but when it came to writing he was actually fairly meticulous.

Thompson left us one canonical classic (*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*), the funniest and darkest book ever written about the American political process (*Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*), and volumes of letters rivaled in American literature only by those of Ezra Pound for their voice and vigor. It should have been enough to satisfy anybody but Thompson himself. (Gates 2008: 60)

3.3. Richard Goldstein's texts not only about rock'n'roll

Richard Goldstein, a popular rock critic and a reporter of counterculture, was born in New York City in 1944. He earned a bachelor's degree from Hunter College of the City University of New York and a master's degree from Columbia University School of Journalism.

Richard Goldstein's journalism professors did not approve of his student efforts to blend fiction and the reliability of reportage: "My attempts to enrich the obit with Faulknerian melancholy did not sit well with the professors, nor did my lengthening hair, or the pieces about rock I infused with the breathless tropes of Tom Wolfe, who was then the Great Satan of journalism schools" (Kaul 1997: online). Not worrying about the hostility of his tutors, and inspired by Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer, Richard Goldstein abandoned the dream of becoming a novelist and fell into line with the New Journalists. This decision helped him launch a career as an incisive critic of rock music and the counterculture of the 1960s. Goldstein felt the music and counterculture he was writing about made for a perfect fit with 'parajournalism'. His articles, mainly from *The Village Voice*, gave a commentary on that time and spoke to the reader alongside the works of Wolfe, Thompson and Didion as an expression of the sixties (Goldstein (a) 1989: ix-xvii).

Not only was Goldstein a perceptive and insightful rock critic but also one of the decade's most promising young writers. The proof that he was an important literary journalist is that Tom Wolfe selected his piece titled "Gear" for the anthology of New Journalism.

Goldstein's first book *One in Seven: Drugs on Campus* (1966) deployed the traditional style of reportage of who, what, when, where, and why. As a graduate from the Columbia School of Journalism, he joined *The Village Voice* in 1966, delighted with the possibility of writing about whatever he wanted and in whatever style he liked. The job in *The Village Voice* required no editing, stylebook, conferences or headline meetings. Goldstein, at the age of twenty-one at that time, was free to invent a new form, a hybrid form of journalism, which he called a "counter-reportage". It was a mixture of essay, narrative, criticism and a memoir, where Goldstein's subjective voice openly addressed the meaning of events. Goldstein published his pieces in his own column *Pop Eye*, which made him a name and was to be his primary claim to fame. During the same period, Goldstein also wrote for *The New York Times* and *Vogue* magazine (Kaul 1997: online). He later continued his career as an executive editor at *The Village Voice*. Today he is not only recognized as a pop-journalist and rock critic, but also best known for writings on gay issues with two books published in the early 2000s: *The Attack Queers* (2002) and *Homocons* (2003).

Goldstein's third book titled *Goldstein's Greatest Hits: A Book Mostly about Rock'n'Roll* (1970) is a collection of essays

written in the years 1966-1968. The pieces cover a varied range of topics which constitute a vivid cultural retrospective of the period of the 1960s. The anthology consists of insightful pieces on the counterculture: “Psychedelic Psell” (1967) and “Love: A Groovy Idea While He Lasted” (1967). Goldstein’s observations are often satirical, reflective and show the journalist’s keen eye for detail. “The characteristic of his journalism is that his articles take the form of snapshots and montage rather than interpretation and explanation” (Lindberg et. al., 2005: 113-115). When psychedelic prophet, Timothy Leary, commercialized drug rituals, Goldstein in his article “Psychedelic Psell”, warned of merchandizing the acid culture, and wondered about the profits reaped by the guru from the sales of LSD.

When by the end of 1967, the hippie culture disintegrated into violence and extensive media publicity, Goldstein saw the apotheosis of the Age of Aquarius. In “Love: A Groovy Idea While He Lasted” the journalist described the victims of flower power and told their tragic tale through the examples of the murders of James Leroy Hutchinson and Linda Fitzpatrick (for the relevant discussion see part II, subchapter 2.1.).

3.4. Joan Didion: Slouching Towards Bethlehem

Joan Didion started writing when she was five-years-old. This activity engaged her thoroughly, and in high school she spent all her savings on a typewriter. She experienced her first misfortune when she was rejected for admission to Stanford University, but she enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley in 1953. In her senior year, Joan Didion won *Vogue's* Prix de Paris Award and a job on the magazine. It was then that she started appearing on the literary scene. Those were the early 1960s and Didion pursued an interest in literary journalism. In 1968 she published her magazine articles in a collection titled *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, where Californian rock stars, hippies and other characters from the 1960s were described. The book established Didion's reputation as one of the leading New Journalists (Winchell 1996: online). In her pieces she imposes her point of view on the reader as if she was saying "listen to me, see it my way and change your mind" (Didion 1979: online). Another volume of essays: *The White Album*, was published in 1979. Two years earlier the equally praised novels *Play It as It Lays* and *A Book of Common Prayer* appeared, which elevated her to the top ranks of contemporary American writers. In the 1980s Didion produced two non-fiction books, *Salvador* (1983) and *Miami* (1987). She continues to write today and she is also known as a screenwriter on several motion pictures, the first of which was *The Panic in Needle Park* (1971) with Al

Pacino. Didion is a prolific, highly paid journalist, always on top of *The New York Times* bestseller lists (Homberger 2004: online).

In the new millennium she continued to achieve professional success; unfortunately, overshadowed by her personal loss. In 2003, her husband John Gregory Dunn died unexpectedly of a heart attack and a year later Didion lost her only child, an adopted daughter Quintana Roo, who passed away after a long hospitalization and treatment. The painful emotional situation pushed her to structure a book that recounted her grief, a memoir presenting the concerns of those who had lost a partner. In eighty-eight days Didion's intimate account of her life as a widow was finished. *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2005) received complimentary reviews, became a bestseller, won the National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize. Joan Didion also adapted her book into a play which was staged on Broadway, starring Vanessa Redgrave (Van Meter 2005: online).

The title piece of *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* was first published on September 23rd 1967 in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Together with a collection of nineteen essays from the years 1963 to 1968, it explored the cultural values and experiences of American life in the 1960s. Here Didion renounced conventional journalism, and created her own style, which was a subjective approach to essays.

In the spring of 1967 Didion had an assignment to go to San Francisco and write about the hippie scene. To gather the necessary material, she ingratiated herself with

the hippies in Haight–Ashbury, and was invited into their crash pads and offered drugs, and food.

Joan Didion, being born in California and remembering the notions of class and tradition, did not approve of the new scene. She did not see the energy and excitement of the Merry Pranksters chronicled by Tom Wolfe. Instead she observed casualties of social change, lost children, who lived on handouts around LSD trips, searching for an identity. Didion wrote in the preface to *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* what she felt when she came to San Francisco: “I had been paralyzed by the conviction that writing was an irrelevant act, that the world I had understood it no longer existed. If I was to work again at all, it would be necessary for me to come to terms with disorder” (Didion 2001: xi). Her statement was ambiguous and it could mean either she needed to accept disorder or make sense of it.

Didion derived the title of her essay and a collection of pieces from William Butler Yeats’ poem *The Second Coming*, a harsh vision of apocalyptic chaos that was a consequence of turmoil of the First World War and the Russian Revolution. Didion might have seen the sixties as Yeats saw the Russian Revolution: evidence that the fractious society was heading to dissolution (Bawer 2007: 86). The article “Slouching Towards Bethlehem” is a conservative critique of counterculture’s dishonest and hypocritical statements, a disclosing report on drug-addled Haight–Ashbury youth that destroys the hopes and beliefs of happy hippiedom.

In the late 1960s, Didion mainly worked for *Saturday Evening Post*, a magazine of a general-interest that was not

familiar with nonfiction. That was the reason why Didion's work did not receive the attention that Wolfe or Talese attracted working for *Esquire* magazine. However, soon after publishing a collection of her essays in the book called *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, she achieved success. The book was immediately critically acclaimed as the work of an astonishing new voice in American journalism (Weingarten 2005: 116-123).

PART II

1. Non-fictional account of the 1960s counterculture

The examination of the circumstances that preceded the birth of the movement is vital to the understanding of hippies. The first chapter has attempted to describe and analyze those circumstances. Undoubtedly, it is an easier task to learn about the important events that changed the lives of the Baby Boom generation than to define hippies and their ideology, given the fact that the postulates of the counterculture revolution were not collected and printed in the form of one manifesto. However, there existed forms of expression common to all the hippies, which helped them spread their revolutionary word. Among them were the use of mind-altering substances, outrageous clothes, music and a specific lifestyle. Hippies also had their leaders, whom they admired and in whose footsteps they followed. Among them were Richard Alpert, who was a social and spiritual leader of the San Francisco hippies, or Allen Ginsberg, who became a guru to thousands of hippies, due to the fact that in his poetry he commented on political and social matters of the era and was an advocate of the transformative power of psychedelic drugs. However, the two most prominent

leaders of the counterculture era were Ken Kesey and Timothy Leary. Without these two figures the psychedelic fascination might not have spread with such enormous speed. They were “proselytizers at a moment when millions were seeking way to live beyond limits” (Gitlin 1993: 207). It is not easy to establish responsibility for the fascination of mind-altering substances among the young, still Kesey and Leary are noticeable as promoters of psychedelia. It is impossible to measure who, using the countercultural terminology, “turned on” more people of the younger generation, but certainly they both exerted significant influence on the youth culture of the sixties.

The literary material on counterculture is very broad; consequently, any research must be highly selective in regard to its source materials. Given the fact that New Journalism explored the decade’s public issues and current events with personal commitment and moral vision, it could be reasonably argued that the texts discussed in this chapter constitute a reflective and interesting representation of the spirit of the age.

It is my intention in this chapter to metaphorically open the door to enable a better understanding of the counterculture and shed more light on its different aspects by means of the analysis of the account provided by non-fictional texts of New Journalism.

1.1. The concept of leadership in psychedelic movement: charismatic figures and gurus

The role of the psychedelic guide is perhaps the most exciting and inspiring role in society. He is literally a liberator, one who provides illumination, one who frees men from their life-long internal bondage. To be present at the moment of awakening, to share the ecstatic revelation when the voyager discovers the wonder and awe of the divine life-process, is for many the most gratifying part to play in the evolutionary drama. (Leary et. al. 1991: 89-90)

The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test is regarded as an impeccable narrative concerning the counterculture of that era, one of the works that best describes the beginnings of the 1960s psychedelia while chronicling Ken Kesey's career as a rising literary star who discovered the mind-transforming power of LSD. *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* characterized a large number of personalities, captured the important aspects of the hippie counterculture, and managed to tell the Pranksters' rambling story (MacFarlane 2007: 106). The book chronicles the birth of a new movement, two journeys and describes the public parties called Acid Tests that Kesey, and Merry Pranksters organized.

The story of *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* starts in October 1966, while Tom Wolfe is observing a few Merry

Pranksters in San Francisco as the group is preparing for the Acid Test Graduation party. The reader is also introduced to Ken Kesey who had returned to California after hiding out in Mexico where he had absconded to, having been charged twice with marijuana possession. It can be seen from the novel that before meeting Kesey, all Wolfe knew about him was that he was a highly regarded 31-year-old novelist having a lot of trouble with drugs, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), made into a play in 1963, and of *Sometimes a Great Notion* (1964). One of the first observations Tom Wolfe shares with the reader is Kesey's charisma. The author of *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* writes that Kesey attracted people at first sight. In the case of Wolfe, the first meeting took place in prison. This is how the journalist saw the leader of Merry Pranksters:

He has thick wrists and big forearms, and the way he has them folded makes them look gigantic. He looks taller than he really is, maybe because of his neck. He has a big neck with a pair of sternocleido-mastoid muscles that rise up out of the prison workshirt like a couple of dock ropes. His jaw and chin are massive. He looks a little like Paul Newman, except that he is more muscular, has thicker skin, and he has tight blond curls boiling up around his head. (Wolfe 1993: 12)

Together with a very attractive appearance went "a soft voice with a country accent" (Wolfe 1993: 13) when Kesey talked about his mission and the role he had to play in something Wolfe had no understanding of. That was the

reason why he later wrote in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*:

Ten minutes were up and I was out of there. I had gotten nothing, except my first brush with a strange phenomenon, that strange up-country charisma, the Kesey presence. (Wolfe 1993: 14)

During his adolescence, Kesey was a model teenager of the fifties: blond, blue-eyed, athletic. Early on in high school he was voted as the “most likely to succeed” by his classmates. At the University of Oregon he became a collegiate wrestling champion in the 174-pound class and a star actor in college plays. At Stanford University he was a “diamond in the rough”, “the hick with intellectual yearnings” (Wolfe 1993: 35-36). At this time of his life he was known to be a committed family man, married to his high school sweetheart, sober, abstemious. His father had taught him resourcefulness, inventiveness, and how to overcome difficulties. Thanks to the ability of swimming, boxing, running and wrestling his figure was outstanding. In one word – he was the best (Stevens 1988: 222).

It is not known what his life would have looked like if he had not volunteered to test a range of drugs. The doors of perception opened for Kesey in 1959. His first encounter with the drug was in Perry Lane¹⁸ and at Stanford University. He volunteered to become one of the guinea pigs at

¹⁸ A bohemian street, where Stanford literary types lived, drinking wine and having intellectual discussions. It was into the middle of this community that psychedelic drugs were introduced.

Veterans Hospital, where he earned twenty dollars a session trying experimental drugs in the government-sponsored program MK-ULTRA¹⁹. Over the next few years Kesey was given a variety of psycho-active drugs from psilocybin and mescaline to LSD and amphetamine. LSD brought a moment in his life when he knew exactly what was happening to his senses, he could truly see into people and entered “a realm of consciousness he has never dreamed of before and it was not a dream or a delirium but part of his awareness” (Wolfe 1993: 41). Not only did the participation in this top secret program inspire him to write *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* but also started to open him up to another world. He was against a non-institutional setting and decided to test the drugs in private experimentations. He moved to La Honda, to a modern log cabin, with the original plan that the Perry Laners would move out with him and live in tents up in the woods, immersing themselves in Kesey’s fantasy of a community of psychedelic adventurers. “He had already proposed to a dozen people on the Lane that they come with him, move the whole scene, the whole raggedy-manic Era off to... [La Honda]” (Wolfe 1993: 53). The Perry Lane crowd “began to eye Kesey’s place as a kind of hill-country Versailles, with Kesey as the

¹⁹ The code name for a CIA mind-control and chemical interrogation research program, run by the Office of Scientific Intelligence. The program began in the early 1950s, continuing at least through the late 1960s, and it used United States citizens as its test subjects. The published evidence indicates that Project MK-ULTRA involved the surreptitious use of many types of drugs, as well as other methods, to manipulate individual mental states and to alter brain function.

Sun King, looking bigger all the time, with that great jaw in profile against the redwoods and the mountaintops” (Wolfe 1993: 60). After that his hillside ranch in the canyon became the world capital of madness. They became a group of harmonious souls, experimenting with communal lifestyle and taking hallucinogenic drugs. “There were no rules, fear was unknown, and sleep was out of the question” (Thompson 1990: xv). Information about Ken Kesey also appears in Hunter Thompson’s *Hell’s Angels* as the author was a visitor of La Honda:

[...] Ken Kesey, a young novelist then living in the woods near La Honda, south of San Francisco. During 1965 and 1966 Kesey was arrested twice for possession of marijuana and finally had to flee the country to avoid a long prison term. [...] He and his band of Pranksters had about six acres, with deep creek between the house and the highway, and a general overcrowded madness in the private sector. (Thompson (a) 1967: 271-272)

Hell’s Angels is also an interesting source of descriptions of the atmosphere at La Honda:

[...] the parties grew wilder and louder. There was very little marijuana, but plenty of LSD, which was then legal. The cops stood out on the highway and looked across the creek at a scene that must have tortured the very roots of their understanding. Here were all these people running wild, bellowing, and dancing half-naked to rock-‘n’-roll sounds piped out through the trees from

massive amplifiers, WILD, by God, and with no law to stop them. (Thompson (a) 1967: 274)

In the 1960s, Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters were among the most visible and colorful leaders of the counter-culture. In 1965 they started to change the consciousness of San Francisco. Hunter Thompson, in the article “The Hippies”, rightly states that they were the original hippies:

During 1965, Kesey’s group staged several much-publicized Acid Tests, which featured music by the Grateful Dead and free Kool-Aid spiked with LSD. The same people showed up at the Matrix, the Acid Tests, and Kesey’s home in La Honda. They wore strange, colorful clothes and lived in a world of wild lights and loud music. These were the original hippies. (Thompson 1967: online)

There were groups such as the Diggers and Chet Helm’s group, The Family Dog, as well as others throughout the country which were using group activity, hallucinogens, and spectacle to explore and to influence the public to question accepted values. However, what helped to put the Pranksters on the most visible front lines was probably the fact that they were a team with two major American literary celebrities (Ken Kesey and Neal Cassady) and that status was instrumental in organizing now legendary events which connected people in a movement that spread across the country (Thompson 1990: xxi). As the group of Merry Pranksters grew, Tom Wolfe often pointed

to Kesey's charisma. At this stage, before Kesey and his group of followers could be called anything in the way of a movement, the situation was closer to that of a leader and his disciples. For Wolfe, there was something religious about the Pranksters' way of life, he compared their activities to the scholarly interpretations that characterized the beginnings of religious movements. Works of Max Weber and Joachim Wach helped him define the community created by the Pranksters, where Wolfe sensed the religious atmosphere. The following excerpt from *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* seems to portray the atmosphere of the Pranksters' commune:

Following a profound new experience, providing a new illumination of the world, the founder, a highly charismatic person, begins enlisting disciples. These followers become an informally but closely knit associations, bound together by the new experience, whose nature the founder has revealed and interpreted. [...] a growing sense of solidarity both binds the members together and differentiates them from any other form of social organization. [the founder] ... has visions, dreams, trances, frequent ecstasies... unusual sensitiveness and an intense emotional life. [...] In all these religious circles, the groups became tighter and tighter by developing their own symbols, terminology, life styles, and gradually, simple cultic practices, rites, often involving music and art, all of which grew out of new experience and seemed weird or incomprehensible to those who have never had it. At that point they would also develop a strong urge to extend the message to all people. (Wolfe 1993: 116-118)

Kesey lived in times of social discontentment, political unrest and enormous changes. Not only Merry Pranksters were not alone in the feeling dissatisfied with their society, felt alienated, frustrated and in search of change. The feelings of insecurity and emptiness permeated the milieu of the youth. In such times, leadership was in great demand and the Pranksters craved Kesey's guidance and were "[...] clinging passionately to whatever support he happens to embrace" (Yablonsky 2000: 292). Nevertheless, the word "leader" might not be adequate here, as hippies, claiming that all men are equal, rejected the concept of leadership, which suggests hierarchy and traditional social structures. Therefore, such people as Kesey or Leary should rather be called role models or "spiritual centers" (Yablonsky 2000: 57).

Kesey was a spontaneous leader, a "spiritual center", whose authority was determined by the group. In a manner reminiscent of Jesus and his disciples, everyone who came to La Honda was taken care of. "Beautiful people" started coming to Kesey's place and no one was rejected. The term "beautiful people" stood for young, middle-class, often educated individuals who were rebelling against the mentality of their society. And those rebels were writing home "Beautiful People letters":

After a perfunctory apology for having vanished without a word, the writer would then go on: "I won't bore you with the whole thing, how it happened, but I really tried, because I knew you wanted me to, but it just didn't work out with [school, college, my job, me and Danny] and so I have come here and it really is

a beautiful scene. I don't want you to worry about me. I have met some BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE. (Wolfe 1993: 123-124)

This really worried middle-class parents who feared that their children might journey into a state of altered reality from which they would never return. The onlookers wondered if those young people were alienated, whether they came from broken homes, or they asked themselves if the society was rotting at the core. The young, on the other hand, knew that they always had only the conventional option of going to school, getting a job or living at home. Whichever way they would choose, it would be boring, so they chose life “in which the subject is not scholastic or bureaucratic but...*Me* and *Us*, the *attuned* ones amid the non-musical shiny-black-shoe multitudes [...]” (Wolfe 1993: 62). Many people started heading for Kesey's place, “sometimes it would be the everlasting visitors, from god knows where, friends of friends of friends, curiosity seekers, some of them, dope seekers, some of them, kids from Berkeley, you could never tell” (Wolfe 1993: 124). Kesey became a very interesting figure for the counterculture, especially after he had been accused of possession of marijuana. He then became a kind of “hipster Christ”, a modern mystic, after the model of Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. Kesey, having discovered LSD and thus a new way of seeing the world around him, felt a strong urge to share his discovery. He became a celebrity, a visionary who had forsaken his career and money to discover new forms of expression. This was the time when Kesey's

commune began to agitate La Honda's townspeople. Thompson highlights the social discontent triggered among the neighbors by Kesey's presence and his guests:

The folks were not happy about the goings on up the road. 'That goddamn dope addict,' said a middle-aged farmer. 'First it's marywanna, now it's Hell's Angels²⁰. Christ alive, he's just pushing' our faces in the dirt!

'Beatniks!' said somebody else. 'Not worth a pound of piss.' (Thompson (a) 1967: 273)

It was also the time when the word of the Prankster lifestyle was made public. It all made them feel immune from the restrictions and rules of the square world. Kesey's arrest for marijuana possession and the police raids increased the prominence of the group within the growing counterculture (Wolfe 1993: 139). The hip world knew that the possession of marijuana was not an issue then. If it was, half of San Francisco and a quarter of the country's population would have had to be incarcerated. Kesey was persecuted because he had done things, which, being different, threatened the established order. For the straight society Kesey was a primitive beast to be caught and civilized (McEneaney 2009: 48).

In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Tom Wolfe does not present the attitude towards money nor is any attention paid

²⁰ Ken Kesey invited the members of the infamous Hell's Angels motorcycle gang to a party at his home. The club became prominent within the counterculture, and established its notoriety as part of the 1960s movement.

to means of obtaining and distributing it. What the author describes is everybody's contribution, communal care, and fair share of goods. This lifestyle seems to be successful, as everyone has what they need and no one has to be concerned with the mundane activities of nine to five work of mainstream society. Ken Kesey claims that everyone should do their own "thing".

All of us are beginning to do our thing, and we're going to keep doing it, right out front, and none of us are going to deny what other people are doing [...] Everybody is going to be who they are, and whatever they are, there's not going to be anything to apologize about. (Wolfe 1993: 70)

Kesey's thing appears to be leadership. However, he does not want to be regarded as the leader, or the one in charge, and thus he calls himself the non-navigator, non-teacher (Wolfe 1993: 115). According to Wolfe, Kesey does not present rules of conduct, he presents his own life as an example for his followers. Whatever Kesey did met with recognition and fascination. In *Mountain Girl*'s²¹ words:

He was the center that it all moved around; he was pulling all the strings and manipulating it and getting people to do what he wanted. Of course, usually what he had in mind was so damn interesting and so outside of anything people would normally think of that you

²¹ *Mountain Girl* was Carolyn Adams' Prankster name. She had a relationship with Kesey, out of which a daughter named Sunshine was born.

wanted to go along with the phenomenon. (Torgoff 2005: 114)

And the reason for the admiration was Kesey's ability to establish proper relations with people of all walks of life: a car mechanic, Perry Lane intellectuals, and a spoilt middle class youngster. He established those relations in a variety of ways but in what he was doing there was a set of clear goals: to lead people through the doors of perception by means of drugs. Because, as Aldous Huxley wrote, they "[...] opened these ancient doors. And through them modern man may at last go, and rediscover his divine birthright" (Wolfe 1993: 45).

Let me at this point mention Timothy Leary, who was another guru of the hippie movement. He achieved the equivalent respect and approbation as Ken Kesey, but although they both became LSD celebrities through their psychedelic prophecies, Kesey soon learnt that their approaches to changing people's consciousness were unquestionably different. Heading to Millbrook, which was Leary's residence, Kesey was certain that if there was anybody in the world who could comprehend Merry Pranksters, it was Timothy Leary. Kesey was looking forward to meeting the second secret society which was also engaged in experiments with human consciousness, and expected an extremely warm welcome. However, their trip to visit the former Harvard professor did not go as planned. The Millbrook group was suspicious of the Merry Pranksters' promiscuous distribution of LSD. Thompson explains their concern in *Hell's Angels*:

[...] the freewheeling acid parties were already cause for alarm among respectable LSD buffs – scientists, psychiatrists and others in the behavioural-science fields who felt the drug should only be taken in ‘controlled experiment’ situations, featuring carefully screened subjects under constant observation by experienced ‘guides’. Such precautions are thought to be insurance against bad trips. [...]

The controlled-experiment people felt that public LSD orgies would lead to disaster for their own research. (Thompson (a) 1967: 278)

Leary’s group was cold towards the Pranksters who in return, discouraged by their counterparts’ refusal to have fun with them, ridiculed their meditation rooms. Being involved in a very serious experiment Leary could not be disturbed, and his unwillingness to meet was disappointing and hurtful to Kesey, who called Millbrook “one big piece of uptight constipation” (Wolfe 1993: 99). Therefore, it became clear that the hippie movement was progressing along several different pathways. Both groups were searching for something; however, Pranksters, with their acid experiments, were making a social-political statement. Millbrook, on the other hand, was primarily research-oriented and focused on trying to understand human consciousness. Leary’s group claimed they took expanding consciousness more seriously. They modeled the experience around established religious traditions. Leary wanted to pursue a contemplative life of meditation and considered *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* as a new bible for America. By contrast, a Prankster’s member,

Mountain Girl, claimed that her group had no understanding of Buddhism.

Kesey's group was more unconstrained and light-hearted. Richard Alpert²² and Timothy Leary, prominent leaders of the psychedelic movement, disapproved of Kesey's drug use and viewed it as an abuse, as a need to participate in a never-ending party. They were also concerned that public drug parties would cause the law to ban LSD. Merry Pranksters lived in the times when people were seeking a way to live beyond their limits and Kesey's idea was to create an environment in which people would be able to indulge in the acid experience, from which a new vision and an art form ultimately appeared. Kesey had a vision of "turning on the world". It occurred to him that the psychedelic message could be extended to the wider world during public initiations called *Acid Tests*.

At the end of the book, Tom Wolfe presents Kesey as a fear-crazed dope fiend. He reminds the reader that

... a few years previous he had been listed in *Who's Who* and asked to speak at such auspicious gatherings as the Wellesley Club in Dah-la and now they wouldn't even allow him to speak at a VDC [Vietnam Day Committee] gathering. (Wolfe 1993: 10)

and he asks a question:

²² Richard Alpert, known also as Ram Dass, worked with Timothy Leary on The Harvard Psylocybin Project. Alpert was dismissed from Harvard for allegedly giving psilocybin to an undergraduate.

What was it that had brought a man so high of promise to so low a state in so short a time? Well, the answer can be found in just one short word, my friends, in just one all-well-used syllable: Dope! (Wolfe 1993: 10)

The reader finishes the book wondering who Ken Kesey was. The man who was so largely responsible for bringing middle-class youth to hippiedom and psychedelia eventually decided to move further without drugs. Where to? It does not seem to be clear. Nevertheless, whatever the people who took part in revolution of consciousness were doing, they had the feeling they were alive in that very special time and place. They sensed that whatever they were doing was right and that they were winning. With that conviction the world in 1967 was invited to Haight–Ashbury for the Summer of Love.

Richard Goldstein did not seem to be that optimistic. His article “Psychedelic Psell” is a bitter article on the hippie guru – Timothy Leary – who mass-propagated the psychedelic experience which became too rampant. Instead of taking responsibility for it, he invited money and fame to his temple. Leary’s name started to appear in the most popular magazines every week, he wrote introductions to people’s books, he wrote his memoirs, took part in chat shows and held press conferences. It was not an easy task to have an interview with him without first contacting his manager, the booking agent and public relations man. Leary was partially responsible for the kind of advertisement of the counterculture which turned out to be harmful for the whole

movement. In the beginning the interest in “Psychedelic shoes. Acid TV commercials. LSD greeting cards. Marijuana brownies. Mandala shopping bags. Tibetan cocktails on the rocks” (Goldstein (b) 1970: 127) brought the excitement Leary was hoping for, unfortunately it quickly entailed undesirable effects. Goldstein seems to see Leary as the culprit but also a victim, who failed to foresee the negative consequences of his activities:

The gurus have been too busy chewing to notice that the beast they are devouring is gnawing away in return. [...] the blood and body are being drained from Timothy Leary’s eucharist and – in a mercantile transubstantiation – are being mass-produced as love beads. There is no Judas in Leary’s garden of Gethsemane; treason is within the prophet himself [...] Time has come for the guru to draw a line between revelation and merchandising. (Goldstein (b) 1970: 130-132)

In the spirit of the style of New Journalism, Goldstein focuses on Leary’s emotions as much as on what he actually did. The article is an explicit critique of Leary’s activities, contrary to Wolfe’s personal remarks, which are suggestions or hints. Whatever the way of presenting judgments and opinions, the following conclusion from the new journalistic texts can be drawn: the leaders of the counterculture were feckless and bumbling in their quest for a new social and spiritual world.

1.2. Drugs and travelling

Drug use was endemic in the United States by the mid-1960s, well before any Summer of Love. “Whether mellow out on Valium, hyped up on speed, socially drunk, or gently buzzed on nicotine, Americans had seemingly accepted the intoxicated state as part and parcel of the American way of life” (Farber in Brannstein and Doyle 2002: 20). But in the sixties their use was more important than ever before. Unquestionably, Tom Robbins is not mistaken when he claims that:

the 60’s would have never happened had it not been for the introduction of psychedelic drugs into the prevailing American paradigm. Certainly, there would have been protests, boycotts, and demonstrations, but they would have been only a fraction of the magnitude of those that actually occurred; they would have been far less frequent, widespread, intense, colorful, or effective. [...] I contend that to talk about the 60’s today without talking about, say, psilocybin, marijuana, and LSD [...] is to be guilty of the most sort of revisionism. Moreover, a panel on the 60’s that ignores or downplays the contribution of psychedelics would be akin to a panel on eggs that ignores or downplays the contribution of hens. (Robbins 2005: 94-95)

The overwhelming majority of hippies²³ used drugs. The flower children approved of different substances such as marijuana, hashish, LSD, mescaline, peyote, psilocybin and morning glory seeds. It was believed that to establish a new culture, people had to alter their consciousness. Through drugs, hippies found a life philosophy, a means of coping with the evils of American society (Miller 1991: 25-35). The hippie drug culture was not so much a revolt against American values but a sign that those values had been subtly changing for a long time. The drug use was not simply for pleasure, it was symbolic, it was a way of saying “no” to authority and the Establishment. It was sufficient to smoke a joint to be an outsider, a subversive, a rebel. If people escaped from reality, then it was away from the ordinary, mundane world into the depths of their innermost self. The hippies bonded drugs with mental exploration. The psychedelic sacrament that led individuals to a higher consciousness was LSD, which became a “mind blower of the masses” (Green 1999: 98). The times of the counterculture were the times of ‘Better Living through Chemistry’. The idea was to open a new space, where people could “space out” and live for the sheer point of living. LSD was an agent that helped the hippies to achieve their goal. It allowed individuals to explore their mind, induce visions and foster their spiritual growth, change the lives of people and, by extension, society (Gitlin 1993: 206). Drugs planted

²³ Prior to 1966, the word hippie was seldom used, so the term was absent through all of Wolfe’s book.

utopia in hippies' minds, as they expected to take the whole world in their hands with the idea of a loving society.

Considering that the ritual of consuming drugs drew people together and they felt they were a part of a loose tribe, Ken Kesey was certain that the miracle drug, the truth serum and the agent of changes must be ingested in company. His ideas are expressed by Tom Wolfe in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*: "It was as important as what you got high on, for you shared parts of yourself with the smoke" (Lee and Shlain 1985: 129-130). Kesey and his band of intrepid trippers started to share their experience by passing the word and the acid. They wanted to "freak freely", traveling, adventuring and observing what the world looked like while tripping and what they could do in that world to make it comply with their drug fueled vision (Farber in Brannstein 2002: 24). In the summer of 1964, the Pranksters started a journey around the country in a 1939 International Harvester school bus, which Kesey bought for 1.500 dollars. Wolfe describes the bus as follows:

It had bunks and benches and a refrigerator and a sink for washing dishes and cabinets and shelves and a lot of other nice features for living on the road. [...] Kesey gave the word and the Pranksters set upon it one afternoon. They started painting it and wiring it for sound and cutting a hole in the roof and fixing up the top of the bus so you could sit up there in the open air and play music, even a set of drums and electric guitars and electric bass and so forth, or just ride. (Wolfe 1993: 65)

As traveling was a symbol of liberation from social restraints and a means to achieve freedom, being on the road was tantamount to adventure, sex, a joyride, leisure and personal power. The embarkation on this celebrated trip was a formative moment of the psychedelic culture. Merry Pranksters themselves were sign-bearers of the new scene, which soon reached every corner of 1960s America (Whelan 1988-89: 63-86). During the trip the bus passengers were supposed to reveal the powers of LSD in random experiments among the people. Tom Wolfe writes that the bus:

headed out of Kesey's place with the destination sign in front reading 'Furthur' and a sign in the back saying 'Caution: Weird Load'. It was weird, all right, but it was euphoria on board, barreling through all that Warm California sun in July, on the road, and everything they had been working on at Kesey's was on board and heading on Furthur. (Wolfe 1993: 68)

Merry Pranksters were visiting main streets of nearby towns, playing music, encountering people and creating a psychedelic environment. They wore bright elaborate costumes, had Day-Glo painted faces, used electronic devices and strobe lights to facilitate their technique of maximum stimulation. They discovered their new selves, new psychedelic identities and took names like Intrepid Traveler, Doris Delay, Mal Function, Zonker, Speed Limit, Gretchen Fetchin or Mountain Girl. Their outrageous clothes and behavior frightened local people, provoked consternation and resentment among citizens (Grunenberg

and Harris 2005: 308). When they visited New York City, the Pranksters discovered that even the New York crowd was not ready for what Kesey and his group had brought to town. In the chapter titled “Tootling the Multitudes” Wolfe recounts: “They tooled across 42nd Street up Central Park West with the speakers blaring and even New York had to stop and stare” (Wolfe 1993: 93).

Furthur’s driver was Neal Cassady, the aging Beat icon, a wild man, a pill-popper, a nonstop talker and a symbol of shift between two generations, the Beats and a new movement of psychedelic hippies. “Neal Cassady drove Jack Kerouac to Mexico in a prophetic automobile, the same Denver Cassady that one decade later drove Ken Kesey’s Kosmos-patterned school bus on a Kafka-circus tour over the roads of an awakening nation” (Lee and Shlain 1985: 122). Travel was still a metaphor for spiritual discovery, but the Pranksters were a different, wilder, more turbulent version of the Beats. They did not have to ride across continents to find a shaman from whom they could obtain a power plant. With plenty of LSD in their possession, they could travel through warm California listening to Bob Dylan or the Beatles. In spite of all the differences between the Beats and Merry Pranksters, the psychedelic revolution was flooding the country. The torch had been passed by Cassady as the flame passing from Kerouac to Kesey (Perry 1990: 85).

The purchase of the bus marks an important moment for the Pranksters. It symbolizes the counterculture’s emergence into broader society, forcing those known as

“citizens” to confront differences and resistance in society. The trip became a metaphor for the carefree, authority-challenging, back-to-nature qualities of the sixties. Allen Ginsberg observed Kesey’s bus trip in the summer of 1964 as a sign of enormous awakening and change. “It was like a very colorful flag going up a flagpole, signaling the news that something was about to happen, something was about to shake” (Torgoff 2005: 115).

Unlike the Beats, Kesey’s followers openly ridiculed and condemned the conservative conformist society that treated them as “others” (Torgoff 2005: 121). The difference between the Pranksters and the Beats was more visible when they arrived in New York and met two of the Beat pioneers, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. According to Wolfe, Kerouac did not seem to be interested in the Pranksters’ world. Despite the fact that his writing was popular among the new generation of American rebels, Kerouac never wanted to be their role model. Their life was not the same and the following fragment from *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* illustrates the tension that grew between the two groups:

Kesey and Kerouac didn’t say much to each other. Here was Kerouac and here was Kesey and here was Cassady in between them, once the mercury for Kerouac and the whole Beat Generation and now the mercury for Kesey and the whole – what? – something wilder and weirder out on the road. It was like hail and farewell. Kerouac was the old star. Kesey was the wild new comet from the West heading Christ knew where. (Wolfe 1993: 94)

The symbol of the fifties met the symbol of the sixties and both rejected each other in equal bewilderment. Kerouac resented the intrusion – a feeling Kesey would soon experience. At that time, however, he could not assume that he would grow frightened by the drug culture he had helped to create and served LSD-spiked Kool-Aid to groups like Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead who returned to San Francisco and helped spread the word (Casale and Lerman 1989: 28).

Rock and roll promoter and writer John Sinclair preached that LSD made youth's most visible cultural creation:

... from alienation to the total embrace of humankind... The music was what gave us our energy and our drive, but it took the magic sacramental acid to give us the ideology which could direct that energy. Marijuana, which had come to us directly from black people and black musicians, in particular, had given us a start in this direction, but LSD opened the road into the future as wide as the sky and we were soaring! Acid blasted all the negativism and fear out of our bodies and gave us a vision we needed to go ahead, the rainbow vision which showed us how all people could live together in harmony and peace [...] LSD brought everything into focus for the first time in our mixed-up lives. [...] We knew things were wrong all the way they were but we didn't know how they could be different, which meant we really didn't know which way to move. LSD cleared all that up... (Farber in Brannstein 2002: 27)

LSD, Kesey's charisma and the novelty of the Pranksters' activities drew more and more people, and word of mouth presented Kesey as a counterculture hero. Kesey and his followers claimed their experience had magical dimensions, commenting that acid trips were ordeals that left them:

blinking kneedeep in the cracked crusts of our pie in the sky personalities. Suddenly people were stripped before one another and behold: we were beautiful. Naked and helpless and sensitive as a snake after skinning but far more human [...]. We were alive and life was us. (Lee and Shlain 1985: 120)

Had it not been for Augustus Owsley Stanley III, a man who became a youth culture legend during the Psychedelic Sixties, Acid Tests would not have been possible. LSD was too difficult to obtain and Kesey's dream of distributing doses to the masses would only have been a fantasy if two men had not met. Owsley formed a company called Bear Research Group, made legal purchase of chemicals essential for synthesizing LSD and began to mass-produce it. His acid was very strong. Owsley was obsessed with making it even purer than Sandoz; what is more, he did not raise the price because of his belief in saving the world by distributing the drug. While making his deliveries, he functioned as a bearer of news and folk wisdom. He was called by Timothy Leary "God's secret agent" and his LSD's effects were seen on the streets and at every major event in San Francisco. A new psychedelic wave

was visible everywhere, it had its gurus, poets, philosophers, chemists and festivals (Lee and Shlain 1985: 120).

Not all the changes made by LSD and the expansion of consciousness were positive for the members of the psychedelic movement. As LSD use spread through the United States and requests for the substance became uncontrollable, in early 1966 the authorities and the media began covering LSD use with a vengeance. *Time* magazine wrote in March that America was in the middle of an LSD epidemic. State governors were competing for the prestige of being the first to sign anti-LSD legislation. Reports of LSD-induced psychiatric breakdowns appeared, data was accumulated about severe psychological and emotional reactions, there was testimony about the demise of cultural values and people being lost to society. A doctor at San Francisco's general hospital claimed that four hippies a day end up on psychiatric wards on bad trips. Scientists and health officials announced that the unsupervised use of LSD for non-medical purposes could only lead to tragic results with a tendency toward bizarre behavior, fits of violence, psychosis which could occur at any moment without warning (flashback effect) (Lee and Shlain 1985: 120). In *The Electric-Kool Aid Acid Test* there are examples of negative side effects of LSD. Wolfe's prejudice against the use of drugs is revealed in Chapters Six and Seven. The author presents a woman called Stark Naked, a maniac who runs off into the desert. The whole group did not seem to care about her. For them, she was just a nudist who had lost control of her emotions from ingesting too much acid. This

fragment shows how much harm the Pranksters had done to people by dispensing drugs. Wolfe also describes Sandy's fits of terror, panic and feeling of paranoia after ingesting too much of the drug. He imagines his body changed into his parents' body, people blending together with things. His story continues in further chapters and the reader witnesses how Sandy grows steadily more paranoid and begins to lose his mind, unable to communicate with the rest of the Pranksters. Owsley's drug-induced experience is also a description of a *bummer*²⁴, the reader sees him in the vision of the French Revolution among rats, crying for help. One more example of a terrible experience under the influence of LSD is presented in Wolfe's novel in the chapter titled "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test". During one of the Acid Tests, Claire's manic scream is heard. Although she thought she was going mad, none of the Pranksters helped her. Instead, they used her cries to enhance their own trips. They failed a different kind of test. They did not give the girl total attention, did not guide her from the monstrous hallucinations she was succumbing to. What was happening can be summarized by Wolfe's words:

Kesey is a maniac and the Tests are maniacal and the roof is falling in. Taking LSD in a monster group like this gets too many forces going, too much amok energy, causing very freaky and destructive things to happen. (Wolfe 1993: 219)

²⁴ An adverse reaction to a hallucinogenic drug.

LSD-induced hallucinations, including negative emotions and frightening visions was not the only thing that should have worried Kesey then. He was one of those gurus who showed the whole generation his vision and encouraged young people to follow in his footsteps; however, there were first signs of the loss of control and the disintegration of the whole scene, which Kesey observed at the Beatles' concert. The Pranksters compared the place to a concentration camp and the crowd to a cancer. Wolfe's words illustrate the Pranksters' somber vision:

The teeny freaks and the Beatles are one creature, caught in the state of sheer poison mad cancer. The Beatles are the creature's head. The teeny freaks are the body. But the head has lost control over the body and the body rebels and goes amok... (Wolfe 1993: 184)

This is certainly a metaphor for the sixties movement, in which young people wanted to be a part of a better new community; however, they were misguided by the "creature's head", which may refer either to Kesey or Leary. Did Kesey fail to realize that the psychedelic movement would soon turn into the Beatles' concert - a horrifying image of one big mass of hysteria? He knew that the psychedelic scene used to be a harmonious gathering of beautiful people. Unfortunately, it had become a mass movement which attracted violence, general chaos, and was driven by base desires such as sex, commercialism and fame.

Police attention increased and drug users were caught in the net of the criminal justice system or remained under

constant police threat. After the second arrest for possession of marijuana, Kesey found himself facing a five-year sentence with no possibility of parole (Wolfe 1993: 229). To avoid jail, he started to adjust to the life of a fugitive in Mexico. After his departure, the Pranksters started to disintegrate. The movement itself lacked a single charismatic leader, a visionary who could pull the whole thing together. Tom Wolfe commented that “Leary was too old [...] As for Kesey – he is in swamp-bound in exile in some alligator-infested Mexican hideaway...” (Wolfe 1993: 320). Moreover, Kesey himself was consumed by paranoia and used drugs not to rebel against societal norms but to escape the reality of his situation.

He looked like he had aged ten years in three months. [...] He was taking a lot of speed and smoking a lot of grass. He looked haggard [...] and was doing some acid rapping, taking 500, 1,000, 1,500 micrograms instead of the normal 100 to 250. He had always been against that. [...] Acid rappers [...] all seemed to end up loose in the head. (Wolfe 1993: 174)

Tom Wolfe describes Kesey's efforts to disentangle himself from a complicated legal situation. In order to be able to return to the US and avoid severe punishment he envisioned a way “beyond acid” and started to plan the so-called Acid Test Graduation, an event at which he would show people how to move beyond acid. His lawyers explained his plan to the judge:

Mr. Kesey has a very public-spirited plan... He has returned voluntarily from exile in his safe harbor, to risk certain arrest and imprisonment, in order to call a mass meeting of all LSD takers, past, present and potential, for the purpose of telling them to move beyond this pestilent habit of taking LSD... (Wolfe 1993: 329)

This meant adopting new methods to recreate the psychedelic experience without chemicals, for example, through yoga or meditation. Following the tendering of this idea, Kesey was awarded bail. He tried to explain his theory of moving to the next step without using drugs but it was neither accepted nor understood. Owsley was the first to protest: “Bullshit, Kesey! It’s the drugs that do it. It’s all the drugs, man. None of it would have happened without the drugs” (Wolfe 1993: 322).

Not only did Owsley fail to understand Kesey’s idea, but the masses did not seem to comprehend it either. From that moment on Wolfe began to show the decline of Kesey’s leadership. The Acid Test Graduation was an ignominious failure and the last activity of the Merry Pranksters and Ken Kesey after years of mayhem. Everyone agreed that the party was a disaster. It showed that the movement had grown bigger than Kesey and the Pranksters, who no longer had control over it. Kesey’s charisma had stopped working. He may have advocated going “beyond acid”, but quite the opposite was happening. The movement was based on drugs and it could not move beyond its connection to LSD. The Merry Pranksters were not able to do anything, they could only grieve deeply over the fact that they had had the

opportunity to own the world but in the end they “blew it”. They became the first casualties of the hippie movement. In May 1967 Kesey received a sentence of six-months’ farm work in San Mateo. Instead of resuming his role as the group’s spiritual leader, Kesey returned to his farm. In the fall, several of the Pranksters joined him in retreating to farms and ranches around the Oregon countryside. Ken Kesey did not continue his priesthood for the psychedelic movement, which is claimed to have haunted Tom Wolfe for many years. Wolfe understood Kesey’s potential and the enormity of what he had done. He even suggested that if Kesey had tried harder, he could have founded as successful and popular a religion as that of the Mormons (McEneaney 2009: 35). Kesey, the Chief of the psychedelic era who had popularized the excess — he might have realized that the movement had plunged into madness, and he refused to be a part of it. In the beginning it was the Garden of Eden: “Acid opened the door to it. It was the Garden of Eden and Innocence and a ball. Acid opens that door and you enter and you stay awhile”. (Wolfe 1993: 350)

Kesey soon realized that going through the same door again and again they were not going to experience anything new and said: “Let’s find out where we are” (Wolfe 1993: 352). He went in search of himself, so did the rest of the movement, which became erratic, uncoordinated and uncontrollable, and as Kesey wrote later: it “burned like a big ultraviolet eye [...] The voltage generated by it scared him and excited him at the same time, and he needed an

escape before it swallowed him up” (Casale and Lerman 1989: 24).

In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* Tom Wolfe takes an unbiased look at the psychedelic culture and the growth of LSD in the 1960s; however, the writer hints that because of the drug the user became disinterested in the world. He describes leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, who, after ingesting acid, became focused only on the drug, became lethargic and saw student freedom movements, peace movements against the war in Vietnam or poverty as futile. According to Wolfe, protest movements changed into the psychedelic movement because LSD destroyed their energy. Kesey was one of those who encouraged people to turn their backs on activism and take part in “head” movement.

The wasted energy and possibilities are also described by Norman Mailer in *The Armies of the Night*. Mailer had hope in the youthful energy of the new generation of middle-class youth. He was bitter about their drug use and their illusion that the world would change by means of LSD-induced “celestial journeys”. Instead of achieving their goals, they lost their energy. In *The Armies of the Night* Mailer, being an honest reporter, criticizes the drug culture:

These mad middle-class children [...] now conceivably burning like faggots in the secret inquisitional fires of LSD. It was a devil’s drug – designed by the Devil to consume the love of the best, and leave them liver-wasted, weeds of the big city. (Mailer 1994: 34)

Mailer's opinion is supported by Paul E. Willis in *Profane Culture*. The author claims that drug use limited their political potential and made hippies powerless to affect the 'real' world. They lacked interest which could have expanded and helped develop their own culture (Willis 1978: 129-133).

Many hippies overdosed, became dependent on heroin, cocaine, barbiturates or methamphetamines which replaced recreational use of LSD and marijuana. Undoubtedly, drugs left many hippies psychologically and socially handicapped and prevented them from achieving their goals. Many, like Leary and Kesey, served prison sentences on drug charges or spent years running from warrants. The drug culture failed to provide enlightenment and liberation; instead, it caused chaos and fear.

The mania for drugs was the most criticized element of the hippie culture. Never before in human history did drugs penetrate with such brazen force into the life of the young generation. The belief that LSD or marijuana would affect a change of consciousness beneficial to the world was a controversial issue; however, again it was not a novel point of view. Throughout history, people have used drug-induced states to feel more at one with nature and the supernatural. Among primitive people, psychoactive plants are often considered sacred gifts from the gods and spirits, believed to unite people with the higher realms, and help them to explore and investigate parts of their own minds not ordinarily accessible. Doctor Stanley Krippner wrote that:

Psychedelic substances have been used very wisely in primitive cultures for spiritual and healing purposes. Our culture does not have this framework. We don't have the closeness to God, the closeness to nature, the shamanistic outlook. (Lee and Shlain 1985: xvii)

His words explain that there is a critical difference between traditional and modern drug use. Moderns may use drugs for pleasure or insight, but their use of drugs is counter-cultural. When traditional cultures use drugs, they confirm the essential truths of their culture. When moderns indulge in drug use, they challenge cultural truths. Contemporary Western Society has acquired non-sacred use of drugs. "Repetitive, compulsive and habitual drug use, emerging from both individual and societal pathology has led to dangers to drug users and to society at large" (Dobkin de Rios 1984: 135). The hippies were criticized for attaining expansion of consciousness with drugs rather than through extended dedication to a spiritual practice. New Journalists' texts also indicate that the hippies' faith in drugs as a key to a harmonious, better world was mindless, shortsighted and destructive.

1.3. Communal life

It was my dream to belong to a tribe when the energies flow among everyone, where people care for one another, where no one has to work, but everyone wants to do something because we're all mutually dependent for our survival and our happiness.

(Melville 1972: 12)

The aforementioned quotation from Keith Melville's *Communes in the Counter Culture* presents the hippie belief in constructing a model of an alternative society complete with values and a lifestyle. Their quest for a tribal community was a highly visible aspect of the hippie rebellion. It represented nostalgia for the old West, the wilderness, the simple life and the utopian community, which created an alternative to the ideology of progress of the technocratic society and its controlled world. Hippies had a lot of precursors. There were Adamites in the second and third century A.D., who shared goods and women, were vegetarians and preached absolute sexual liberty. Communes existed from the seventeenth century. In the 1840s, Brook Farm became a famous utopian experiment in communal living based on the ideals of Transcendentalism. Thoreau's retreat to Walden was for the hippies an example of an alternative to the tedious demands of conventional life. It offered them a vision of a purer life. The phenomenon of

community life, the return to nature and rejection of technology was not new in the United States and it was very intense in the counterculture. The desire to protect the earth and the glorification of a return to nature were new expressions of old instincts. Hippies created their communities and could live harmoniously there on their own terms, sharing things, working together and taking drugs. They believed that the lack of rules and organization would eliminate hostilities and people would be able to live in harmony with nature. A life in communes gave hippies an alternative to the Establishment, and created a feeling of abandoning the old society of secure, suburban dwellings. In this way they rejected the materialistic world and nine-to-five careers. They moved into a new form of society, which avoided competition and isolation, and provided a sort of emotional solidarity. According to Lewis Yablonsky:

The hippie dream is to return to the tribal position of the American Indian or the more satisfying life of a more closely knit extended-family – a situation where adults and children can live more intimately and humanely in a cohesive, face-to-face primary group. (Yablonsky 2000: 301)

Each group created its own lifestyle, terminology and simple cultic practices which involved music and art. Of greatest significance is the fact that hippies created a lifestyle of their own in opposition to choices given by corporations and political parties.

San Francisco's secret was not the dancing, the lightshows, the posters, [...] but the idea that all of them together were the creation and recreation of a community. Everybody did their thing and all things were equal. (Pichaske 1989: 138-139)

The communes were places where the hippies could live their lives, separate from the rules of straight society. According to the hippies this was the only way of rebellion that could destroy the hypocrisy that bred in all other spheres of American society. There is a general consensus among historians that Drop City was the first hippie commune. It was established in Colorado in 1965 (Issit 2009: 52). Later, San Francisco was christened as the vibrant epicenter of the hippie phenomenon; however, there were similar places throughout the country, such as Griffith Park in Los Angeles or East Village in New York to name a few (Melville 1972: 22).

Tom Wolfe presents some aspects of the Merry Pranksters' communal life. The author describes the place where they were staying and compares them to gypsies who live without hot water, toilets and beds, on "a couple of mattresses in which the dirt, the dust, the damp, and the scuds are all one [...]" (Wolfe 1993: 23). Wolfe was especially overwhelmed by the bathroom situation in the warehouse, where the Pranksters were living at the time he saw them for the first time. Because of the lack of indoor plumbing, the members of the commune were forced to relieve themselves outside near a fence, in an old abandoned

hotel or use the bathroom at the Shell gas station. For Wolfe, it was a really embarrassing situation when he had to ask for a bathroom key and carried it like a “bladder totem”. At that very moment it hit him that for the Pranksters, this situation was permanent:

This is the way they live. Men, women, boys, girls, most from middle-class upbringings, men and women and boys and girls and children and babies, this is the way they have been living for months, for years some of them, across America and back, on the bus, down to the rat lands of Mexico copping urinations, fencing with rotten looks – it even turns out they have films and tapes of their duels with service-station managers in the American heartland trying to keep their concrete bathrooms and empty Dispensa-Towels safe from the Day-Glo crazies... (Wolfe 1993: 21)

Straight society was getting upset with their lifestyle, especially when they saw the Pranksters living together on a bus by the side of the river. They knew it was not sanitary and that the bus presented a health nuisance (Wolfe 1993: 170). Neither does Tom Wolfe present their life as a happy and carefree one. In the chapter “The Unspoken Thing”, he gives another example of the life in communes. Many young people who were fascinated with the drug world were “piled into amputated apartments” (Wolfe 1993: 123).

The seats, the tables, the beds – none of them ever had legs. Communal living on the floor [...] They had no

particular philosophy, just a little leftover Buddhism and Hinduism from the beat period, plus Huxley's theory of opening doors in the mind, no distinct lifestyle, except for the Legless look...They were...well, Beautiful People! (Wolfe 1993: 123)

Those beautiful people rejected middle-class comforts, glorified poverty and sometimes lived in it.

Although a rundown farm was a picture that represented the predominant public image of the hippie commune, the scene was diverse. There were rural and urban communes, but it is impossible to estimate the exact number of them in order to calculate the size of the hippie communal movement. It is known, however, that the communes were present from the earliest days of the counterculture. There was Drop City in Colorado, and Morning Star Ranch outside Sebastopol, California (Miller 1991: 87-100). The greatest action started in 1966 and was all over in Haight-Ashbury, which was home of the Hippies. North Beach, which had once been the cradle of the Beat Generation, student rebellion, old-style hip life, jazz and coffee houses, was dying (Wolfe 1993: 14-15). The whole scene moved to "a rundown Victorian neighborhood of about 40 square blocks between the Negro/Fillmore district and Golden Gate Park" (Thompson in Fixx 1971: 674). Thousands of hippies were flocking to San Francisco for a life based on LSD and the psychedelic thing, and all eyes were on Kesey and his group, known as the Merry Pranksters (Wolfe 1993: 15). The acid rock and the

psychedelic movement had just started, San Francisco was the center of it and “La Honda was the leading edge” (Casale and Lerman 1989: 28). During his conversation with Ken Kesey, Tom Wolfe realized that San Francisco had become the capital of a drug culture and that other parts of the United States were years behind: “I don’t want to be rude to you fellows from the City, but there’s been things going on out here that you would never guess in your wildest million years, old buddy...” (Wolfe 1993: 15).

The communes were coming onto the scene not only in San Francisco. They appeared in large urban areas like Los Angeles, Boston, New York and also in rural areas of Big Sur, New York State and California. Hunter Thompson provides information about the communes in his article “The Hippies”:

By the early 1967 there were already half a dozen functioning hippie settlements in California, Nevada Colorado, and upstate New York. They were primitive shack-towns, with communal kitchens, half-alive fruit and vegetable gardens, and spectacularly uncertain futures. (Thompson 1968: online)

Hunter Thompson in the aforementioned article claims that hippies created new family organizations, selfless communities based on a romanticized tribalism fashioned on the American Indian (Thompson 1968: online). One such community were the Diggers. In 1967 they started dispensing free food in the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park,

and offering shelter and protection. The Diggers operated a free store with second-hand clothes or surplus from local companies. Doing this they provided “the ultimate freedom for everyone to do his thing” (Goldstein (c) 1989: 96). Richard Goldstein, in his article “Catcher in the Haight”, explains how the Diggers work, presenting opinions of different people on the Diggers’ activities, describing their pads, kitchens, their plans, and philosophy to rebel against the straight system and its hegemony. The Diggers coordinated cultural events, they managed a travel bureau, a counseling service and a hippie hotel. Thanks to their activities there were fewer casualties in the hippie scene, with its encroaching deprivation and disease.

Handouts on the Panhandle are only the beginning. The Diggers plan to run a bus down Haight Street. Donated sewing machines and fabric will provide the working tools for a co-op planned for the area. (Goldstein (c) 1989: 98)

Their community resembled a government, but fundamentally different from the externally imposed establishment structure, because its rules were self-imposed. The hippies were tired of the bureaucratic, oppressive society where people played “ego games” which were characterized by middle-class values, the assignment of roles, subordinate relationships, sanctions, regulations and discipline. The behaviors that lacked the aforementioned characteristics were non-games that included “psychological

reflexes, spontaneous play, transcendental awareness” (Leary in Yablonsky 2000: 312). Creating and living in communes allowed hippies to “do their own thing” and free themselves from ego-games (Yablonsky 2000: 310-312).

The purpose of taking part in the hippie movement and living in communes was intended to give young people exceptional social, educational and spiritually-enriching experiences. In the end many hippies returned to their homes and undertook their social roles. The hippie communes stood little chance of surviving. The adolescents who have taken on the ambitious task of changing the society and creating an alternative to it were poorly prepared to succeed in it. However, by their responses and actions they had sent a clear message to the older generation that the life they represented did not have meaning for them. The individualism, materialism, industrialization and heavy schedule of obligations were poor models for the young. Communes were a useful form of organization and as such, despite their shortcomings, may remain an inspiration for future generations.

1.4. Clothes of protest

Time wrote, 'Never have young been so assertive or so articulate.' This was the dawning of the Age of Aquarius [...]. Skirts grew shorter. Hair grew longer. The Youth of America were leaving home. (Davidson 1978: 101)

Skip Stone, in his book titled *Hippies From A To Z*, wrote that hippies turned fashion upside down and inside out. It meant the emergence of new styles and colors and a departure from the conservative rules of the early 60s and corporate character of the fashion industry. Hippie fashion was exaggerated and expressive. It was based on designs from India or Morocco, but also on costumes worn by icons of those days, like Jimi Hendrix or The Beatles. Seldom could hippies afford such clothes, but due to their resourcefulness, an old pair of jeans, a cheap bandanna, or an old vest with frills together with some beaded jewelry looked like the height of fashion.

Tom Wolfe was not a journalist with first-hand experience of the confusion around the whole hippie movement and the Pranksters. He met them on various occasions but he was never "on the bus"²⁵. He interviewed

²⁵ "You're either on the bus or off the bus" – a metaphor used by Kesey meant that people can either be members of the movement or outsiders.

some members of the group, consulted their diaries, watched their films. He told a second-hand story of the events. However, he did his best to describe everything with color and vividness.

From the beginning of *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, the reader can see the initial contrast between the world of the Pranksters and the conventional old world of the Establishment. The conflict is clearly delineated in terms of footwear. Wolfe shows the Pranksters' distrust of any kind of low-cut, shiny black shoes — the kind worn by the corporate world and the FBI. "Heads"²⁶ are fond of light, fanciful boots, or hand-tooled Mexican shoes. The ultimate solution to footwear in the hippie world, clearly distinguishing them from the rest of the society, was the decisive rejection of shoes and walking barefoot, even to a significant discomfort of doing it in the cities:

In the fall of '68, the new culture was in flower by the San Francisco Bay.

'Have a rilly good day!' Ankle bells, righteous weed,
Free Heuy! Shambala, brown rice and bare feet singing
Power to the People! (Davidson 1978: 175)

At one glance the hippies can be distinguished from the crowd because of their clothes: "[...] the jesuschrist strung-out hair, Indian beads, Indian headbands, donkey beads, temple bells, amulets, mandalas, god's eyes, fluorescent

²⁶ A user of psychedelic drugs, member of the counterculture.

vests, unicorn horns, Errol Flynn dueling shirts [...]” (Wolfe 1993: 8).

Suzanne Labin, in her book *Hippies, Drugs and Promiscuity*, explained that all the hippies’ clothes were those of protest. She claimed that by wearing feathers and headbands they identified with the purity of Indian tribes. Adopting the Hindu style of a holy man or by wearing saris, they paid homage to the mysticism of Hindus. Dressing in outrageous or even ridiculous clothes, young people wanted to show that the modern world was absurd (Labin 1972: 27-29).

Hunter Thompson, in his article “Why Boys Will Be Girls”, published in *Pageant* magazine in 1967, also concentrated on the hippies’ appearance. The world’s first Human Be-In gave him an opportunity for observation. On a date set by an astrologer, January 14, 1967, about 25 000 people celebrated the birth of the epoch of liberation, love, peace and unity – the Age of Aquarius. All the gurus of the psychedelic generation were there: Leary, Ginsberg, the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane. It was a huge psychedelic picnic with Diggers distributing food and LSD. That festival marked the beginning of the media’s fascination with the Haight–Ashbury inhabitants (McWilliams 2000: 72). The hippies were analyzed, photographed and considered to be dropouts who threatened law and order, public peace and the status quo. Thompson observed that as soon as the photographers had their obligatory photos of featured guests, they turned their lenses on the crowd of flower children. “There were barefoot men dressed in beads and

long robes; there were men wearing flowers, kilts, and necklaces, and girls dressed in sweat shirts and Levi's, with their hair cropped short like Army recruits" (Thompson 1967: 94). The representatives of the "straight"²⁷ society were present at the Be-In only to stare or maintain discipline. In his article, Hunter Thompson presents their resentment and opinions about the new generation. The Old World viewed the whole hippie phenomenon as a social cancer, one policeman claimed the youth was mentally ill and should be in hospital, the other suggested shooting them on sight. Some alarmed people warned the journalist that the generation of freaks "is on the verge of replacing the proud American eagle with a jabbering peacock" (Thompson 1967: 96). Because of very long hair and the use of outrageous multicolored clothing the hippies became antisocial queers. The generation of parents could not cope with a radical metamorphosis of the Western man, who decided to be beautiful and loved rejecting traditional male roles. The square world failed to understand that for hippies androgyny was important and helped to support their ideas of unity. In *Mephistopheles and Androgyne*, Mircea Eliade wrote that androgyny reflects a dissatisfaction with one's actual situation and a wish to recover lost unity. Men grew long manes of hair to be more feminine, women wore clothing with masculine appearance (Eliade 1965: 108-111). The convergence of male and female styles was promoted, it represented a combination of aesthetics and repudiation of the conception of maleness. Long hair for hippies was a

²⁷ Straight means here conventional.

natural human symbol of return to nature. Thompson observes that the crew-cut, hard fisted American society, which valued discipline, authority and moderation, could not understand why their daughters shaved like men and their sons dressed in pink polka-dot blouses. The members of the counterculture, on the other hand, were wondering why hair, their most visible symbol, which represented a break from oppressive country, was under the siege of such criticism. They defended themselves pointing out that most recent major criminals wore short hair and were beardless (Thompson 1967: 94-101). Only one of the people Hunter Thompson interviewed to write the *Pageant* article seemed not to agree with the mainstream opinion about the hippies. He was surprised at the reaction of the square world:

A lot of people actually seem afraid of them, which doesn't make sense, at least on the surface, because the Hippies aren't violent at all. They are going out of their way to reject the Old West, Hollywood image of masculinity [...] They don't like violence, and they are trying to reject a society that makes it a way of life. (Thompson 1967: 101)

Political activism did not constitute a central theme of the movement; however, during different types of sit-ins, love-ins, be-ins or protest marches hippies always caught the eye. Their presence did not escape the attention of New Journalist Norman Mailer, who, together with the politicized hippies under the command of Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, took part in the March on the Pentagon in

October, 1967. The march was supposed to be a symbolic battle against the American military power and the obscene, unjust Vietnam War. The four-day account surrounding the unprecedented demonstration was presented in *The Armies of the Night* (1968), where the protesters were described with exceptional detail:

The hippies were there in great number, perambulating down the hill, many dressed like the legions of Sgt. Pepper's band, some were gotten up like Arab sheiks, or in park Avenue doormen's greatcoats, others like Rogers and Clark of the West, Wyatt Earp, Kit Carson, Daniel Boone in buckskin, [...] and wild Indians with feathers, a hippie gotten up like batman, another like Claude Rains in *The Invisible Man* – his face wrapped in a turban of bandages and he wore a black satin top hat. A host of these troops wore capes, beat-up khaki capes, orange linings, or luminous rose linings. [...] One hippie may have been dressed like Charlie Chaplin [...] there were Martians and Moon-men [...]. (Mailer 1994: 91-92)

As Mailer suggests, the hippie aesthetic was their politics. They were at war with the Establishment and commercial culture and if they were going into battle they had the right to dress as they pleased. They often exercised this right by running away from home. The straight society of their parents seemed not to understand their need for dressing differently. Hippies explained the reason for their

choices to Joan Didion who quoted their conversation in “Slouching Towards Bethlehem”:

‘My parents said I had to go to church,’ Debbie says.

‘And they wouldn’t let me dress the way I wanted. In the seventh grade my skirts were longer than anybody’s – it got better in the eighth grade, but still.’ [...]

My mother was just a genuine all-American bitch,’ Jeff says. ‘She was really troublesome about hair. Also she didn’t like boots. It was really weird.’ (Didion 2001: 78)

Hippies made a considerable impact on style. Long hair, flowers, beads, colorful clothing, and things thanks to which hippies were recognizable – they all resulted in a wider acceptance of casual clothing and longer hair for men. This fashion indicated a loosening of the 50s rigidity and also involved a progressive re-evaluation of the meaning of masculinity. Long hair for both sexes and unisex clothing became mainstream fashion styles. Blue jeans, prohibited by public schools in the 1960s, started to be produced by top designers and are a universal form of dress nowadays. By the end of the 1970s the fashion of bell-bottomed pants, long hair and headbands were considered stylish, not eccentric. Inevitably, the protest clothes of the hippies were incorporated and exploited by the mainstream fashion industry.

1.5. Free love and promiscuity

Men will no longer work; they will have no more need for tools, domestic animals and possessions. Once the old order is abolished the roles, rules and taboos will lose their reason. The prohibitions and customs sanctioned by tradition will give place to absolute liberty; in the first place to sexual liberty, to orgy. For, in human society, it is sexual life that is subject to the strictest taboos and constraints. To be free from laws, prohibitions and customs, is to rediscover primordial liberty and blessedness, the state which preceded the present human condition, in fact the paradisiacal state. (Eliade 1965: 127)

Materials like leather, denim or velvet with paisleys and psychedelic designs, beads and amulets, and unshaven underarms and legs were as revolutionary as being naked. The rejection of modesty and puritan values together with nudism and bare feet placed people closer to nature. Nudity was a symbol of free style, it facilitated interpersonal communication, and as a cultural taboo it constituted a vehicle for dissent. Drugs together with nudism and free sex might have been symbols of deviance, but they were transformed into a salient feature of the hippie generation.

The beginning of the decade of the sixties were times when virginity and the puritan code constituted a very

important issue for the youth and their parents. Out of wedlock couples did not dwell together; sex, love and marriage were inseparable. People were warned of the consequences of premarital sex, and masturbation was disapproved of. When the hippies emerged, however, they accused sexual morality of the puritan society of being against nature, of suppressing instincts and impulses. According to Theodore Roszak, the corporate, technocratic society killed spontaneity and animal impulsiveness (Roszak 1995: 198). The hippies developed new, liberating concepts of sexuality in human life.

It may reasonably be doubted whether the hippies invented free love and recreational sex, but their attitude towards this sphere of life was unconventional. Openness towards promiscuity, easy divorce and contraceptives were present in the 1920s, the fifties rock'n'roll music had heightened sexual awareness, the Beat Generation's writing influenced the hippies' sexual freedom, the Bohemian attitudes of Greenwich Village proliferated, *Playboy* magazine preached sexual liberation. The developments in contraception was a crucial factor in shaping counter tradition to puritan values (Pichaske 1989: 132-135). It freed sexual intercourses from procreation and weakened parental control over teenage bodies. The redefinition of moral standards and a more sexually permissive atmosphere was visible in the cinema. *Easy Rider* (1969) idealized independence, drug use and casual sex. Nudity and lovemaking were shown in *I Am Curious Yellow* (1967), there

was also a comedy about wife swapping - *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice* (1969) (McWilliams 2000: 15).

Unlike any generation before, hippies valued personal desires over the rules of their parents, institutions, society or church. They were involved in sexual relationships and sexual experimentation as opposed to the traditional and restrictive mores of the 50s and early 60s. Sexual revolution liberated millions of Americans from the prevailing puritan sexual attitudes of the past era. To hippies, sex was good and healthy; it was treated as a means of human communication without the feeling of shame and guilt. Hippies preached the necessity of “experiences with many different people, in different times, circumstances and localities, in moments of happiness, sorrow, need, and comfortable familiarity, in youth and in age” (Reich 1971: 166).

Sara Davidson describes the new culture and the unconventional attitudes of its propagators:

Oh sure, there were still kids who slept through it: kids who studied at the library [...] But hundreds and hundreds were living the new life. Every house was a commune, every longhair was a brother. [...] Life was free and so was sex. Mmmmmmmmm sex, the ripe scent percolated in the air. All over Berkeley. [...] Everyone was turned on. (Davidson 1978: 175)

This description clearly indicates free sex as an element of the culture of the time, if not for everyone, than certainly for the majority.

Among the hippies, the majority of sex seemed to be premarital or extramarital. In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* not much attention is paid to the Pranksters' sexual life; however, the reader is informed about Kesey's relationship with eighteen-year-old Mountain Girl and their illegitimate daughter:

[...] here comes a woman and three children. Kesey's wife Faye, their daughter Shannon, who is six, and two boys, Zane, five, and Jed, three. [...] and then Mountain Girl brings over her baby, Sunshine, [...]. (Wolfe 1993: 27-28)

The episode of Mike Hagen's arrival might give the reader the picture of activities freely enjoyed by the counterculture members:

[...] he had his Screw Shack built out back of the cabin, a lean-to banged together with old boards and decorated inside with carpet remnants, a mattress with an India-print coverlet, candles, sparkling little bijoux, a hi-fi speaker – for the delight and comfort of Hagen's Girls. (Wolfe 1993: 61)

There is also a story of a woman, who after ingesting great amounts of narcotic substances invited Hell's Angels to an orgy. The scene is presented by Wolfe with a shocking indifference:

[...] one soft honey hormone squash, she made it clear to three Angels that she was ready to go, so they all trooped out to the backhouse and they had a happy round out there. Pretty soon all the Angels knew about the 'new mamma' out in the backhouse and a lot of them piled in there, hooking down beers, laughing, taking their turns, [...]. (Wolfe 1993: 158-159)

On the one hand, most hippies did not condemn orgies, which created community spirit and were revolutionary; but on the other, they were not attracted to organized sex, which was neither spontaneous nor countercultural. The predominant attitude, however, was that of freedom on the grounds of pleasure and free choice. Hippies were often accused of every manner of sexual perversion; they were attacked for being promiscuous, for having wild sex orgies, seducing innocent teenagers. Such things were not born with the idealism of the hippies. They started appearing when the hippie scene received publicity in the media, when it became fashionable to be a so-called weekend hippie, and when districts like Haight–Ashbury started attracting tourists. The influx of people created an opportunity for different kinds of petty criminals, pseudo hippies or sex maniacs to seduce naive youngsters. Many teenagers who ran away from home and joined the hippie movement were victims of child abuse. For some people Haight–Ashbury became a perfect place to have sex with a hippie girl. In their newspaper article the Diggers wrote:

Pretty 16-year-old middle-class chick comes to the Haight to see what it's all about and gets picked up by a 17-year-old street dealer who spends all day shooting her full of speed again and again, then feeds her 3000 mikes [of acid] and raffles her temporarily unemployed body for the biggest Haight Street gang bang since the night before last. The politics and ethics of ecstasy... Tune in, turn on, drop dead? One wonders. (Farber in Doyle 2002: 35)

Almost identical example is presented in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Hunter Thompson plots an episode with Lucy, a young girl, who came to Las Vegas to meet her idol, Barbara Streisand. Trusting and callow, she agrees on being taken to a hotel by Dr. Gonzo, who later tries to get rid of her before she starts to recollect what had been done to her:

[...] being picked up and seduced in the Los Angeles International Airport by some kind of cruel Samoan who fed her liquor and LSD, then dragged her to a Vegas hotel room and savagely penetrated every orifice in her body with his throbbing, uncircumcised member. (Thompson 1998: 116)

One more shocking example of the exploitation of the naïve hippie runaways is described by Yuri Kapralov in a memoir and a social history of Greenwich Village titled *Once There Was a Village* (1974). The book is an authentic account of the author's life in New York East Village, the neighborhood with a history of violence and rampant drug

use. During the late sixties and early seventies it became a crime-ridden place. The area around Thompson Square Park was especially dangerous and infested with hard drugs. One of the events concerns a young hippie girl from Wisconsin who came to New York in search of free love and freedom. She met a young man (a dangerous drug dealer) who epitomized the promise of indulging in a hippie lifestyle. The dealer drugged her and sold her into the sex slave industry to pay his debts. The girl spent days being bound to a bed in Brooklyn and sold to anyone willing to pay. Kapralov claims this was not an uncommon occurrence as drug dealers and addicts would sell runaways to obtain money (Kapralov in Kuligowski 2005: 84).

On the basis of the above examples it is possible to confirm the beliefs of the parents' generation that in the world of the hippies, love lost its sanctity, relationships became cheap and dangerous, and that free sexuality equaled domination over women by men. The hippies were scorned for breaking the barrier of shame attached to public fornication, homosexuality and prostitution. The attacks also came from the emerging women's movement which saw the woman as the victim of the sexual revolution: "[o]ur mothers could get a home and security, a prostitute – money, but a hippie woman is bereft of all that" (Estellachild in Miller 1991: 67). From the many statements of one of the most famous revolutionists, Abbie Hoffman, it can be concluded that women could sleep with whoever they wanted, but taking care of the house and children was still their obligation and there was no talking about women's

liberation (Kuligowski 2005: 91). It all can be summarized by a one sentence quote from *The Hippies and American Values*: “[t]he idea of sexual liberation of the woman means she is not so much free to fuck as to get fucked over...” (Miller 1991: 37). Sara Davidson adds to the critique:

Jealousy was bourgeois. We shouldn't have to censor our sexual desires. We shouldn't censor anything. If it feels right, do it. But while the men could ball for lust and not get attached, the women kept falling in love. What a mess. [...] Women were like blacks. Women were treated as inferiors and kept in subservient positions to men. (Davidson 1978: 176-177)

Nevertheless, throughout the decade, to many hippies, sex was felt to be a super mystical and harmonious experience, even though at the beginning of their revolution they had failed to notice the common problems of venereal diseases and teenage pregnancies. “They were sunny and cheery, and the word love punctuated their conversation with alarming frequency: all kinds of love, elevated ethereal love and plain old physical love” (Stevens 1988: 299).

The sexual emancipation permeated larger society and more and more people began to accept the possibility that physical pleasure was good. Sex out of wedlock became openly practiced, there was a greater tolerance of relations other than heterosexual. Many people stopped believing that cohabitation was morally wrong. Single-parent families mushroomed, the terms “husband” and “wife” were replaced with the terms “lover” and “partner”. Views on sexual

morality became more liberal and civil rights for homosexuals were gradually favored. Americans continued to grow more tolerant of liberal sexual attitudes than they had been before the hippies arrived on the scene. The permissive attitude continued to spread at high speed; however, the emergence of AIDS brought with it a kind of caution.

1.6. Music and festivals

Do you believe in rock and roll?
Can music save your mortal soul? (Don
McLean 1971: online)

Apart from the concept of free sex and the use of drugs, rock and roll music also distinguished the hippie generation from their parents' world. Music was an integral part of the counterculture. It was regarded as pivotal to the generational rebellion, it provided a medium for cultural communication. Hippies used it to express their feelings, emotions, and to identify with important issues and events that concerned them. Through music they made a statement, gave voice to their movement. Music was not just a concoction of sounds or entertainment, it was a necessity, a way of life which united the hippies, guided them along in their quest for meaning, drove them to action, made them think, dream and feel united. The suggestive lyrics carried a message which expressed the longings, aspirations, concerns and values of their listeners, and helped to shape those values (Miller 1991: 73-84). In *Greening of America*, Charles Reich wrote about the music of the 60s and its importance:

The new music is uniquely and deeply personal, allowing individuals and groups to express their special vision of the world to all their brothers and sisters; it deals with the entire world as seen and felt by the new

consciousness, and it takes listeners to places they have never been before. (Reich 1971: 271)

The new music of the sixties was a liberating force and “it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the music was not just a record of the sixties, it *was* the sixties” (Shapiro 2003: 150). A new reality of song and rock and roll, in opposition to prose and poetry of the Beat Generation, defined the hippies. The Beatles occupied a significant place in interpreting the culture. Their charm and vulnerable masculinity was compatible with the vibes of the sexual revolution, their positive energy with the promise of the Civil Rights Act. Their confident, rebellious style manifested the spirit of the counterculture. Their 1967 performance of “All You Need Is Love”, aptly portrayed the hippies’ strong belief in the mind-changing and life-transforming power of the rock of the sixties. The Beatles also helped to pave the way for other British bands such as the Rolling Stones. Inseparable from the countercultural music scene and rock, was the widespread use of marijuana and LSD (Farber and Bailey 2001: 55-63). To create psychedelia, the counterculture also invented its own type of rock, which generated a musical revolution on the West Coast. It was acid rock, typical for such bands as The Grateful Dead or Jefferson Airplane. In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Tom Wolfe explains the relationship with music and drugs and the emergence of acid rock:

[...] after Owsley hooked up with Kesey and the Pranksters, he began a musical group called the Grateful Dead. Through the Dead's experience with the Pranksters was born the sound known as 'acid rock'. And it was that sound that the Beatles picked up on, after they started taking acid, to do famous series of acid-rock record albums, *Revolver*, *Rubber Soul*, and *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts' Club Band*. (Wolfe 1993: 189-190)

Released in 1967, mystical, anti-establishment album *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was a psychedelic cultural statement perfectly expressing youthful idealism, and capturing the spirit of the Summer of Love. The Beatles' song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds", from the above mentioned album, caused speculation that the first letter of each of the title's nouns intentionally spelled LSD. Although the group denied a hidden LSD reference, the album cover²⁸, the lyrics²⁹, studio effects, tangerine trees, and marmalade skies all carried tell-tale signs that LSD and acid subculture were indeed part of it. Several radio stations also refused to play The Byrds' "Eight Miles High" because of drug connotations in the lyrics (Shapiro 2003: 141-165).

Reading *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* one has a feeling that music was an important and inseparable part of

²⁸ One of the people on the cover was Aldous Huxley; it has long been rumored that some of the plants in the arrangement were cannabis plants.

²⁹ The song "A Day In the Life" was banned by the BBC, because of its favorable reference to 'a trip'.

the Pranksters' life. Thanks to Wolfe's vivid style, the reader can sense the atmosphere, feel the rhythms, see people dancing in strobe lights and under the influence of LSD:

[...] and suddenly acid and the worldcraze were everywhere, the electric organ vibrating through every belly in the place, kids dancing [...] *ecstasy*, leaping, dervishing, throwing their hands over their heads like Daddy Grace's own stroked-out inner countries – yes! – Roy Seburn's lights washing past every head, [...]. (Wolfe 1993: 211)

Music is omnipresent in Wolfe's novel, which can serve as an important source of knowledge about The Grateful Dead. The group was directly connected with Ken Kesey, The Merry Pranksters and their Acid Tests, and constituted a rich source for the art that defines the sixties. Perhaps another reason why the San Francisco music scene was different from those in other parts of the United States is expressed in the following quotation from Richard Goldstein, who made some insightful comments on the geographical variations in the musical cults and their fascinations:

Ask an aspiring musician from New York who his idols are and he'll begin a long list with the Beatles or Bob Dylan, then branch off into Paul Simon literacy [...]. Not so in San Francisco. Bob Dylan is like Christianity here; they worship but they don't touch. The sound of the Grateful Dead, or Moby Grape, or Country Joe and

the Fish, is jug band music scraping against jazz.
(Goldstein (d) 1989: 56)

The most notable and quintessential Bay Area band was The Grateful Dead, who Timothy Leary called “a twenty year extension of the Acid Tests” (Perry 1990: 149). Psychedelic experience, specific and direct references to drugs were strongly expressed particularly in the Bay Area and The Grateful Dead leader, Jerry Garcia was “a patron saint of the scene” (Goldstein (d) 1989: 56). From Wolfe’s book one can learn how Ken Kesey met Garcia (Wolfe 1993: 210), how they chose a new name for the band (they were previously known as The Warlocks), and how important their music was for the development of the acid culture. By describing their equipment, Wolfe reveals the power of music and their performances:

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 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 [...]. (Wolfe 1993: 211)

Hypnotic repetition and exotic instruments of acid rock appealed to ‘the heads’. Additionally, the bands gave free concerts, as the songs contained swear words and were too long for radio stations, the music was largely restricted to

live performances. Hippies felt connected to their bands, which reflected commitment both to the moment and to the community (Pichaske 1989: 141).

Alongside The Grateful Dead, perhaps the most important musician of the sixties was Robert Zimmerman, performing under the name Bob Dylan, who incorporated rock into his folk style and was the author of various protest anthems. Charles Reich called him “a true prophet of the new consciousness” (Reich 1971: 270). His songs allowed young people to escape from the Vietnam War, terror and anguish into utopia and an aesthetic existence. They contained powerful texts of social observation and protest, some of which were elusive compositions of no single message or meaning. One of the songs that transformed the hippies into an individual’s fantasy was “Mr. Tambourine Man”. Hunter Thompson’s dedication of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* “to Bob Dylan, for *Mister Tambourine Man*” shows how important the song was for the counterculture generation. In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* Tom Wolfe also mentions his name on various occasions:

Bob Dylan’s voice is raunching and rheuming in the old jacklegged chants in huge volume from out the speakers up in the redwood tops up on the dirt cliff across the highway – He-e-e-ey Mis-ter tam-bou-rine Man [...] radios were wide open and cracking out with sulphurous 220-volt electric thorn baritones and staticky sibilants – He-e-e-ey Mis-ter tam-bou-rine Man [...]. (Wolfe 1993: 154)

While the hippies dreamed about peace, love, beauty, harmony and freedom, Dylan sang about the Romantic vision of the liberated individual, released from the pains and distortions of society's traps. The lyrics appealed to hippies as they expressed their values and longings for freedom. There were also interpreters who understood the song (or its two verses: "Take me on a trip upon your magic swirling ship [...] Take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind" (Dylan 1965: online)) as an ode to a drug dealer, inviting young people into a kingdom of psychedelic satisfaction (Gitlin 1993: 200). Whether it was Dylan's intention or not, the idea was communicated and the song helped hippies bond in a belief that "crazy sorrow" and all the unhappiness will turn into sweet collectivity, especially with a little help from mind-altering drugs:

"Mr. Tambourine Man" went down especially well with marijuana, just then making its way into dissident campus circles. The word got around that in order to "get" the song, and others like it, you had to smoke this apparently angelic drug. It wasn't just peer pressure; more and more, to get access to youth culture, you had to get high. Lyrics became more elaborate, compressed, and obscure, images more gnarled, the total effect nonlinear, translinear. Without grass, you were an outsider looking in. (Gitlin 1993: 201)

Outsiders did not notice the incorporated acid experience in the enigmatic lyrics of "White Rabbit" by Jefferson Airplane, a San Francisco acid rock scene band.

The lead vocalist and a song writer Grace Slick codified the counterculture psychedelia for American youths. The song, which is recalled several times in Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*³⁰, hit top of the US charts and was called by Richard Goldstein "the hippie national anthem" (Palmer and Horowitz 2000: 185). Inspired by Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) world of imagery, it includes comparisons of the hallucinatory effects of psychedelic drugs, events, such as changing size after eating mushrooms or drinking an unknown liquid, characters referenced include Alice, the hookah-smoking caterpillar, the White Knight, the Red Queen, and the Dormouse (Torgoff 2005: 137-138):

When men on the chessboard
 Get up and tell you where to go
 And you've just had some kind of mushroom
 And your mind is moving low
 Go ask Alice
 I think she'll know
 When logic and proportion
 Have fallen sloppy dead
 And the White Knight is talking backwards
 And the Red Queen's "off with her head!"
 Remember what the dormouse said:
 "Feed your head" (Jefferson Airplane 1967: online)

³⁰ "I hit the "play" button and "White Rabbit" started building again" (Thompson 1998: 60). "The volume was so far up that it was hard to know what was playing unless you knew Surrealistic Pillow almost note for note...which I did, at the time, so I knew "White Rabbit" had finished;" (Thompson 1998: 59).

References to Carroll's novel could also indicate a relation to the Alice-in-Wonderland effect. It is a condition that may appear after prolonged drug use, when one experiences the feeling of living between several worlds (Yablonsky 2000: 269). Whatever the purpose of the lyrics might have been, hippies understood the strange bolero-like song as a call to learn about or escape to other realities. "Let's Get Together" contained another message which urged hippies to create a new world of a loving community, absolutely different from the normal social circuits:

Hey people now
Smile on your brother
Let me see you get together
Love one another right now. (Jefferson Airplane 1966:
online)

Not only music and lyrics, but also the musicians themselves, their behavior, and the messages they conveyed had a powerful influence on young people. Very often, musicians wanted to show them the way, as it was in the case of Janis Joplin:

Kids from the Midwest, their whole fucking thing is to sit in row Q47 and be still... It's never occurred to them that they could not go in the army. You know, it's a thing to do... If you can get them once, man, get them standing up when they should be sitting down, sweaty when they should be decorous ... I think you sort of switch on their brain, man, so that makes them say: 'Wait a minute, maybe I can do anything'. [...] After

they see me, when their mothers are feeding them all that cashmere sweater girdle, maybe they'll have a second thought – that they can be themselves and win. (Echols 2002: 41-42)

The new music achieved a degree of integration, especially during rock festivals and concerts. In the sixties all hippie festival days took on an air of historical importance, they were like crusades and pilgrimages of the countercultural faithful. They were the subjects of conversation for weeks before and after the event and provided one massive indulgence in drugs, sex, rock and community, which created a sense of cultural identity that could not be found elsewhere. (Miller 1991: 82). The Trips Festival of January 21-23, 1966 was one of the greatest expressions of a psychedelic culture. In Wolfe's words:

[It] was like the first national convention of an underground movement that had existed on a hush-hush cell-by-cell basis. The heads were amazed at how big their own ranks had become – and euphoric over the fact that they would come in the open, high as balloons, and the sky, and the law, wouldn't fall down on them. [...] and the Haight-Ashbury began that weekend. (Wolfe 1993: 234)

Trips Festival was held in several parks and concert halls in the Haight–Ashbury area of San Francisco. The festival was a three-day party open for everyone with 20,000 people dressed in outrageous costumes under the influence

of LSD even though it was advertised as a celebration that was to simulate the LSD experience without LSD. After this event many people recognized that a culture had been created. Haight–Ashbury became the colorful, outrageous symbol for a growing hippie movement, with people sleeping in parks and shared apartments, with stores opened to serve hippie needs and even an LSD Rescue Service to help people having bad experiences with drugs (Perry 2005: 40–48).

Merry Pranksters' Acid Test was scheduled on the Saturday of The Trips Festival. There were several Acid Tests in different parts of California and they were described by one of the Wolfe's interviewees:

... a ballroom surrealistically seething with a couple of thousands bodies stoned out of their everlovin' bruces in crazy costumes and obscene makeup with a raucous rock' n 'roll band and stroboscopic lights and a thunder machine and balloons and heads and streamers and electronic equipment [...]. (Wolfe 1993: 225)

Merry Pranksters initiated something that was called mixed-media entertainment which later was a standard practice in 'psychedelic discotheques'. Projectors, tapes, microphones, lights, music and movies played a very important part in their ventures. They also discovered that there was such a thing as strobe, which for the acid heads had magical properties (Wolfe 1993: 214). The events of which Pranksters were ultimate practitioners came to be called 'participatory theater'. The notion of such a

performance was ever-present in the Haight–Ashbury. The Diggers practiced it as eagerly as the Pranksters. The Diggers became famous for free food and crash pads, but most of their activities were strongly theatrical. The theater motif distinguished the hippie use of psychedelics from that of the Beats, and helped assimilate psychedelic experience into everyday life (Perry 2005: 242–244).

On October 6, 1966 LSD was delegalized and its possession and distribution were criminalized, which made its use more dangerous and more a clear sign of cultural rebellion. The law against LSD was interpreted by the drug’s advocates as a violation of people’s right to experience their own divinity. Some people attached to that date a half-serious implication of the triple sixes, which was the mark of the Antichrist in the Book of Revelations (Perry 1990: 117). From *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* one can learn how on the same day:

...the Haight–Ashbury heads held the first big ‘be-in’, The Love Festival [...] Thousands of heads piled in, in high costume, ringing bells, chanting, dancing ecstatically, blowing their minds one way and another and making their favorite satiric gesture to the cops, handing them flowers [...] the thing was fantastic, thousands of high-loving heads out there messing up the minds of the cops and everybody else in the fiesta of love and euphoria. (Wolfe 1993: 324)

The Golden Gate ‘Be-In’ of 14 January 1967 gathered thousands of people who flocked to San Francisco to listen

to music, make love and get intoxicated. And, to the amazement of the conventional society there was no trouble nor disaster. This is how the event was described in Sara Davidson's journalistic novel, *Loose Change* (1977):

[...] the scene looks spinny. People dancing on the grass. Allen Ginsberg all in white, chanting OM. Hell's Angels parked about the stage like gunmen, guarding the sound equipment. The Angels and the hippies are friends now, thanks to Ken Kesey who convinced the Angels that both groups are outlaws from straight, washed America. [...] Girls with bare, jiggling breasts are carrying babies on their backs. Balloons, soap bubbles and hair, hair everywhere! Astrology, tarot, leather capes, Grateful Dead, Sufi dancing, body painting, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna. Jamming on stage are a succession of rock bands with names that must have been conceived while tripping: the Freudian Slips; Big Brother and the Holding Company; the Hedds; the Chosen Few; the Jefferson Airplane; the Electric Train; A Sop-with Camel; Earth Mother and the Final Solution; Moby Grape; the Only Alternative and his Other Possibilities. A lull in the music. Timothy Leary ascends the stage and chirps, 'What I have to say can be summed up in six words: turn on, tune in, drop out!' (Davidson 1978: 108)

There was energy of the new generation drawn from being together, listening to music and embracing each other. The Be-In organizers managed to show the world the beauty of what was happening in San Francisco so that

people understood why hippies rejected the American Dream in favor of LSD and the communes of the Haight-Ashbury district (McWilliams 2000: 72).

Another event that was quickly mythologized by the counterculture was Woodstock festival in Bethel, New York – a weekend of sex, drugs and rock’n’ roll. The greatest party of the twentieth century took place on August 15, 1969 and despite being a facility disaster, it became affirmation of the values of the counterculture generation. There was no police protection, little security or medical staff, the rain turned the field into a swamp, but the sense of community and cooperation among the half million strong crowd was enormous and no violence occurred. Woodstock became a symbol of beautiful people and the beautiful sixties (McWilliams 2000: 74-75).

At The Chicago Conspiracy Trial³¹, Abbie Hoffman, an American social and political activist said he resided in Woodstock Nation. When he was asked in what state Woodstock Nation was, the answer he gave was “in the state of mind”. “That’s what stuck with people of the Woodstock generation once they washed off the mud. Not drugs or the politics, but a state of mind” (Casale and Lerman 1989: 22). And the state of mind was the remains of the peace and joy that gave way to ugliness which appeared in the form of Altamont, the Mason murders or commercialization:

³¹ Eight people were tried for conspiracy, inciting to riot, related to protests that took place in Chicago, Illinois on the occasion of the 1968 Democratic National Convention. (see part I, subchapter 1.5.)

Eventually, of course, the predators came, and the rip-offs, and the lawyers, and the heat, and all the harpies of the establishment crushing in from every side, exploiting, abusing, applying the screws and the rack, and there were drug busts and legal hassles about lyrics and who could play with whom, [...] and Joe had left the Fish, and the Haight was full of hustlers and perverts, and that was the end of a brave experiment and a very lovely dream. (Pichaske 1989: 142)

Janis Joplin, Jerry Garcia or Grace Slick constituted a part of the Haight–Ashbury community, but the possibilities of stardom separated them from their audiences. The commercialization of music was the sign that the musicians who first set out to change the world, were instead, themselves, changed by corporate America. Woodstock quickened the process of commercialism – more and more bands became crowd-pleasing entertainers, and started playing in Madison Square Garden. Show-business, considered by many as insincere and indifferent to artists, became part of their lives; as did franchised magazines and rock pundits. The marketplace changed their musical venues, their audiences, their values, and in turn destroyed much of the visions of alternative realities that LSD had planted in their minds as individuals. The noncommercial package of the scene was ripped off and the music stopped reflecting the attitudes of the hippie community (Echols 2002: 39–47).

2. The end of the Age of Aquarius

It was a country of bankruptcy notices and commonplace reports of casual killings and misplaced children and abandoned homes and vandals who misspelled even the four-letter words they scrawled. Adolescents drifted from city to torn city, sloughing off both the past and the future as snakes shed their skins. It was not a country in open revolution. It was a country under enemy siege. It was the United States of America in the cold late spring of 1967, and the market was steady and the G.N.P. high and a great many articulate people seemed to have a sense of high social purpose and promise, but it was not, and more and more people had an uneasy apprehension that it was not. All that seemed clear was that at some point we had aborted ourselves and butchered the job. San Francisco was where the social hemorrhaging was showing up. San Francisco was where the missing children were gathering and calling themselves 'hippies'. (Didion 2001: 72)

2.1. Commercialization and decline of the movement

In the above excerpt from "Slouching Towards Bethlehem", Joan Didion claims that the members of the counterculture called themselves hippies. Hunter Thompson would not

agree with her. In the article “Why Boys Will Be Girls” Thompson claimed that a hippie was a meaningless “newspaper term, the creation of headline writers who make their living by translating reality into quick, eye-catching phrases that will fit in one or two columns”. (Thompson 1967: 96). In his other article “The ‘Hashbury’ Is the Capital Of the Hippies” he tried to give a meaning to the term he had previously called meaningless and defined the word hippie:

The word ‘hip’ translates roughly as “wise” or “tuned-in”. A hippy is somebody who “knows” what’s really happening, and who adjusts and grooves with it. Hippies despise phoniness; they want to be open, honest, loving and free. They reject the plastic pretense of 20th century America... (Thompson in Fixx 1971: 674)

In his other article titled “The Hippies”, Thompson comments on the Random House dictionary definition of the word ‘hip’:

“Hip” is a slang word, said Random House, meaning “familiar with the latest ideas, styles, developments, etc.; informed, sophisticated, knowledgeable [?].” That question mark is a sneaky but meaningful piece of editorial comment. (Thompson 1968: online)

Whether the members of the counterculture liked the term or not, it caught on and young rebels came to be called by that name.

Those young rebels were mostly white, carefully nurtured and well-educated, they constituted a tiny minority but because of the fact that they were imaginative, articulate and artistic, their lifestyle and world-view spread to a far larger group of people (Bingham in Fixx 1971: 696). Hippies created a phenomenon of cultural rebellion, they gathered all over the United States and across Europe; however, the San Francisco district of Haight–Ashbury was the center of the revolution. San Francisco was rapidly becoming the capital of drug culture. Nearly everyone on the streets between twenty and thirty was ‘a head’: a user of psychedelic drugs. Hippies saw themselves as the leaders of a new, psychedelic way of life, with love, work as fun and people helping each other. They made a clear break with straight society, dressing in a bizarre way, replacing the family with the commune, pop and jazz with acid rock, traditional cuisine with macrobiotics and changing art into a do-it-yourself activity. Although there was widespread concern about the dangers of so many people using so much LSD, the drug culture was spreading fast and attracted more and more followers. Thousands of students moved off campus, popularizing the custom of living together without matrimony, constantly experimenting with drugs, abandoning stable routes of American society and rejecting its system. Parents were shocked, authorities defined this way of living as illicit and governor Reagan called a hippie

someone who “dresses like Tarzan, has hair like Jane, and smells like Cheetah” (Gitlin 1993: 217). The cultural panic, which was spread in the news did not seem to stop a crowd of new, inexperienced hippies from heading towards Haight–Ashbury.

A happening that was focused on higher consciousness, communal living, ecological awareness, The Human Be-In of January 14, 1967, celebrated in Golden Gate Park, was a prelude to what was about to happen in the summer. In August not only was San Francisco crowded with people but also New York received half a million visitors. The Woodstock Festival was called the greatest party of the hippie era. It was affirmation of peace, love, freedom, spiritually, sex and rock music, all the values of the generation. The 1967 Summer of Love spread the counterculture throughout the country and produced a wave of visitors. With the influx of flower children from all parts of the United States, San Francisco received great media attention and the hippie started to cease to be a cult and was becoming an industry.

Richard Goldstein blamed the media for exploitation of hippie culture. Most popular coverage focused on controversy like nudity, drugs and outrageous clothes. Only few perceptive reporters saw deeper meanings in hippiedom. The majority of the reporters did not want to spend months reconstructing that very intense period. They had couple of days to comprehend a group of weirdoes and wrote shallow articles using a banal journalistic formula of free sex, drugs, indolence and menace. The press, by advertizing all those

things brought to hippie enclaves insecure young people, dropouts, outcasts and crazies. It was not the kind of advertisement the hippies looked forward to (Perry 2005: 261). In the article “San Francisco Bray”, Richard Goldstein criticized the media for exploitation of counterculture:

No sooner does a new tribe of rebels skip out, flip out, trip out, and take its stand, than photographers from Life magazine are on the scene doing a cover. No sooner is a low-rent, low-harassment quarter discovered than it appears in eight-color spreads on America’s breakfast table. American culture is a store window that must be periodically spruced and dressed. The new bohemians needn’t worry about opposition these days – just exploitation. (Goldstein (d) 1989: 53)

Due to this exploitation, the gurus of the psychedelic movement — Timothy Leary and the Grateful Dead became celebrities.

Goldstein also predicted the “Mac-Dougalization of acid art” (Goldstein (b) 1970: 130). The psychedelic aesthetic of hippie fashion, strobe lights, psychedelic posters, and paisley swirls made their way into American shopping malls and infiltrated the mainstream. “Hippieland” was filled with stores catering mainly to the tourist trade. The stores in the neighborhood catered only to tourists. The prices were high and hippies could not afford sandals for twenty dollars or a psychedelic outfit for almost seventy dollars. They did not have enough money to pay entrance fee to Fillmore Auditorium and Avalon Ballroom, which

were the birthplaces of psychedelic music (Thompson in Fixx 1971: 675). Visitors came to Haight–Ashbury as onlookers so their presence had no investment in the community that had been established there. Their indulgence in the atmosphere of hippiedom was akin to sampling. Nicholas Von Hoffman presented the bitterness of the hippies caused by the publicity and tourist influx on the hippie scene:

Since the summer began our doorstep has been littered [...] with every kind of freak. I can't use the word hippy. I was a hippy, but I don't have anything to do with what's going on here. We used to have our cardinal rule: Do not impose your trip on anyone else. Well, that's what these people are doing [...] the kids and the tourists came and imposed their trip on us, a sidewalk freak show. (Von Hoffman 1968: 24)

Hunter Thompson wrote that everything that was genuine in the Haight–Ashbury was wiped out by publicity and commercialism. In his article “The Hippies”, he also observed that hippies became both anti-culture heroes and a hot commercial property (Thompson 1968: online). The hippie “was famous in a hazy kind of way that was not quite infamy but still colorfully ambivalent and vaguely disturbing” (Thompson 1968: online). The media exploitation is also commented on by a journalist Nicholas Von Hoffman in his book *We Are The People Our Parents Warned Us Against* (1968). According to Michael L. Johnson, the book belongs to the New Journalism genre (Johnson 1971: 134). It

portrays the lives on the hippie scene and stresses the media and tourist exploitation of the psychedelic culture:

It's the mass media that changed us from men into hippies, and then when they've done it they write these terrible editorials against us [...] The mass media made us into hippies. We wanted to be free men and building a free community. [...] There never were any flower children. It was the biggest fraud ever perpetrated on the American public [...] And it's your fault; you, the mass media, did it. This wasn't a 'Summer of Love', this was a summer of bullshit and you, the press did it. The so called flower children came here to find something because you told 'em to, and there was nothing to find. (Von Hoffman 1968: 261-262)

The counterculture became a lifestyle for sale and Scott McKenzie's song "San Francisco"³² "was the real last nail in the coffin" (Echols 2002: 30). 'Squares' dressed to the code described in newspapers, wore flowers in their hair and descended on the Haight–Ashbury district to become a hippie during the weekend. Anyone could be a hippie by following the latest fashions (Echols 2002: 30). Tourists flocked to San Francisco, some companies organized trips through the Haight–Ashbury district, hippieburgers and lovedogs were sold in local stores. The hippie rebellion against conventional society and the commercial process, the symbols that expressed outrage at society's oppression and

³² Written by John Phillips of *The Mamas & the Papas*, released in June 1967.

absurdity, ironically were transformed into marketable items.

Another negative aspect of the process of degradation of the movement was commented on by Susanne Labin. It was the female hippie, who for her was a pitiful sight. She painted a portrait of a girl who was ugly, had sunken cheeks, greasy hair and destroyed vital cells. Hippie girls looked like that because of sleepless nights in discotheques, LSD trips and venereal diseases contracted during casual sexual encounters (Labin 1972: 53). The women did not seem to find the freedom and liberation from conformist society that all the first hippies had dreamed about. Nicholas Von Hoffman describes the situation of the female hippies:

Hip or straight, the essential feminine role is intractably the same: the old ladies of the Haight doing the cooking, the sewing, and the house cleaning like the young matrons in the suburbs. They walk one step behind their men, submissive... (Von Hoffman 1968: 203)

Not only Labin and Von Hoffman were pessimistic about the hippie scene. Hunter Thompson interviewed different people to write his piece on the Haight–Ashbury scene. One of them presented his gloomy vision of the hippie movement:

I'm very pessimistic about where this thing is going [...] Maybe this hippy thing is more than a fad; maybe the whole world is turning on but I'm not optimistic. Most

of the hippies I know don't really understand what kind of a world they're living in. I get tired of hearing about what beautiful people we are. If the hippies were more realistic they'd stand a better chance of surviving. (Thompson in Fixx 1971: 677)

Attracted by the new fad, many of the youths who flocked to the hip enclaves were not prepared for spiritual exploration; they were clueless and naive. The counterculture was luring them to a life they were unaware of beyond a superficial level, and ultimately unprepared for. People arrived at the hippie scene and they did not know how to take care of themselves. They did not know how to wash their clothes, hold down a job, or make sure they were going to live through it.

In the essay "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" (1968), Joan Didion presented a Dickensian picture of life on the edge of Golden Gate Park. Didion titled her book and the essay *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* borrowing one line from W. B. Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*. Although the poem appeared in 1921 it can also be a symbol for the end of the 60s as it is about fear, despair and chaos. Joan Didion saw the same signs in her contemporary world. "The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" (Yeats in Didion 2001: ix) – Joan Didion subscribed to Yeats' words of seeing disorder in his times, with reference to the Great War and the Russian Revolution. Didion admitted that the world she had understood no longer

existed and she painted the apocalyptic portrait of a new age, similar to Yeats', with the coming of a "rough beast" as a new Messiah. Didion warned her readers that humanity was facing a time of moral chaos and anarchy. She advocated that American society was losing its hold and things were falling apart. In the Haight–Ashbury district she discovered "social hemorrhaging" caused by drug dealers and runaway teenagers, who very often had become parents, were living on the streets and were irresponsible and inexperienced as guardians to their offspring. What Didion and Thompson wrote in their articles suggests that hippies did not seem to see anything wrong in administering LSD to their children:

'I got something at my place that'll blow your mind', and when we get there I see a child on the living-room floor, [...] 'Five-year-old', Otto says. 'On acid'. [...] For a year now her mother had given her both acid and peyote. (Didion 2001: 109)

Everyone should take it, even children. Why shouldn't they be enlightened early, instead of waiting till they're old? (Thompson 1968: online)

This clearly spelled out irresponsibility towards children, and served to indicate the ongoing degradation of the movement.

In San Francisco, Didion saw a handful of pathetically unequipped children trying to create a community in a social vacuum. The writer knew that autocratic hippies were more

ignorant of the society rather than being in rebellion against it. In Didion's book, hippies are presented as emotionally immature and disturbed, as children playing at being grown-ups who fulfill their most elemental needs for food, companionship, and sexual release, but who avoid all the complexities of adult life. Their dependence on drugs is a form of regression, a search for dependence and the total passivity of childhood (Usher Henderson 1981: 102-103). When Didion observed those emotional and physical vagrants, she understood that, "These children grew up cut loose from the web of cousins and great-aunts and family doctors and lifelong neighbors who had traditionally suggested and enforced society's values" (Didion 2001: 105). These uprooted and wandering lost people lacked insightful adults in their lives; maybe the adult generation neglected them or maybe there were too few of them "to tell these children the rules of the game they happened to be playing" (Didion 2001: 105). Quoting the words of a San Francisco psychiatrist, Didion tries to explain that what was happening in San Francisco and other parts of the United States was not all about drugs. The doctor says it is a social movement that recurs in times of real social crisis. The movement was an outcome of the cultural matrix and the lives of the young were affected by larger social issues. In "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" the reader learns about the tensions between hippies and black people. Flower children were a source of irritation for African-Americans, who thought that the hippies could always come to the district, have fun and escape whenever they felt like it. Black

residents, on the other hand, could not afford to do so. Most Americans of color, Chicano or Native Americans had lives that were in deep contrast to the lives of white middle class citizens. “White kids here, they can sit in the park all summer long, listening to the music they stole, because their bigshot parents keep sending them money” (Didion 2001: 108). Didion’s characters distributed the fliers with disturbing communication, warning the hippies that: “this summer thousands of un-white un-suburban boppers are going to want to know why you’ve given up what they can’t get and & how you get away with it & how come you not a faggot with hair so long...” (Didion 2001: 107). The lack of understanding and the tensions between black people and the hippies are presented by Nicholas Von Hoffman in *We Are The People Our Parents Warned Us Against*:

At a time when Negroes are fighting off dope and forcing their way out of the ghetto to get the good things that hips dismiss as so plastic, it’s hard for them to empathize with white kids who have all the Negroes want. It’s incomprehensible that these whites should build a new ghetto and lock themselves up in it to take dope. [...] So rich, so precious, so secure, so much to the manner born, they can despise the money, the cleanliness, the comfort, the balanced diet, the vitamins, and the living room carpets black people have been willing to die for. (Von Hoffman 1968: 125)

Both Von Hoffman and Didion did not seem to see a powerful movement in the love generation, nor a community

that was functioning effectively. Didion ends “Slouching Towards Bethlehem” with a metaphorical event that points to an unstable, insecure future. In the last scene the author presents the picture of hippies at a warehouse. They prioritize retrieving hash which had dropped through the cracks in the floor over a child’s safety – three-year-old Michael started a fire, burned his arm and was chewing on an electric cord. Suffice it to say that Lewis Yablonsky’s observations about hippie parents seem to confirm Didion’s reflections. Yablonsky, having studied hippie communities for several months, claimed that hippie parents were too egocentric and too involved in the search for identity and religious experience, all at the expense of properly raising their children. No wonder hippie offspring are often placed in abandoned positions and are viewed as playthings for the adults, who administer them drugs and fail to provide basic necessities such as food, clothes and health facilities. (Yablonsky 2000: 196). Tom Wolfe also saw disturbing images in the hippie culture:

...all the white middle-class kids who are coming to Haight-Ashbury, piling into pads and living freaking basic, on greasy mattresses on the floor [...] slopping up soda pop and shit out of the same bottle, just passing it around from mouth to mouth, not being hung up on that old American plumbing &-hygiene thing, you understand, even grokking the weird medieval vermin diseases that are flashing through every groin – crab lice! (Wolfe 1993: 317)

The excerpt from *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* illustrates another negative aspect observed by Yablonsky: the health problem. Defecating and urinating in the community, maintaining unsanitary cooking and kitchen facilities, and keeping pets in such conditions results in hepatitis and dysentery (Yablonsky 2000: 197).

Hunter Thompson had lived a block above Haight Street for two years by the end of 1966. The writer claimed that the world was full of places where a man could “run wild on drugs and music”, but not for long. Soon the neighborhood converted into a place full of drug addicts, psychedelic hustlers, police harassment, paranoia and malnutrition (Thompson 1980: 166). Not only was there not much room to live for him, but also for all those more dedicated people who believed in the cultural revolution. The district became crowded with too many ill-equipped adolescents who were not able to turn their visions into feasible realities (Farber 2001: 36). Heroin, rape, teenage pregnancy and venereal disease were increasingly common in Haight–Ashbury and the community of hippies found itself vulnerable to the false-hippie con artists who flooded their neighborhood.

[...] the Haight Ashbury had become such a noisy mecca for freaks, drug peddlers, and curiosity seekers that it was no longer a good place to live. Haight Street was so crowded that municipal buses had to be rerouted because of the traffic jams. (Thompson 1968: online)

The illustration of violence in the environs of hippies, which hit the headlines in 1967, was the murder of Linda Fitzpatrick and James Hutchinson, known as Groovy. A teenage girl and her 21-year-old boyfriend were found beaten to death in the East Village, a neighborhood in the borough of Manhattan in New York City. Linda was a heavy user of drugs, and Groovy had a police record of several arrests. Among the hippie crew he was known as a cheap source of LSD, marijuana and barbiturates. The Fitzpatricks were unaware of the life their daughter had been living (Perlmutter in Fixx 1971: 670) “A life that sounded like a lurid caricature of the hippy way, shacking up a couple of boys in a smudgy, six-dollar-a-night hotel room, taking speed and acid, making the pilgrimage to the Haight–Ashbury” (Von Hoffman 1968: 153). All this seemed to be irrelevant for the newspapers. The readers had to see Linda Fitzpatrick as a scared teenage girl who was lured and fascinated by the hippies’ world. Linda Fitzpatrick’s family was wealthy and that was the reason why the gap between Linda’s world and her parents’ life was so shocking. She quickly became a symbol of the alienation of many middle-class youth and Hutchinson became a martyr of his generation, having personified the love ethic (Lukas 1968: 106). Their coffins were not arrayed with flowers because they were victims of such symbols. “They were beautiful people, and beautiful victims” (Goldstein (e) 1970: 168). However, Richard Goldstein in his article “Love: A Groovy Idea While He Lasted” does not see the need to glorify them. He knew the world they lived in and

understood why it had turned against them. The flower children lived in poor neighborhoods to which they brought media and police attention. Hippies also made their own narcotics which had angered the gangsters. All this made reprisal foreseeable. The Summer of Love changed into a time of violence. The mystic has worn off and people were beginning to admit the ugliness of the scene. The flower children started to wonder "...why anyone would sleep in Central Park, or offer flowers to a raging madman" (Goldstein (e) 1970: 168). The scene deteriorated and those who could not see it and escape became its ultimate victims. Goldstein partially blamed the media for starting a campaign promoting hippies. He saw the whole movement as a cruel joke:

The last laugh belongs to mediamen, who chose to report a charade as a movement. In doing so, they created one. [...] Life-Look filled its pages with technicolor testimonials to the young drop-outs living the love ethic their leaders were wary of. (Goldstein (e) 1970: 168)

It seems that nearly everyone between twenty and thirty was a user of marijuana or LSD; and there were also other types of drugs, which did not have a manufacturer's guarantee. Another danger was the habit of mixing different illegal substances at a time. Hippies' health and minds were often destroyed by something that was supposed to induce peaceful euphoria. And even if euphoria was produced, it

was short-lived. Soon people witnessed the events that produced bad trips instead of a high; violence instead of brotherhood and peace; ugliness instead of beauty (Thompson in Fixx 1971: 674-688). One such event was the Altamont concert on December 6, 1969, which marked the end of all that was hopeful in the hippie subculture. This is how Sara Davidson remembers the event:

[the people] were ugly: shoving, popping pills, throwing full beer cans. More packed in until there were 300.000 – the largest gathering in California history. [...] Susie and Jeff headed home, as if returning from a war. It was not until the following day that they learned an eighteen-year-old man had been stabbed to death in the commotion. Gloom descended on Berkeley. ‘Aquarius Wept’. This was the new culture rising? Lord help us. (Davidson 1978: 241)

A few months earlier, a resident of Haight–Ashbury, Charles Manson and his group of followers began the apocalyptic killing of five people in Roman Polanski’s house.

The deaths of the icons also cast shadows on the drug culture. Jack Kerouac, a man who was always an inspiration for the hippies, died the classic alcoholic’s death on October 22, 1969. Neal Cassady, the icon of the Beat Generation and “the Fastestmanalive”, who drove the Merry Pranksters in their Furthur bus was found comatose along railway tracks and died in hospital shortly after. Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and Jimi Hendrix symbolized the promise and creativity of the psychedelic movement. It was horrific to

hear the news about those causalities, which resulted from the lack of understanding as far as the physiology and chemistry of drugs is concerned (Torgoff 2005: 242-244). It also turned out that there was no escape from straight American society. There was no liberation from the larger culture, the draft and the nightmare of serving in the jungles of Vietnam hung over the heads of the young generation. The presidential election of 1969 was also a brutal confirmation that fighting the Establishment was futile. Listening to hippie music of that time, one hears as much dread and anxiety as commercial flower-power ideals. Jefferson Airplane's "Somebody to Love"³³, which opens with the lyrics: "When the truth is found to be lies / and all the joy within you dies" does not sound like a love generation theme. Grace Slick's "White Rabbit"³⁴ sounds rather like a menace. One definitely does not hear acid enthusiasm in her voice (Echols 2002: 32). Undeniably, the peace-loving counterculture had become violent and chaotic. The stories of Altamont or Charles Manson are examples of the collapse of the Age of Aquarius. It happened when the whole country was immersed in the counterculture. Then it became incoherent, vulnerable to media opinion and

³³ Jefferson Airplane's song from the album *Surrealistic Pillow*, released April 1, 1967.

³⁴ A psychedelic rock/acid rock song from Jefferson Airplane's 1967 album *Surrealistic Pillow*. It includes comparisons of the hallucinatory effects of psychedelic drugs such as magic mushrooms with the imagery found in the fantasy works of Lewis Carroll: 1865's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. With its enigmatic lyrics, "White Rabbit" became one of the first songs to sneak drug references past censors on the radio.

unraveled into an ethos that could tolerate violence (Zimmerman 2008: 158).

In the beginning, the youngest members of the love generation might not have realized what problems they could face in the near future. They saw themselves as creators of a new, psychedelic way of life, a new world full of love and spontaneity. Nevertheless, the older generation of hippies stopped feeling so confident. In vain they had been waiting for the world to change. Instead, their neighborhood changed into a “crowded, defiant dope fortress” (Thompson in Fixx 1971: 679) and the whole generation of rebels “drifted off to a drugged limbo” (Thompson 1968: online).

Hunter S. Thompson captured the spirit of the decline of the movement perfectly in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. The book is not only a report on how two drug-crazed madmen devastated hotel rooms, Cadillac convertibles, credit systems, cleaning ladies, and themselves in pursuit of the American Dream they knew did not exist. It is above all an insightful commentary about the nature of the United States in the early 1970s.

2.2. Fear and loathing in America: towards the end of an era

We were somewhere around Barstow on the edge of the desert when the drugs began to take hold [...] The trunk of the car looked like a mobile police narcotics lab. We had two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powdered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers...and also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of Budweiser, a pint of raw ether and two dozen amyls. (Thompson 1998: 3-4)

The aforementioned quotation may suggest that *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is a book about the usage of mind-altering substances. The novel could be mistaken for a fast and dangerous ride into the utopia of the sixties, or could be naively read as a cautionary or anti-drug manifesto. The ubiquitous descriptions of altered states and consumption of drugs are in fact here to produce a shock effect. Readers may think differently if they are unaware of the reality of the times Hunter Thompson described. It was the time when the ideals of the sixties' counterculture broke on a harsh reef of the police state and Nixon's presidency, the never-ending, cruel and pointless Vietnam War, social and political tensions, and the birth of American paranoia (Żulczyk 2008:

257-258). *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* deals with American reality at the beginning of the seventies and describes its pessimistic condition. Instead of giving the reader objective descriptions, Thompson presents his reactions and bewilderment, and introduces his drug-inspired narrator/protagonist who is an exaggerated version of the author. This experiment helped the author to describe the surrounding reality more accurately. Thompson, in his book, does not present any particular phenomenon in detail, but describes a series of minor incidents; however, he claims they tell us more about the unfulfillment of American society than any detailed study. It can be argued that it is an extremely valid literary representation of the counterculture that came from New Journalism school of writing (Durczak 1988: 106-117).

In a red convertible car whose trunk was overflowing with a variety of different drugs, Raoul Duke (an exaggerated version of the author) and Dr. Gonzo (identified with attorney Oscar Zeta Acosta) start their journey to Las Vegas. Their purpose is to cover the annual motorcycle race; however, the reader learns quickly that the real assignment is the pursuit of the American Dream. The protagonists are certain that it can be found in Vegas, a city which underlines the shallowness of American society under the presidency of Richard Nixon at the beginning of the seventies. This decade marked the time of disappointment and disillusionment as opposed to the decade of the sixties which Thompson often refers to as an era of love, hope, opportunity for change, promise of expanded consciousness and rebellion. The spirit

of the sixties awakens poignant memories of optimistic days, idealistic values of freedom and equality. The times of beautiful people and a hopeful movement had passed, dreams were shattered and the myth of innocence gave way to paranoia, madness, anger and despair (Demiańczuk 2008: 20). Thompson compares the counterculture's movement to a wave, which covered the nation with a promise of better days.

There was a fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was right, that we were winning... And that, I think, was the handle – that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply prevail. There was no point in fighting – on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave....

So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high-water mark – that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back. (Thompson 1998: 68)

In the aforementioned quotation, the author demonstrates that the waters of American society had changed, the ideals of the sixties were now debilitated, the wave had been reduced and its power diminished, the counterculture collapsed; alas, putting an end to hopeful visions. What Raoul Duke and Dr. Gonzo had to face were “brutish realities of this foul year of Our Lord, 1971” (Thompson 1998: 23).

The idealism of the sixties was stomped to death at the end of the decade. Thompson regards the times of the hippie era with great fondness; however, he does not agree with some aspects of the culture and shows why the counterculture movement collapsed. The author sees the downsides of experiments with psychedelic drugs which led to the emergence of a drug street market, drug-related crimes, the usage of other narcotics, sexually transmitted diseases, unexpected pregnancies and school dropouts (Orliński 2008: 17).

No doubt they all Got What Was Coming To Them. All those pathetically eager acid freaks who thought they could buy Peace and Understanding for three bucks a hit. But their loss and failure is ours, too. What Leary took down with him was the central illusion of a whole life-style that he helped to create... a generation of permanent cripples, failed seekers, who never understood the essential old-mystic fallacy of the Acid Culture: the desperate assumption that somebody - or at least some force - is tending that Light at the end of the tunnel. (Thompson 1998: 178-179)

The above quotation provides grounds for supposing that there was nobody to take the responsibility and lead the way. In the book, Thompson accuses Timothy Leary of being a false prophet of mind expansion, a showman who did not care about all the young people who had taken his advice to “turn on, tune in, drop out”. Thompson charges Leary for

[...] selling 'conscious expansion' without ever giving a thought to the grim meat-hook realities that were lying in wait for all the people who took him seriously [...] but there is not much satisfaction in knowing that he blew it very badly for himself, because he took too many others down with him. (Thompson 1998: 178)

Thompson suggests that without proper control and sufficient knowledge, hippie youths used LSD in a self-destructive way. Lewis Yablonsky supports Thompson's opinion on the leaders of the movement. In his book *The Hippie Trip*, the issue of the lack of responsibility for thousands of youngsters emerges. As role models for the young generation, leaders such as Kesey or Leary should have demonstrated more serious engagement. Thompson also blames Ginsberg and Kesey for their inability to unite all the children of the revolution.

The movement was too diverse, and without a competent leader it was not destined to survive. 1960s political and cultural heroes were supplanted by the arrival of the 1970s and its cynicism. People like Thompson no longer knew where to look for guidance. Owsley, Leary, Bob Dylan, John and Robert Kennedy were all irrelevant, impotent, or dead in this new era of American culture. Thompson associated Joe Frazier's victory over Muhammad Ali with the proper end to the sixties:

Tim Leary a prisoner of Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria,
Bob Dylan clipping coupons in Greenwich Village, both
Kennedy's murdered by mutants, Owsley folding

napkins on Terminal island, and finally Cassius/Ali belted incredibly off his pedestal by a human hamburger... (Thompson 1998: 22-23)

The waning of the counterculture was also caused by economic needs. People had to make a living and support themselves, but there were few places where hippies could find employment. They had to abandon all the ideals, cut their hair and go clean. The problem was dramatized when everyday American life started to seethe with violence of the events which took place in Chicago, the orgy of brutality at Altamont, the Manson murders, the Kent-State massacre and the Jackson State killings (Menand 1988: 38).

When the revolution began, people who took part in it had the illusion that the new generation had started history afresh. Unfortunately, the romantic notions about peace and love or the innocence of *On the Road* had disappeared. At the beginning of a new decade there was neither enough life, power nor unity in the movement to “mobilize against all the death raining down” (Gitlin 1993: 408). The signs of the destruction of the illusions of a better society, the representations of gore, fear and violence is shown when Duke (Thompson’s alter ego) reads the Las Vegas Sun. The typical, leading grim news stories of 1971 were: a young woman dies from an overdose of heroin, drug use causes death among American GIs in Vietnam, soldiers torture Vietnamese prisoners, the police arrests a pharmacy owner on the grounds of illegal drug trade, a gunman wounds five people in New York City, the son of a prominent

Republican gouges his eyeballs out after an overdose of PCP, Muhammad Ali sentenced to five years in prison for refusing to fight against the Viet Cong (Thompson 1998: 72-74, 102). Ali recognized the wickedness of the time in which he lived and attempted to oppose it. Presenting the news item about Ali, Thompson again points out the absurdity of the situation. Somebody who refused to fight against enemy troops could face a longer sentence than a criminal. As Duke passed on the message about drug-related tragedies, it became obvious that there existed a huge gap between the drug culture of 1971 and its early promises from the previous decade. When Duke switches the television on he sees the invasion of Laos, terror, explosions, disaster, "Pentagon generals babbling insane lines" (Thompson 1998: 29). Such newspaper articles and TV news serve to create a heinous background for the society and show that there was something amiss with it. Thompson stands face to face with new America, which frightens him, destroys all his most important moral beliefs and makes him an outcast, a stranger. The official culture and the values of the society are represented by the kitsch and excess of Las Vegas, a Sin City full of alcohol, fast sex, quick marriage and easy divorce. Las Vegas is a domestic holiday destination for the middle-class, the parents of the love generation. They go there for glamour and the possibility to fulfill the American Dream. Las Vegas is the Establishment full of corruption and decay and for this reason stands out in stark contrast to the spirit of the sixties. For Thompson, the life and consciousness of the country

was in the San Francisco Bay Area in the mid-sixties, never in Las Vegas.

When Raoul Duke and Dr. Gonzo cross the city border, they see a giant billboard announcing a twenty-year sentence for the possession of marijuana, and a life sentence for selling it. This is the first sign of the hypocrisy of Vegas, where prostitution and all kinds of gambling are legalized, excessive drinking is tolerated but people may be severely punished for the consumption of marijuana (MacFarlane 2007: 176). The Circus-Circus, a casino where Duke and his attorney decide to go, is as chaotic and frightening as the whole of Vegas.

The gambling action runs twenty-four hours a day on the main floor, and the circus never ends. Meanwhile, on all the upstairs balconies, the customers are being hustled by every conceivable kind of bizarre shuck. (Thompson 1998: 46)

While visiting the casino, both protagonists are under the influence of mescaline and become more and more paranoid. In particular, Dr. Gonzo has terrifying visions full of confusion and danger. Duke attempts to help his companion by telling him that they are sitting in the vortex of the American Dream. He sees crowds of people gathered around different tables and machines and is surprised to see people still rolling the dice and hoping to hit the jackpot. Duke realizes that everyone is searching for the American Dream one way or the other. The casino, in a visual sense,

with its noise and luxury is symbolically a version of the American Dream. Nevertheless, seeing it from a slightly different perspective, the casino changes into a terrifying vision full of confusion and danger (Thompson 1998: 46-48).

The images of Las Vegas depicted here show the state of the country, the society whose glossy veneer was supposed to hide the inside full of hysteria, fraud, insolence, bribery, falsehood, rot, insult and violence. The journalist comments that Richard Nixon, Thompson's enemy Number One, who represented the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of the American political scene, would have been a perfect mayor of this city. The city which lures tourists to its casinos, promising success and an immediate rise from rags to riches, while in fact it is a place full of greed and hunger for power, where the ethic of 'eat the wounded' prevails, where the weak are taken advantage of. Las Vegas is full of wasted, broken lives. However, most visitors will only see good-looking, vibrant and classy people.

Another story which offers examples of the ruthlessness and corruption of Las Vegas is when Duke sees two dealers being put into prison. They are clearly a menace to the society, nevertheless, possessing an incredible amount of money gives them an opportunity to bribe the officers, and they are released. This is all in contrast to the story of Thompson's friend who was arrested for vagrancy and was not even allowed to call his lawyer.

The fear and loathing that Duke feels are not the results of his acid paranoia. He is terrified that the country is governed by silly Americans who exert power and influence

the new reality. He attacks the oppressive manifestation of greed and materialism of Las Vegas. His reaction is outrage, increased by his continuing consumption of illicit substances and alcohol. Duke wants to re-create the feeling of the 60s. He becomes involved in the drug culture of the 70s to make himself unable to think clearly and not realize what he is missing. Like so many of his generation, he feels disappointed by society and he escapes into the stupefying effects of narcotics, adopting drug use and the drug culture as a form of rebellion to fight the sense of estrangement from the culture. Duke's drug abuse is representative of an entire generation's reaction to disillusionment (Sickles 2000: 61-74).

Using the weapon of drugs, the two protagonists become beasts, relieving themselves of the pain of being human. The source of pain comes from the defeat of the sixties and the corruption of the initially idealistic drug culture. The protagonists' insane and violent behavior reflects the horrifying disasters of the Vietnam War and the death of the sixties; and, compared to the actualities of American life, reality seems more disturbing than their behavior: "Reading the front page made me feel a lot better. Against that heinous background my crimes were pale and meaningless" (Thompson 1998: 74). Every newspaper he flicks through is filled with bad news. Each new headline makes Duke annoyed and upset. He is afraid to look into the face of the society that has so disillusioned him and hates the fact that he must not only face it, but also interact with it on a daily basis as a journalist.

When Dr. Gonzo and Raoul Duke arrive at the Mint Hotel they are in a state of absolute intoxication. They are paranoid, hallucinating and unable to cope with the registration procedure. They see the receptionist's face swelling and changing into the face of a moray eel. They see terrible things happening around them: a huge reptile gnawing on a woman's neck, carpets soaked with blood. They are afraid that the lizards will maul them. Their stoned state symbolizes the absurdity of the society. Metaphorically, Duke and his attorney attempt to find a way to survive in the place where everything appears hostile, the present culture is unfriendly and Duke with his Samoan attorney are alienated from it. Their drug use is more escapist than it is opposed to the mental expansion attitude of the 1960s, which Thompson is longing for. Although his hallucinations are not enjoyable, the journalist does not want to change the habits which remind him of the companionship and unity of the 1960s. That is why he adopts the drug culture of the seventies, which represents a rebellion and the generation's reaction to disillusionment.

Having been advised by his attorney, Raoul Duke decides to experiment with a new potent stimulant, which is called andrenochrome, and is made from human adrenaline glands. The effects are dreadful and Duke falls into a state of total paralysis. In the meantime, Dr. Gonzo watches President Nixon's speech on TV. The only word the paralyzed journalist can understand is 'sacrifice', repeated continuously. At this moment, the attorney advises his companion to relax until the effects of the drug stop. "Don't

try to fight it, or you'll start getting brain bubbles ... strokes, aneurisms ... you'll wither up and die" (Thompson 1998: 134). This is a forceful metaphor for the society in which they live. Although Duke is full of frenetic and rebellious energy, he cannot act because he is made to sacrifice his values.

Unable to find the American Dream, caught in the chaos and destructiveness of Las Vegas, feeling increasingly vulnerable to arrest, Raoul Duke decides to leave; however, Dr. Gonzo's telegram prevents the plan from being realized. In the message, the journalist is instructed to stay in Vegas to cover a four-day conference on illegal narcotics. The reason why Duke decides to cover the seminar illustrates the situation's twisted humor, since the subject of the conference is the punishment of people such as himself and his companion.

To prepare for the task, he changes his red convertible car into a white Cadillac, a more respectable vehicle and a synonym of wealth and taste. With such a symbol it is easier to infiltrate the crowd of police officers and other civil servants. When the journalist and Dr. Gonzo enter the auditorium they use name-tags that identify them as a "private investigator" from LA and an expert in "Criminal Drug Analysis"; all this in a sense, being true. Being familiar with the drug culture, Duke and his attorney realize that the authorities have no knowledge or understanding of the 'business' they are trying to deal with. Thompson does not believe that there is a police officer among them who could recognize a drug user. He comments that "these poor

bastards didn't know mescaline from macaroni" (Thompson 1998: 143) and continues that they had no idea where to start the fight against the drug culture. The only person who learned something in this conference was the journalist who understood "that the National District Attorneys' Association is about ten years behind the grim truth and harsh kinetic realities of what they have only recently learned to call "the Drug Culture"..." (Thompson 1998: 201). The authorities spend enormous amounts of money making movies about the dangers of LSD, not knowing that drug market was, by then, based on Seconal, heroin, and bad domestic grass "sprayed with everything from arsenic to horse tranquilizers" (Thompson 1998: 202). The same government in the 1960s tested psychedelics on citizens, who are now warned of the horrifying consequences of consuming drugs. The whole conference turns out to be a shocking collection of grotesque, especially acute when Dr. Gonzo and Raoul Duke, with their heads full of LSD and mescaline, watch a movie about the dangers of marijuana. Thompson compares the police to a gang of drunken pig farmers and realizes that he is no longer hideous or atrocious. The meeting also shows how wide the gap between the counterculture and the older middle class generation was. There was little understanding between the two camps and their values were different. Thompson shows his disappointment with the early seventies through a metaphor concerning drug trends:

Uppers are no longer stylish. Methedrine is almost as rare, on the 1971 market as pure acid or DMT. “Consciousness expansion” went out with LBJ ... and it is worth nothing, historically, that downers came in with Nixon. (Thompson 1998: 202)

When the conference finishes, Duke and his attorney continue their quest to the heart of the American Dream. They arrive at Taco Stand to drink some coffee and have something to eat. Duke asks the waitress if she knows where he can find the American Dream:

We’re looking for the American Dream, and we were told it was somewhere in this area. ... Well..., we’re here looking for it, ‘cause they sent us out here all the way from San Francisco to look for it. That’s why they gave us this white Cadillac, they figure that we could catch up with it in that.... (Thompson 1998: 164)

The waitress asks the cook if he knows where the American Dream is. The cook explains that the American Dream is the old Psychiatrist’s Club on Paradise Boulevard. Thinking that Duke and his attorney were looking for a place, not a concept, he tells them about the place where “the only people who hang out there is a bunch of pushers, peddlers, uppers and downers, and all that stuff” (Thompson 1998: 165), thus inadvertently providing a comment on what American society had boiled down to in its search for fulfillment. Duke and Gonzo finally locate the place and describe it as “a huge slab of cracked, scorched concrete in a

vacant lot full of tall weeds. The owner of a gas station across the road said the place had “burned down about three years ago” (Thompson 1998: 168).

When Duke and his attorney are faced with the ramshackle Old Psychiatrist’s Club which is emblematic of the sorry condition of the American Dream, Duke realizes its impossibility, and permanently disillusioned, he prepares for his trip to Los Angeles. He knows that the “from rags to riches” belief is no longer a realistic expectation. Work and faith in the system are no longer rewarded. The only hope most Americans can have now is the hope to survive. Duke claims that “We are all wired into a survival trip now [...] the illness was understood to be terminal, and the energies of The Movement were long since aggressively dissipated by the rush to self-preservation” (Thompson 1998: 178-180). The drug-soaked grotesque journey to Las Vegas signals the decline of American culture and its values and corruption of the myth of the American Dream: “Horatio Alger gone mad on drugs in Las Vegas” (Thompson 1998: 12) – such a vision expresses ideological bankruptcy of the person who created the myth and at the same time the disintegration of the mythical structure. Duke realizes that his belief in possibility was merely an illusory faith in a false myth. The experience of the journey to Las Vegas leaves him forever disillusioned (DeKoven 2004: 86-109).

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas forms an outrageous elegy and unpleasant epitaph for the failed promise of the 1960s. It is also a bitter lament and a burlesque of the American Dream, which was brutally destroyed and

changed into a mere hope for survival. Thompson abandoned the idealisms of the 1960s. For him it was a failed era with the mistaken assumption that mainstream USA was a place where greed, violence, and hypocrisy can ultimately be eliminated through the ingestion of psychedelic drugs. Las Vegas, the place which had become the antithesis of the sixties, represented the entirety of American society. The betrayal of the American Dream was embodied in the city into which the sixties moved, so the only things that can be found there is capitalism, commercialism, corruption, pathology, absurdity and betrayal (Banco 2007: 134-141).

As the authors of the *Counterculture and Revolution* suggest, public figures wanted to suppress artistic expression, political leaders had no vision, materialism ruled the world. The government destroyed all the liberal hopes of the cultural revolution, provoked a wider war which could escalate into nuclear attacks on Vietnam and China. The same government declared war against black liberation through its attacks on the Panthers and neglect for African-American people in general. Faced with Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew, Ronald Reagan and Julius Hoffman young people sensed immediately that dialogue was impossible, and a brutal suppression of students' protests at Berkeley, Santa Barbara and Ken State were the main official reaction to alienated white youth (Horowitz, Lerner and Pyes (eds.) 1972: 165-169). The forces of death were everywhere, the movement was divided and confused. Rigid administration, brutal police, pervading presence of national guard troops,

severe penal laws, prisons and chemical weapons became the dominant realities of the 1970s and they destroyed whatever optimism about love may have remained. The love generation turned out not to be immune to violence and oppression (Reich 1971: 427). The remnants of the hippie movement became scarcer and scarcer. There were fewer hitchhikers, it was harder to find good and cheap marijuana, seldom did people greet each other with the peace sign (Casale and Lerman 1989: 80). A new “post-hippie” generation seemed to want things that were in total opposition to countercultural values. They did not want:

more change but security and order. They were obsessed with getting into college and making money. They were frightened of radicalism and worried that there would not be enough wealth in the community for them all. (Davidson 1978: 287)

Only a few people were liberated, the masses gained bits of freedom, the Establishment continued on, perhaps softened but most definitely intact. The revolution seemed to have resulted only in small changes. As it is suggested by Tom Wolfe in “The ‘Me’ Decade and the Third Great Awakening” (1976), in the decade of the seventies the shift from the Woodstock generation to the “Me Generation” was observed. Americans turned from political activism, community, human reciprocity and issues of social justice to passivity, narcissism and the lack of social concern (Wolfe 1976: online).

Moreover, the 1970s in the United States were characterized with a move towards greater conservatism. The major cause of this shift was the backlash in response to the forces unleashed in the 1960s. Working class and middle class white Americans in particular, responded to the times of growing liberalism, the breakdown of traditional values, riots and antiwar protests, by embracing a new kind of conservative populism. Many Americans were tired of spoiled hippies and whining protestors, tired of the government that, in their view, helped minorities at the expense of working class whites who celebrated capitalism and lamented the decline of “traditional” social values and roles (Morgan 2010: 240-241).

Conclusions

Maybe it meant something. Maybe not, in the long run...History is hard to know, because of all the hired bullshit, but even without being sure of “history” it seems entirely reasonable to think that every now and then the energy of a whole generation comes to a head in a long fine flash, for reasons that nobody really understands at the time – and which never explain, in retrospect, what actually happened.

(Thompson 1998: 66-67)

Following the advice of the British social historian Arthur Marwick, it is very important not to put oneself into the position of idealizing periods, singling out good decades from bad. Hippiedom had its critics, defendants and followers alike and should be read both in positive and negative lights. There are voices, such as those of the Washington Post columnist Jonathan Yardley, who attacked the sixties, writing that:

The Sixties were adolescent rebellion masquerading as a political movement, while the current popularity of the decade's symbols and totems seems to be almost entirely a matter of commercial exploitation. ... The plain truth is that the Sixties were a period of unfettered self-indulgence on the part of privileged children of America's middle class, and that the decade's legacy is, with the rarest exceptions, lamentable. (Yardley in Morgan 2010: 262)

Yardley's criticism reflects all the stereotypes that were repeated throughout the backlash era. However, the sixties are often evoked not with opinions that those were the times of immoderation, self-indulgence and breaking away from discipline and parental supervision. For many it was not "an empty decade". Suffice it to mention the 1980s advertisement which pitched the products with direct appeals to the sixties nostalgia for youth, excitement and playfulness of the decade. The advertisement proclaimed:

It was a decade that saw man first walk on the moon. And the New York Mets win their first World Series, a feat many saw as even more improbable.

A decade in which four guys from England came west to the U.S. and changed music forever. And 400,000 people from all across America traveled north, to upstate New York, and a piece of history known simply as Woodstock. Finally, it was a decade in which hemlines got shorter, ties got wider, and the official uniform was faded jeans, T-shirts, and a pair of Frye boots. It was a uniform that symbolized a belief on the

part of those who wore it (did anybody not?) in things that were simple, honest and enduring³⁵. (quoted in Morgan 2010: 266)

The echoes of the 1960s also reverberate in fiction. Philip Roth paints a gloomy picture of the decade and reminds his audience of the violence of the sixties. The writer evokes the image of demonic possession to describe the decade, when old values had dissipated and demonic forces set children against their parents and turned the American Dream into a living hell. Roth in his novel *American Pastoral*³⁶ (1998), evokes the Weatherman bombings when the protagonist's only daughter kills innocent people in a stream of political terrorist attacks. The protagonist blames the demons of the times, nihilism and anarchy for shattering his American suburban dream world.

It can be claimed that the cultural revolution failed and the reason for such failure may have been its mistake in allowing for extremism, absurdity and the thoughtless selection of its ranks. Nevertheless, the counterculture can be understood as a period of spontaneity which introduced a spirit of freedom, hope and happiness. Although the countercultural ideals were extremely utopian, they ambulated, transformed, spread and germinated in American society (Burszta 2005: 218–221). Whatever opinion is held about the

³⁵ The ad text is examined in Stuart Ewen, *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1998, 253–255).

³⁶ In 2016 the book was adapted into a movie of the same title, starring Ewan MacGregor and Jennifer Connelly.

hippie generation, there is no doubt that it changed the world in many ways.

Although we are now in a new millennium, the question of what the cultural revolution wrought has still not been settled. However, it emerges that Suzanne Labin's opinion was accurate when she wrote in 1972 that "society will certainly never adopt the whole hippie style but, in the way of cows, it will integrate a few of the new grasses planted by the hippies in the human field into its ball of cud" (Labin 1972: 253). The counterculture phenomenon helped change and shape America in the near past and it is still present in cultural circulation now. It repeatedly undergoes a process of recycling and continually inspires contemporary artists and critics. It is confirmed by Thomas Frank in *The Conquest of Cool* (1997) that the culture of advertising and business caught onto the appeal of individuality and rebellion:

Every few years, it seems, the cycles of the sixties repeat themselves on a smaller scale, with new rebel youth cultures bubbling their way to a happy replenishing of the various cultural industries' depleted arsenal of cool. New generations obsolete the old, new celebrities render old ones ridiculous, and on and on in an ever-ascending spiral of hip upon hip. (Frank in Morgan 2010: 263)

It should come as no surprise that the sixties were called 'The Decade That Will Not Die'. Anniversaries and commemorations of the 1960s are held, personal memoirs are published, specific events and personalities are

reassessed. A good example here may be the album “Chimes of Freedom” released in January 2012. The seventy-six songs of Bob Dylan were released to honor the life-saving human rights activism of Amnesty International, while celebrating the singer’s impact on culture and the anniversary of his 1962 debut album. Bob Dylan has also become the first songwriter to receive the Nobel Prize in literature. The 75 year old troubadour was awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize for “having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition”. The tradition his songs are rooted in is American folk music with influences by the poets of modernism and the beatnik movement. Dylan’s lyrics told the story of the 1960s by incorporating social struggles and political protest which he also confirmed in his Nobel Lecture, quoting Homer’s *Odyssey*: “Sing in me, oh Muse, and through me tell the story” (“Bob Dylan – Nobel Lecture”, *nobelprize.org*: online). The 2011 Bruce Robinson’s adaptation of Hunter Thompson’s *The Rum Diary*, with the writer’s long-time friend Johnny Depp as the booze-loving main character, is one of the more attractive, recent examples pointing to the continued inspiration for contemporary art that comes from the beginnings of gonzo journalism (Szczerba 2011: online).

The many questions about the meaning and reasons for different 1960s events still remain to be answered. The struggles and issues of that time have not disappeared. There are writers who present those years with disdain and a patronizing attitude, as a period full of obscenities, behind which there is nothing but intoxicated long-haired

youngsters. There are others who present it with personal reminiscence and thoughtful analysis, as they want us neither to forget, nor to remember with bitterness or fear. There is literature that captures the spirit of the era, and appreciates its contribution to American society. The New Journalists' texts are an excellent addition to that literature as they offer a vivid and perceptive insight into the subject matter.

The term 'new journalism' was used at the end of the nineteenth century to describe the journalistic practices initiated by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst because of the new, emotional appeal of the stories that were published to call attention to the problems of the poor. At the beginning of the twentieth century another 'new journalism' appeared in the form of Muckrakers. They played a constructive role in history, expressing the ills, abuses, social hardships and corruption of the society they were referencing. They painted vivid pictures of the times, presenting an intimate, anecdotal, behind-the-scenes history. Muckrakers' work was deeply moral and it sought common good while at the same time promoting professional ethics of journalistic freedom. The Muckrakers were against avoidance of controversial subjects. They opposed the censorship of their worldly wisdom, opinions, ideas and skepticism (Arthur and Lila Weinberg 2001: xv). Muckraking belonged to a particular era and culture, and the conditions that gave rise to it no longer exist in the same form; however, within the period of fifty years, a new generation of reporters appeared and came to be called New

Journalists. But their writing should not be mistaken for sensational or muckraking journalism. They were not concerned with muckraking in the popular sense, but just as their predecessors had been, they were interested in human nature and wrote with a clear moral purpose. Muckrakers' texts were more political than artistic acts. New Journalists fall in between an objective, researched exposure and a personal, creative art bringing original contribution to American literature and to American social life.

Whatever the counterculture or hippies happened to be in reality, may have had nothing or little in common with what the media decided to present. As the citizens were often bombarded with abbreviated shock imagery, provocative pictures of dramatic behavior and shallow descriptions, they gained a distorted understanding of the new phenomenon of the youth rebellion. The public received brief glimpses of the new subculture in the form of conservative judgment rather than any real insight and understanding. By contrast, the New Journalists were engaged in presenting thorough explanations of the counterculture and their account was definitely not a distorted stereotypical "fun house mirror" (Roszak 1995: 37) of the cultural revolution. The New Journalists added to our understanding of the counterculture their personal feelings, interpretation, advocacy and opinion, novelistic characterization and description, touches of obscenity, concern with fashion and cultural change, and of course political insight. They developed a new voice by including a device or approach forbidden by the older journalistic code.

Their newly won journalistic freedom allowed for a better understanding of what actually took place. New Journalism appeared to fight with journalistic convention – with impersonality, with boredom, with neutrality that turned hostile or exploitative whenever the revolutionary culture of the sixties was described. New Journalism:

honors the desire to write a good story, not a safe story or an objective story, but one finely crafted and forceful in its emotional impact. It's a journalism powered by feeling as well as intellect, the kind of journalism which can help break the glass between the reader and the world he lives in. (Hentoff 1978:187)

One should not overlook the fact that the New Journalists were not merely reporters of the counterculture. Their texts are sources of knowledge on a variety of public, political and social issues. For example, we may take into account presidential primaries, wrongdoings in establishment organizations and business institutions, the lives of celebrities or different kinds of public events. Though they were not the subject of this book, they may, however, create an interesting field for further enquiry.

The New Journalists presented honest and thorough statements about the counterculture, they effectively informed people about the contemporary human situation that was not stripped of individual feeling and judgment. Some of the authors used strategies to hide their point of view in order to allow the readers to develop their own

opinions; others explicitly presented it, gave clues to interpret the events or remained outside the story as commentators. No matter what strategies they used to present their stories, they all acted as tour guides through the wild and eccentric phenomenon of the counterculture. The New Journalists offered a different perspective than that of the stifling realities reported in the daily press and suggested a prism through which the stories could be viewed. For example, Wolfe and Thompson, in their works, create an aesthetic experience, presenting their own personal experience and interpretation of the events. In this way the reader reads about the events and also participates in the author's personal experiences and the interpretation of them. The reader reaches for their journalism not only for direct confrontation with the news, not only for journalistic information, but for the experience and the lesson to be acquired from their journeys through the sixties. Moreover, "vastness of detail allowed the reader to make their own judgment, unobstructed by condescending advice from the author" (Dennis and Rivers 1974: 22).

The New Journalists claimed that certain topics could not be written in a morally neutral fashion. Their texts make a true claim to reflecting a world of fact and offer a unique way of looking at things. New Journalism opens a new window onto the counterculture, a window which creates in the mind of the reader, an entire countercultural world that reflects symbolic details, is lively, engaging and full of color. The metaphorical window is wide open, its shutters do not narrow our view of the counterculture. This view is neither

limited by fiction nor by pure journalism, but is richer because the New Journalists thoroughly and vividly examined the subject they described by taking the readers inside social groups and individual personae, to the heart of events and the whole world of the storyteller. The New Journalists' texts are documents that not only present what was said and done, but also what was thought and felt. As a result, they manage to create some of the atmosphere specific to the world of fiction while remaining fully factual. The New Journalists' texts provide excellent storytelling and are a powerful chronicle of the times. They are an important and inseparable part of history and should be treated on an equal basis with texts and documents of all kinds as they constitute a valuable source in any attempt to describe and examine the cultural and social fabric of the 1960s counterculture.

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Summary in Polish

Obecnie niewiele miejsca poświęca się w opracowaniach historycznoliterackich nurtowi Nowego Dziennikarstwa. Szczególnie w Polsce czytelnik lub badacz rzadko ma okazję dostrzec to zjawisko. W Stanach Zjednoczonych w latach sześćdziesiątych i siedemdziesiątych cieszyło się ono dużą popularnością i wzbudzało ogromne zainteresowanie. Wielu Nowych Dziennikarzy zdobyło sławę i miano celebrytów. W Polsce autorzy reprezentujący owe dziennikarstwo są mało znani, a ich twórczość tylko sporadycznie pojawia się w księgarniach. Powodem takiej sytuacji może być obawa tłumaczy i wydawców przed ograniczeniami związanymi z niezajomością kontekstu kulturowego i polityczno-historycznego tekstów. Uważam, że jeśli taki jest powód niewielkiej popularności tego nurtu w Polsce, to należałoby zachęcić do sięgnięcia po lekturę dzieł takich kronikarzy jak Tom Wolfe czy Hunter Thompson. Bowiem twórczość autorów Nowego Dziennikarstwa dostarcza czytelnikowi ogromnej wiedzy o sytuacji politycznej, społecznej i kulturowej Ameryki drugiej połowy XX wieku, wyjaśnia przedstawione wydarzenia i obszernie je komentuje. Teksty Nowych Dziennikarzy wpisują się także w dyskusję nad tym jaką rolę tekst dziennikarski odgrywa w dostarczaniu wiedzy o świecie i interpretowaniu rzeczywistości.

W mojej książce pragnę dowieść, że teksty z nurtu Nowego Dziennikarstwa są szczególnie ważnym źródłem wiedzy o kontrkulturze lat sześćdziesiątych. Fakt ten jest często ignorowany w badaniach kontrkultury, które skupiają się najczęściej tylko na analizie dokumentów historycznych i socjologicznych a zapominają o, w równej mierze ważnych, literackich reprezentacjach epoki lat sześćdziesiątych.

Lata sześćdziesiąte w Stanach Zjednoczonych były erą burzliwych przemian społecznych, masowych rozruchów, antywietnamskich protestów, rewolucji seksualnej, zamachów politycznych, strajków studenckich, demonstracji, które wstrząsały Amerykanami. Nie byli oni w stanie zrozumieć tempa przemian oraz wydarzeń, których byli świadkami. W tym okresie zamordowano prezydenta Stanów Zjednoczonych, Johna Kennedy'ego, zastrzelono Martina Luthera Kinga, represjonowano walczącą o swobody życiowe część społeczności amerykańskiej. Codziennością stało się uczestniczenie w masowych pogrzebach ciał przywożonych z Wietnamu żołnierzy. Dziennikarze i reportażyści próbowali wytłumaczyć ludziom skomplikowaną naturę otaczającej ich rzeczywistości. By sytuację unaocznić, przedstawić zrozumiale i wyczerpująco musieli zastosować nowe sposoby i metody obrazowania i przedstawiania świata. Zmienili dotychczasowe środki wyrazu, użyli narracji, monologu wewnętrznego, dialogu, bogatych opisów świata, nadali koloryt widzianym obrazom.

Tak powstało jedno z ciekawszych zjawisk literackich tamtej epoki – Nowe Dziennikarstwo, którego twórcy odpowiadali na zapotrzebowania społeczne analizując i kome-

tując ważne wydarzenia polityczne i kulturalne Ameryki. Rysując skomplikowaną rzeczywistość Nowi Dziennikarze stworzyli reportażowo-literacki styl, zawierający socjologiczne i historyczne walory. Żywiołowo relacjonowali także rozwijającą się kulturę popularną, byli głównymi kronikarzami kontrkultury i czasów hippisowskich. Przede wszystkim jednak Nowe Dziennikarstwo i jego twórcy okazali się wspaniałymi charakteryzatorami jednostek. Poprzez opis zachowań postaci, ich sposobu mówienia, stylu ubierania, miejsc zamieszkania, charakteru wykonywanych przez nie prac dawali obraz ówczesnego społeczeństwa kontestującego.

Celem niniejszej książki jest analiza wybranych tekstów Nowego Dziennikarstwa, która pozwala lepiej zrozumieć kontrkulturę i obyczaje Ameryki lat sześćdziesiątych, scharakteryzować ówczesną sytuację, oraz umożliwić dostrzeżenie wszystkiego w jaskrawych i wyraźnych kolorach.

Kluczem do analizy stała się teoria nowego historyzmu, który przywrócił dziełom literackim kontekst historyczny, nie traktując tekstu jako autonomicznego tworu, a osadzając go w kontekście kulturowym. Literatura bowiem przekazuje społeczne, polityczne i kulturowe nastroje, ukazując ducha danej epoki. Nowi historycyści postrzegają ją jako źródło historyczne, odzwierciedlające realną rzeczywistość.

Chcąc przedstawić nieodzowny kontekst do analizy kontrkultury, próbuję w rozdziale pierwszym przedstawić tło historyczne buntu i udział w nim prekursorów – hipsterów i bitników. Dalej zmierzam do przedstawienia wybuchu rebelii hippisowskiej w latach sześćdziesiątych, opisuję rów-

niez społeczne i kulturowe przyczyny powstania kontrkultury, analizując wydarzenia, które doprowadziły do upadku ruchu hippisowskiego. W rozdziale drugim skupiam się na okolicznościach narodzin i charakterystyce Nowego Dziennikarstwa, przedstawiam jego prekursorów, ich twórczość oraz głosy krytyki. Wskazuję też na fakt podniesienia rangi dziennikarstwa i przyczynienia się do jego rozwoju i rozpowszechnienia. W rozdziale trzecim zajmuję się genezą wymienionych niżej tekstów i przedstawiam sylwetki ich autorów.

W drugiej części książki analizuję poszczególne powieści i artykuły prasowe Nowego Dziennikarstwa, które w całości skupiają się na ruchu hippisowskim i jego upadku. Analiza obejmuje powieści: *Próbę kwasu w elektrycznej oranżadzie* (1968) Toma Wolfa, *Lęk i odrazę w Las Vegas* (1971) Huntera Thompsona, esej Joan Didion *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968), artykuły Richarda Goldsteina: *Psychedelic Psell* (1967), *The Catcher In the Haight* (1967), *Love: A Groovy Idea While He Lasted* (1967), *San Francisco Bray* (1967) oraz artykuły Huntera Thompsona: *Why Boys Will Be Girls* (1967), *The 'Hashbury' Is the Capital of the Hippies* (1967), *The Hippies* (1967). W książce wykorzystuję również do analizy fragmenty *Hell's Angels. Anioły piekiel* (1966) Huntera Thompsona, *The Armies of the Night* (1968) Normana Mailera, *Loose Change* (1977) Sary Davidson oraz *We Are The People Our Parents Warned Us Against* (1968) Nicholasa Von Hoffmana.

Głównymi kryteriami wyboru tekstów były kontrkulturowe treści w nich zawarte oraz przynależność ich autorów do nurtu Nowego Dziennikarstwa.

Analiza wspomnianych tekstów pozwala na scalenie i szerokie zobrazowanie integralnych elementów kontrkultury. W mojej książce opisuję rolę kontrkulturowych liderów, którzy w ogromnej mierze przyczynili się do rozszerzenia ruchu hippisowskiego i propagowania idei kontestacyjnych. Wskazuję na używanie środków poszerzających świadomość jako nieodłączną część buntu lat sześćdziesiątych. Opisuję hippisowskie komuny, życie w atmosferze wolnej miłości i rewolucji seksualnej. Analizuję komuny jako alternatywny sposób życia oraz jako formy protestu przeciw establishmentowi. Ukazuję rolę muzyki, tekstów piosenek, wydarzeń muzycznych i muzycznych idoli w czasach kontrkultury. W dalszej części książki omawiam czynniki, które w późnych latach sześćdziesiątych doprowadziły do upadku kontrkultury. Analiza kończy się zobrazowaniem komercjalizacji ruchu hippisowskiego, schyłku dekady lat sześćdziesiątych, upadku kontrkultury i koncepcji „American Dream”.

Śmiem twierdzić, że teksty, które wyszły spod pióra Nowych Dziennikarzy nie są dziś jedynie kulturowym artefaktem. Są bogatym źródłem wiedzy na temat kontrkultury lat sześćdziesiątych oraz częścią dziejów Stanów Zjednoczonych. Przedziwne i często zdumiewające wydarzenia, opisywane przez autorów, mogą stanowić źródło silnych i głębokich przemyśleń. Są jednocześnie jak ożywczy wiatr, który otwiera okiennice okna i pozwala na szersze, wyraźniejsze widzenie świata i jego spraw, oglądanych dotychczas tylko

przez szparę owych okiennic. Szeroko otwarte okno jest metaforą odbierania świata widzianego nie wyłącznie przez „szkiełko i oko”, ale wzbogaconego uczuciami Nowych Dziennikarzy, ich świeżym spojrzeniem, ich młodymi opiniami, interpretacją, dziennikarską swobodą i swadą. Należy podkreślić, że teksty Nowych Dziennikarzy są ważną i nierozzerwalną częścią historii, stanowią dokumenty, które powinny być traktowane na równi z tekstami czysto literackimi, historycznymi i socjologicznymi. Ich połączona analiza uzupełnia dotychczas istniejący stan wiedzy na temat ruchów kontrkulturowych w Stanach Zjednoczonych w latach sześćdziesiątych.

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