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# Hippie Movement as a Protest against the Mainstream

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# ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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## Zásady pro vypracování

Teoretická část bakalářské práce poskytne nejprve relevantní kulturně-historický kontext daného tématu, ve kterém studentka zdůrazní hodnotovou krizi spojenou s generačním konfliktem v americké společnosti tohoto období. Dále bude charakterizován pojem subkultura jako forma protestu proti mainstreamu. Tyto poznatky a témata pak budou diskutovány a analyzovány ve vybraných díle The Electric Kool-Aid Acid od Toma Wolfa. V analytické části tak studentka představí kvalitní literární analýzu vybraného zdroje.

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## **ANNOTATION**

The thesis "Hippie Movement as a Protest against the Mainstream" comprehensively analyses the Hippie Movement within the context of countercultural rebellion against mainstream norms influenced by historical events like the Cold War and societal tensions. By exploring the movement's emergence, evolution, and impact on society, the thesis delves into the cultural, social, and political significance of the Hippies as leaders in civil rights movements and advocates for peace, equality, and social change. By examining the historical background of the 1950s, the Beat Generation, and the Hippie ethos, the thesis offers scholarly insight into a transformative era marked by rebellion, countercultural ideals, and a quest for personal freedom and authenticity.

## **KEY WORDS**

America, The Hippie Movement, The Beat Generation, Culture, Drugs

## **NÁZEV**

Hnutí Hippies jako protest proti Mainstreamu

## **ANOTACE**

Tato bakalářská práce se podrobně zabývá tématem "Hnutí Hippies jako protest proti mainstreamu" poskytuje komplexní analýzu hnutí Hippies v kontextu kontrakulturní vzpoury proti mainstreamovým normám, ovlivněné historickými událostmi, jako byla studená válka a společenské napětí. Prostřednictvím zkoumání vzniku, vývoje a vlivu hnutí na společnost se práce zabývá kulturním, společenským a politickým významem Hippies jako vůdců hnutí za občanská práva a zastánců míru, rovnosti a společenských změn. Na základě zkoumání historického pozadí padesátých let 20. století, Beat Generation a charakteru Hippies nabízí práce vědecký vhled do transformační éry, která se vyznačovala rebelstvím, kontrakulturními ideály a hledáním osobní svobody a autenticity.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Amerika, Hnutí Hippies, Generace Beatníků, Kultura, Drog

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## Introduction

The first chapter of this paper delves into the historical context of the 1950s, an iconic and paradoxical decade in American history shaped by various events. Following the Second World War and the Cold War, America witnessed unparalleled economic growth, scientific innovation, the strongest military strength, and the baby boom. The country saw a rise in the middle class and increased consumer spending. This wealth significantly influenced American culture, especially attitudes toward labour, materialism, and consumption. However, it was an age of struggle characterised by increased tensions with the Soviet Union and political conservatism. As a result, society struggled with the conflicts of tradition and modernity, conformity and revolt, and unity and dissent.

This second chapter examines the beginnings, peaks, and modes of self-presentation of the Beat Generation in literature and other artistic mediums. The Beat Generation offered remarkable prose and poetry and examined consciousness as a critical response to American complacency. Separation, poverty, anarchic individuality, and communal living were characteristics of this literary movement that questioned the established social mores and standards.

The third chapter focuses on the Hippie Movement's beginnings, the reasons that contributed to its formation, and its countercultural influence and impact on the structure of American society in critical situations. The chapter aims to study the complex relationship between the Hippie Movement and drug use by digging into the motivations for using psychedelics as sacraments for spiritual development and community building. It also investigates the cultural backdrop that helped to create this phenomenon.

The analytical part of the thesis focuses on Tom Wolfe's book *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and is analysed from two aspects. First, the analysis of the characters, their qualities, and the themes they represent. Second, the chapter focuses on analysing the literary techniques Tom Wolfe used in his writing.



# 1 America in the 1950s

This chapter is a journey into the historical background of the 1950s, an iconic and paradoxical decade in American history influenced by many factors. After World War II, followed by the Cold War, America experienced economic prosperity, technological advancement, the strongest military power, and the baby boom. The nation saw a rise in the middle class and higher consumer expenditure. This prosperity remarkably shaped American culture, including views toward labour, materialism, and consumption. Despite all of this, it was, unfortunately, the era of conflicts marked by heightened tensions with the Soviet Union filled with political conservatism. Consequently, society grappled with the tensions between tradition and modernity, conformity and rebellion, unity and dissent. It is crucial to discuss the mainstream American background of the 1950s and its influence on the emergence and development of the Hippie movement.

As the world emerged from the devastation of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in an enormous political and ideological conflict known as the Cold War. Farish notes that these two superpowers and their respective allies competed for global dominance from the late 1940s and continued to the early 1990s, but instead of having a direct military conflict, they struggled worldwide for influence and ideological supremacy, often characterised by proxy wars, espionage, and propaganda campaigns.<sup>1</sup> This complex and multifaceted conflict arose from a combination of factors. Farish clarifies that the Cold War arose from ideological differences between capitalism and communism, geopolitical competition for dominance and spheres of influence, conceptual competition, military buildup, and diplomatic tensions.<sup>2</sup> All these aspects of The Cold War negatively impacted American society. Apart from the Americans, this rivalry permeated popular culture, foreign policy, international relations and influenced world political decisions.

The Cold War had its turning point, which extended in the early stages and was called the Second Red Scare. Carosso remarks that the Second Red Scare occurred in the early 1950s and increased concerns of communist subversion and infiltration, resulting in an anti-communist frenzy and the repression of political dissent.<sup>3</sup> It was a time of extreme fear in

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Farish, "Disaster and Decentralization: American Cities and the Cold War," *Cultural Geographies* 10, no. 2 (2003): 125–148.

<sup>2</sup> Farish, "Disaster and Decentralization," 125–48.

<sup>3</sup> Andrea Carosso, *American Culture in the 1950s* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, 2012), 15–16.

American history because it warned about the risks of letting fear undermine democratic values and civil freedoms. The author also claims that the Soviet Union's acquisition of nuclear weapons, the development of communism in Eastern Europe, and the Korean War raised concerns about communism's global growth.<sup>4</sup> The overlapping of these occurrences heightened Cold War apprehensions by strengthening the idea of a hazardous and escalating ideological struggle. As a result, Western countries stepped up their military readiness and embraced harsher containment strategies. This emphasised the concern about the spread of communism worldwide and its extent. Western nations were prepared to oppose it. Carosso mentions that The Red Scare fostered a culture of fear and conformity accompanied by the suppression of free speech and political dissent during this period, galvanised opposition to the prevailing political establishment.<sup>5</sup> It fostered a spirit of rebellion, especially among countercultural groups like the Beats.

The Vietnam War, a major flashpoint of the Cold War, played a significant role in shaping the Hippie movement. As the war escalated, resistance to American military intervention grew, leading to widespread protests, draft resistance, and anti-war activism. Following Eckhardt's statement, Vietnamese nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh declared his country's independence and worked to install a communist regime in the country's north following World War II.<sup>6</sup> Vietnam's struggle for independence saw a dramatic change as a result, demonstrating the country's unwavering attempts to terminate foreign rule and forge its own democratic path. Importantly, Eckhardt mentions that Vietnam was divided into two regions before the Vietnam War - North Vietnam was ruled by the communist regime of Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh, and South Vietnam was led by President Ngo Dinh Diem and supported by the United States.<sup>7</sup> Vietnam's split into communist and non-communist areas highlights the international disputes that existed before it and the long-lasting effects of colonial pasts and historical battles on a country's political makeup. In addition, the Vietnam War was one of the most important social and political events in American history, as it inspired substantial opposition and contributed to the rise of the Hippie movement. Vietnam's struggle for independence and the war's lasting effects on American culture demonstrate how intertwined national and international forces were during this turbulent time.

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<sup>4</sup> Carosso, *American Culture in the 1950s*, 15–16.

<sup>5</sup> Carosso, *American Culture in the 1950s*, 15–16.

<sup>6</sup> George Eckhardt, *Vietnam Studies: Command and Control 1950–1969* (Department of the Army, 1991), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Eckhardt, *Vietnam Studies*, 1991, 6.

Comprehending the Vietnam War and its worldwide consequences is vital to appreciate the ideological and political conflicts of the era. In addition to being the catalyst for one of the biggest anti-war movements in American history, the battle brought tremendous societal and cultural changes to light. As Gilcher-Holtey states, Congress allowed the American president to fight in southwest Asia without limitation, resulting in the deployment of 460,300 young American soldiers to Vietnam.<sup>8</sup> The Vietnam War was a complex and multidimensional conflict caused by domestic and international interests. This resulted in discontent worldwide. The Vietnam War produced one of the most potent anti-war movements in American history, with millions of people taking to the streets to protest the war. Anti-war posters from the era developed into potent symbols of resistance and unity.

One of the most prominent figures was Wisconsin Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, and it is important to talk about him. Storrs talks about McCarthy, who gained notoriety in this atmosphere of mistrust and terror by taking advantage of people's anxieties connected to communism for his political ends in which his campaign focused on removing suspected communists and leftists from all parts of American society, instilling widespread fear, paranoia, and censorship.<sup>9</sup> Without McCarthy's influence, the fear of communism would not be as prominent in American society as it was during that time. Schrecker and Deery note that McCarthy initiated several well-reported investigations and hearings after claiming to have a list of known communists; the strategies, which frequently depended on guilt by association and unproven charges, led to the persecution of many people, harm to reputations, and violations of civil liberties.<sup>10</sup> Based on guilt by the organisation, unfounded allegations and investigations against a well-known American citizen resulted in widespread intimidation, harm to credibility, and infringement of civil liberties, highlighting the dangers of such tactics in social and political situations. Since then, the word "McCarthyism" was coined. Schrecker and Deery explain that the term is derived from his campaign centred on removing suspected communists from positions of power; both the federal government and private companies used loyalty oaths and blocklisting policies.<sup>11</sup> The phrase "McCarthyism" has grown to represent a wider practice of intimidating people and making unfounded allegations to control opposition.

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<sup>8</sup> Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, *A Revolution of Perception? Consequences and Echoes of 1968*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 71.

<sup>9</sup> Landon R. Y. Storrs, "McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, ed. Jon Butler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ellen Schrecker and Phillip Deery, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford), 72–81.

<sup>11</sup> Schrecker and Deery, *The Age of McCarthyism*, 72–81.

Consumerism was among the other main features of the 1950s. Lytle states that America's consumer culture exploded as credit became more widely available and disposable income rose.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, suburbanisation became the next phenomenon that swept across America during the 1950s. Jackson points out how government housing subsidized, and affordable mortgage availability influenced the growth of suburban communities, such as Levittown, which offered suburban living to millions of Americans seeking to escape crowded urban areas.<sup>13</sup> While suburbanisation brought prosperity to many Americans, Jackson points out that critics argued that suburban expansion led to environmental degradation, social isolation, homogenisation of culture, and inequality toward minority groups.<sup>14</sup> Jackson's portrayal emphasises that living in the suburbs became part of chasing the American dream, and many elements contributed to the growth of suburban communities.

Meanwhile, a lot of “happy” families were settling down in suburbia; traditional gender roles, family structures, and sexuality were prominent topics. Halliwell explains that the 1950s were a period of social uniformity and cultural conservatism, and the prevalent cultural norms prioritised traditional gender roles, nuclear family values, and conformity to mainstream views.<sup>15</sup> Social expectations pushed people to conform to societal norms and repress nonconformist conduct. Married couples were expected and pressured by American society to fit into the idealised portrayal of the nuclear family, with the wife staying home and taking care of the children and the husband providing for the family. Later in Chapter 3, it is further discussed that the Hippies did not want to follow these American values shaped by nuclear American families.

During the 1950s, racial segregation was deeply embedded in American society, particularly in the southern states. Simkin notes that Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation in public facilities, including buses, schools, restaurants, and restrooms.<sup>16</sup> Black and white citizens were legally separated and not equal at all. African Americans faced systemic discrimination perpetuated by both state laws and social customs, which made the Black community feel frustrated, wait, and hope for a change. Some community members decided to battle this issue. Simkin claims that it contributed to the birth of the Civil Rights Movement, in

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<sup>12</sup> Mark H. Lytle, “The Golden Age of Consumption,” *The All-Consuming Nation: Chasing the American Dream Since World War II* (New York; Oxford Academic, 2021), 174.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 206.

<sup>14</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization*, 206.

<sup>15</sup> Martin, Halliwell. *American Culture in the 1950s*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 34.

<sup>16</sup> John Simkin, *Race Relations in the United States* (Spartacus Educational, 1988), 22-32.

which African Americans and their supporters fought against racial inequality, discrimination, and segregation.<sup>17</sup> Racial segregation led to frustration and hope for change, contributing to the birth of the Civil Rights Movement and significant social activism. Garrow celebrates Martin Luther King Jr., who emerged as a critical leader in the Civil Rights Movement and put into practice nonviolent protest tactics with some success by strategically choosing the methods and places in which protests were carried out.<sup>18</sup> His speeches and writings paved the way for future social justice movements and inspired subsequent generations of activists. As a result, segregation was banned, and more equal rights were given to African American minorities. On the other hand, it may appear that Americans have not learned much from their past, as Afro-Americans still sometimes experience public abuse based on their ethnicity.

Another disadvantaged minority was the LGBTQ+ community because homosexuality was not accepted by society at that time. Johnson describes The Lavender Scare as a period of persecution and discrimination against those thought to be homosexual or sympathetic to LGBTQ+ issues in the United States government in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> During the Lavender Scare, the LGBTQ+ community was subjected to prejudice since homosexuality was not socially acceptable and went against the traditional values of the American nuclear family. Shibusawa says that in the climate of dread and mistrust, LGBTQ+ people were viewed as potential security risks due to their moral "perversion", even though there was no evidence to support this.<sup>20</sup> Despite the absence of supporting evidence, the Lavender Scare of the 1950s exposed the pervasive prejudice and terror toward LGBTQ+ people in anti-communist hysteria and Cold War tensions. Thousands of LGBTQ+ people were subjected to harassment, interrogations, and job terminations from government posts as a result of the Lavender Scare. The Lavender Scare reflected a dark period in American history full of fear, suspicion, and the persecution of individuals based on their perceived political or sexual orientation.

As the United States entered a geopolitical struggle with the Soviet Union, tensions rose during the Cold War and defined features of the conflict. There was also a persistent fear of a possible nuclear war. The threat of mutually assured destruction spread anxiety and worry among the American people. This existential dread fuelled a broader dissatisfaction with

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<sup>17</sup> Simkin, *Race Relations in the United States*, 22-32.

<sup>18</sup> David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 32.

<sup>19</sup> David K., Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Naoko Shibusawa. "The Lavender Scare and Empire: Rethinking Cold War Antigay Politics." *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (September 2012), 723-752.

mainstream norms and institutions, prompting many people to seek alternative ways of life and existential significance, such as the Hippies or the Beats. Not all Americans conformed to these norms, which was seen as rebellious; they opposed conventional values through literature, music, and art, so the terms “counterculture” and “subculture” gained popularity. Hebdige describes a subculture as a smaller group inside a larger community with unique ideas, values, conventions, customs, and behaviours that distinguish it from mainstream culture.<sup>21</sup> Hebdige additionally states that subcultures can be based on various characteristics, including age, ethnicity, class, interests, or place of residence, and they frequently develop inside the framework of the dominant culture.<sup>22</sup> Subcultures don't always have to challenge or oppose the prevailing culture to coexist harmoniously. Even now, subcultures adapt and evolve, taking inspiration from the dominant culture while remaining distinct. It might have a tremendously positive psychosocial impact because subcultures often give their members a feeling of identification and belonging, as well as a sense of purpose and community. They provide an alternate platform for self-expression, creativity, and exploration. In contrast, Yinger suggests that a counterculture overtly challenges or rejects the prevailing cultural values and practices and may arise as a reaction to perceived social injustices, inequalities, or moral objections to the dominant culture's rules and behaviours.<sup>23</sup> These groups work to alter the prevailing social standards and promote alternative ideas, attitudes, ways of living, and social structures to subvert and change mainstream society. They can result in significant cultural shifts when they acquire enough support and influence. Issitt assumes that the 1960s counterculture included prominent groups, such as Hippies, student activists, civil rights organisations, and anarchist organisations.<sup>24</sup> These and other diverse groups were all part of the 1960s counterculture marked by its variety and dynamic drive for social change. This could be the reason why many people saw them as a menace to society. Relating to subcultures and countercultures, various of these communities were familiar with drug use. As Stone puts it, medications were utilised after World War II to prevent and treat illnesses, relieve pain, aid sleep disorders, and even lower children's hyperactivity.<sup>25</sup> Drugs were viewed as a wonder of contemporary technology, with people believing they could cure any disease. There was no concern that medications

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<sup>21</sup> Dick, Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 1979), 132-133.

<sup>22</sup> Hebdige, *Subculture*, 132-133.

<sup>23</sup> John Milton Yinger, “Chapter two.” In *Countercultures: The promise and peril of a world turned upside down*, (New York: Free Press, 1982), 18-20.

<sup>24</sup> Micah L. Issitt, *Hippies: A guide to an American subculture*, (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2009), 11.

<sup>25</sup> Skip Stone. *Hippies from A to Z: Their sex, drugs, music and impact on society from the sixties to the present*. (Silver City: Hip, 2000), 26.

would be harmful. Not only were countercultures and subcultures influential back then, but they also significantly impacted today's society.

To conclude, this chapter gives historical context from the 1950s in America. Moreover, it explores how Americans were trying to live in contradiction to the American dream and fit into traditional gender roles during this transformative decade. Contrary to the accessibility to consumer goods and improvement in technology, Americans felt the tension with the USSR as well as they feared the potential nuclear war. Some American citizens were unfairly dismissed based on their ethnicity or sexuality; this issue was mainly represented by queer and black people or immigrants who struggled with finding their position in society or even had to fight for the equality of rights. In this chapter, it is also projected that not all Americans conformed to conventional norms and were driven to reject consumerism and technological alienation, so they started to rise against this mainstream or separated from the culture into smaller and specific groups making their own culture. Additionally, these facts, such as The Vietnam War from the controversial American background of the 1950s, were significant motivators for the countercultural movements of the 1960s, such as the Hippie movement or Beat Generation. Overall, the 1950s in America were a complex period of transition, cultural evolution, and social norms that influenced subsequent decades. Finally, understanding the American setting of the 1950s is necessary because it exemplifies the mainstream that subcultures and countercultures subsequently challenged and criticised.

## 2 Beat Generation

The different currents of the subcultures and countercultures emerged from past cultural and political revolutions. One was the Beat Generation, undoubtedly connected with the Hippie Movement thanks to setting a great example, as this chapter shows. This chapter goes through the birth and peak of the Beat Generation, their representation through various art, especially literature. The Beat Generation was a critical response to American complacency, offering new forms of prose, poetry, and a unique exploration of consciousness. This literary movement was often characterised by disaffiliation, poverty, anarchic individualism, and communal living, challenging traditional societal norms and values. This chapter also introduces and illustrates famous works by influential Beat writers.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II in the 1950s, a new cultural and literary movement asserted itself in the US national consciousness. Rahn claims that they were called The Beats, and the movement began in New York City and San Francisco but, due to negative publicity, was soon recognised throughout North America, and university students started challenging their society's materialism and consumerism because they believed such things were detrimental to the human soul.<sup>26</sup> Many young people were demoralised by the widespread materialism and commercialisation of the time, which found resonance in the Beats movement, which swiftly expanded throughout North America. As university students and others tried to reject surface-level ideals in favour of more meaningful, real-life lifestyles, it represented a significant cultural change. Rahn also says that the Beats expressed discontent with consumer culture and the restrictive and rigid upbringing that characterised their parents' generation; they were all highly educated and came from middle-class origins despite their anti-academy and anti-establishment rhetoric.<sup>27</sup> The Beats drew in young people, especially college students, who wanted to reject mainstream. This cultural shift affected a generation ready for change, reflecting dissatisfaction with surface-level societal ideals and a desire for meaningful experiences.

Defining the word "beat" is crucial for understanding the movement fully. In the context of the Beat Generation, the word "beat" may refer to a wide range of concepts. Halberstam credits the term "beat" to street hustler Herbert Huncke, who spent most of the 1950s in prison due to his repeated offences and drug habit lying dormant during the movement's crucial

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<sup>26</sup> Josh Rahn, "The Beat Generation," *Literature Periods & Movements*, (2014): 7.

<sup>27</sup> Rahn, "The Beat Generation," 7.



formative years.<sup>28</sup> The street hustlers' underground culture gave rise to the term "beat," which became essential to the Beats movement's character and reflected the movement's origins in underprivileged and countercultural communities. Halberstam also describes that the term "Beat Generation" was coined by fellow poet Jack Kerouac to characterise the anti-conformist youth movement in New York City.<sup>29</sup> Halberstam mentions that Kerouac came up with Beat in 1948, but it originally had a negative connotation because it was a slang word with a history of association with drug culture; he reinvented it to describe those who did not adhere to the prevailing tide of materialism and personal ambition.<sup>30</sup> Understanding the Beat Generation's written, cultural, and philosophical foundations is essential for comprehending its members' pursuit of a genuine and free way of life, defying social conventions, and experimenting with new creative forms.

As mentioned in the first chapter, Americans wanted to take up life where it had left off before the war years with secure jobs, happy marriages, nice families, well-deserved retirement and various consumer goods. Huddleston claims that the young generation was expected to go to school, get jobs, live moral lives, marry and have children, and live the same life as their parents to be good citizens.<sup>31</sup> The pressure placed on young people by society to follow in their parent's footsteps in terms of education, careers, and family responsibilities had muted individualism and self-discovery, which left many yearning for more genuine lives frustrated and rebellious. However, according to Huddleston, the Beat Generation rejected what they felt were inauthentic, pre-packaged lives; they looked for spiritual meaning in life instead of the quest for materialism; hence, their lifestyles were scandalous to conservatives, who called them radicals, dangerous and bums.<sup>32</sup> Overall, The Beats felt they needed to differ from mainstream society. It is assumed that conservatives were mostly from the older generation and could not understand why youngsters did not want to work, especially when plenty of good-paying jobs were available, so they called them names.

Furthermore, The Beats are famous for their literature and using particular themes. The literary works produced by the Beat Generation are renowned for their innovative styles and profound explorations of various themes that reflect their quest for authenticity and rebellion

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<sup>28</sup> David Halberstam, *The Fifties*, (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 301.

<sup>29</sup> Halberstam, *The Fifties*, 301.

<sup>30</sup> Halberstam, *The Fifties*, 301.

<sup>31</sup> Diane M., Huddleston, *The Beat Generation: They Were Hipsters Not Beatniks* (Eugene: Oregon University, 2012), 58-59.

<sup>32</sup> Huddleston, *The Beat Generation*, 58-59.

against societal norms. For instance, Rahn states that obscenity was not uncommon for them even though, in those days, sexuality was considered taboo.<sup>33</sup> Their literature was more direct and expressive than anything that had come before. As Rahn notes, The Beat Generation popularised avant-garde literary theories and methods, best represented by the spontaneous prose of Jack Kerouac, allowing for a more dynamic and expressive style that captured the essence of the moment while also creating a deeper connection with readers thanks to its raw and unfiltered character.<sup>34</sup> This method encouraged writers to express their ideas freely, emphasising the importance of unrestricted word flow. Dardess asserts that The Beat Generation writers sought to unleash creativity and spontaneity, so they employed a variety of literary devices, including stream-of-consciousness, allowing thoughts to flow freely without interruption, and experimenting with various forms of free writing, such as timed writing or writing without punctuation.<sup>35</sup> As written above, Beat writers did not shy away from exploring disapproved subjects such as drug use, sexuality, and existential questions. They delved into the darker aspects of human experience and pushed boundaries in the investigation of forbidden issues like drug use and sexuality.

The Beats displayed themselves with prose and poetry, employing both methods to convey their movement's spirit. Beat poetry, recognised for its fluid form and blunt vocabulary, forcefully articulated its fundamental ideas. Poetry Foundation informs that the Beats delved into experimental forms of poetry, drawing inspiration from jazz music, surrealism, metaphysical poetry, and Eastern philosophies. This experimentation led to unique and unconventional poetic expressions that challenged traditional norms.<sup>36</sup> Poetry Foundation also states that Beat poets transformed poetry by playing with form, bringing in a variety of influences, questioning accepted wisdom, and extending the range of possible lyrical expression.<sup>37</sup> Influenced by Eastern religions and philosophies, the Beat writers integrated spirituality, mindfulness, and transcendence themes into their works. Poetry Foundation points out that The Beat Generation used their writing to criticise mainstream American society, addressing issues such as materialism, conformity, and political repression, therefore their works often reflected a sense of disillusionment with post-war America and a desire for social

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<sup>33</sup> Rahn, "The Beat Generation," 8-9.

<sup>34</sup> Rahn, "The Beat Generation," 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> George Dardess, "The Logic of Spontaneity: A Reconsideration of Kerouac's 'Spontaneous Prose Method,'" *Boundary 2* 3, no. 3 (1975): 729-46.

<sup>36</sup> Poetry Foundation, The Beat Poets, accessed on May 15, 2024 <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/147552/an-introduction-to-the-beat-poets>

<sup>37</sup> Poetry Foundation, "The Beat Poets."

change.<sup>38</sup> This added a unique dimension to their writing, reflecting a broader cultural and philosophical perspective. Combining these techniques and their rebellious spirit resulted in a revolutionary and significant body of work that inspired countercultural movements throughout the 1950s and beyond.

A fundamental principle of the Beats' art was anti-materialism since it emphasised experiences over material belongings and depicted authentic human feelings and experiences. Turner also describes their experimentation with drugs to explore psychedelic worlds and also embraced sexual emancipation, which was projected in important pieces such as William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* or Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, which captured the spirit of rebellion and the challenges of the time and typified their ethos.<sup>39</sup> In their literary works, the Beats advocated some ideas that would eventually be essential to the Hippie movement.

Alongside these notable writers were other influential poets, particularly Lawrence Monsanto Ferlinghetti. Following Davidson, Ferlinghetti was a social activist who played a pivotal role in San Francisco's Literary Renaissance, a vibrant period of poetic activity during the 1950s that brought the city to prominence as a hub of the American poetry avant-garde.<sup>40</sup> The Beat movement turned San Francisco into a centre for avant-garde poetry and creative expression. Kimmelman recognises Lawrence Ferlinghetti as a publisher, political activist, and poet; his most popular piece is a collection of 30 poems called *A Coney Island of the Mind*, which is a classic example of Beat literature because of its experimental style, aggressive vocabulary, and vivid imagery that all closely resemble the Beat Generation's literary and cultural rebellion.<sup>41</sup> He became an important representative of this era. Kimmelman additionally claims Ferlinghetti captures the essence of the Beat movement by focusing on themes of societal critique, revolution, and the search for authenticity set against a backdrop of modernism and urban life.<sup>42</sup> Ferlinghetti's dedication to making art accessible to everybody, his effect on modern readers, and his uncompromising spirit can still captivate audiences today. Kimmelman adds that Lawrence Ferlinghetti denied categorisation as a Beat poet, instead identifying as the last of the Bohemians and emphasising his role as a bookstore owner and publisher.<sup>43</sup> His

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<sup>38</sup> Poetry Foundation, "The Beat Poets."

<sup>39</sup> Steve, Turner. *Angelheaded hipster: a life of Jack Kerouac*, Viking, New York, N.Y, 1996, 223.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Mid-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 94.

<sup>41</sup> Burt Kimmelman, *The Facts on File Companion to 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Poetry* (New York: Facts on File Inc, 2005), 161-162.

<sup>42</sup> Kimmelman, *The Facts on File*, 161-162.

<sup>43</sup> Kimmelman, *The Facts on File*, 161-162.

commitment to free expression and challenging societal norms was exemplified by his instrumental role in publishing Allen Ginsberg's iconic poem *Howl*. Kimmelman concludes that Ferlinghetti's publishing arm, City Lights, was instrumental in publishing groundbreaking works by Beat authors such as already mentioned Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs.<sup>44</sup> Though not a Beat himself, Lawrence Ferlinghetti has become significant in launching and sustaining the Beat movement through his bookstore, a gathering place for legendary Beat writers such as Gregory Corso.

Another poet with an impressive but difficult background was Gregory Nunzio Corso. Corso was among the youngest among the inner circle of Beat Generation writers. Murad remarks Corso's troublesome childhood, incarceration, and later schooling under Allen Ginsberg's guidance greatly impacted his work, topics, and writing style.<sup>45</sup> Gregory Corso was most famous for his poetry, particularly his metaphysical and abstract style. Harney says that his most notable works are *Gasoline* - a poem that captures the rebellious spirit of the Beat movement and explores themes of freedom, desire, and existential angst - *Marriage*, and *Bomb*.<sup>46</sup> Corso's poetry was known for its ebullient and playful nature, often blurring the lines between seriousness and humour.

Corso's work and character inspired the counterculture movement, notably his participation in Acid Tests. Harney explains his poems and lifestyle exemplified the shift from the Beat Generation to the Hippie Movement, as he embraced counterculture ideas such as personal independence, experimentation, and social critique.<sup>47</sup> Corso's poetry reflects his experimental and irreverent approach to traditional forms. His humour, satire, and social commentary align with the Beat Generation's emphasis on challenging mainstream norms.

The Beats altered the counterculture of the 1960s that went beyond literature, with individuals like Neal Cassady bridging the generational divide. It is known that they concentrated on themes of the human condition, sexual emancipation, spirituality, psychedelic exploration, and anti-materialism. Despite not being a prolific writer, Cassady was a major inspiration and muse for several Beat writers.

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<sup>44</sup> Kimmelman, *The Facts on File*, 161-162.

<sup>45</sup> Ibrahim A. Murad, *The Beat Generation A Socio-Political Study*, (Kermanshah Publishing Press, 2019), 73-75.

<sup>46</sup> Steve Harney, "Ethnos and the Beat Poets," *Journal of American Studies* 25, no. 3 (1991): 363-380.

<sup>47</sup> Harney, "Ethnos and the Beat Poets," 363-380.

Wolfe presents how Kerouac immortalised Cassady as the rebellious, daring personification of the Beat mentality:

Neal Cassady was the hero, “Dean Moriarty,” of Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, the Denver Kid, a kid who was always racing back and forth across the U.S. by car, chasing, or outrunning, “life,” and here is the same guy, now 40, in the garage, flipping a sledge hammer, rocketing about to his own Joe Cuba and—talking. Cassady never stops talking. But that is a bad way to put it. Cassady is a monologist, only he doesn’t seem to care whether anyone is listening or not. He just goes off on the monologue, by himself if necessary, although anyone is welcome aboard. He will answer all questions, although not exactly in that order.<sup>48</sup>

In this excerpt, Neal Cassady is shown as an exemplary icon for the Beat writers, inspiring them with his boundless energy and spontaneous spirit. His actions are driven by the search for truth and life experiences. *Rocketing about to His Own* emphasises his individualistic approach to life, ignoring the social constructs and focusing on his own terms. Ginsberg also wrote about Cassady. According to Campbell, Ginsberg called Cassady a “secret hero” in his poem *Howl*, and he was attracted to Cassady’s unusual lifestyle and sexuality; the difference between Kerouac’s and Ginsberg’s descriptions of Cassady put him under pressure to live up to these divergent images for the rest of his life.<sup>49</sup> Cassady was a link between the Beat Generation of the 1950s and the counterculture of the 1960s, influencing both groups through his interactions with significant personalities.

The Beats travelled a lot; their idea of mobility meant searching, not escaping. McDowell explains that The Beat Generation’s mobility concept went beyond simple escapism and focused on the discovery and personal development.<sup>50</sup> Disillusioned with 1950s America’s rigidity and consumerism, the Beats embraced travel to break free from societal limitations, seeking fresh experiences that included physical excursions and intellectual and spiritual development. Furthermore, McDowell states that this desire for authenticity and meaning through mobility fostered creativity, community building, and a shared sense of rebellion, with a focus on personal growth, artistic inspiration, and the formation of a group bound together by shared experiences.<sup>51</sup> The Beat Generation’s emphasis on mobility, as seen by their travels and literary works, allowed them to break free from social limitations and achieve a more authentic

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<sup>48</sup> Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (New York: Picador, 1968), 15.

<sup>49</sup> James Campbell, *This is the Beat Generation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 12.

<sup>50</sup> Linda, McDowell. “Off the Road: Alternative Views of Rebellion, Resistance and ‘The Beats,’” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 21, no. 2 (1996): 412–419.

<sup>51</sup> McDowell, “Off the Road, 412–419.

and fulfilling life, encouraging creativity, community, and a spirit of revolt. McDowell also includes examples such as Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" and Allen Ginsberg's trips to India, demonstrating how mobility transformed the Beat Generation.<sup>52</sup> The Beat culture was continued by the counter-culture movement, which carried on its values and aspirations in numerous ways. In this sense, beat culture came to be understood as more than just a passing trend; it became a potent social and political force. Their impact can still be observed in the works of many modern authors. They lived this rebellious life to show their protest and rejection of American middle-class values.

The Beat Generation is often regarded as the ancestor of the Hippies, and they would not have existed without them. As this chapter suggests, some figures easily transitioned from the Beats to the Hippies, for instance, Neal Cassady, who acted as a bridge between the two movements. Highlighting their innovative literary style and iconic works show how the Beat Generation's unique ideology - characterised by nonviolence, ecological conscience, homosexual rights, and hedonism - expanded consciousness through surrealism and Eastern spirituality. Their ideology, combining drugs, poetry, and existentialist philosophy, extended beyond literature, merging with the 1960s Hippie counterculture. Poets like Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti broke the traditional norms, while Jack Kerouac's spontaneous prose characterised their mobility and spontaneity. Despite conservative society's misunderstanding, the Beats proudly embraced their differences. Their avant-garde writing, rebellious lifestyle, and experimental approach inspired young people to challenge authority, reject consumerism, and seek a more meaningful life, especially appealing to college students eager to break from their parents' predetermined paths. The Beats' unconventional lives and bold, unapologetic appreciation of nonconformity draw people inspire people even in the present.

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<sup>52</sup> McDowell, "Off the Road, 412–419.

### 3 The Hippie Movement

The 1960s were pivotal in history when societal norms were challenged, and authority was questioned. The Hippie Movement, following the Beat Generation, revolutionised cultural norms and beliefs, transforming American society. This chapter delves into the origins and motivating factors behind the Hippie Movement, exploring its countercultural ethos and impact during a period of significant change. It also examines the complex interaction between the Hippie Movement and drug usage, analysing the motivations behind the use of psychedelics as rituals for spiritual development and community building. Additionally, it investigates the cultural context that gave rise to this phenomenon. The Hippie Movement emerged as a response to both external factors - political, social, and economic settings - and internal changes in the mindset of young Americans, including shifts in their attitudes towards society. As a subculture, Hippies were characterised by nonconformity and rejection of widespread conventions, distinguishing themselves through unique fashion trends, alternative lifestyles, and active resistance to mainstream institutions. Hippies wanted to establish a new community and social organisation, promoting social justice, love, and peace while critiquing materialism, consumerism, war, and social inequity.

The movement deliberately avoided standard organisation in order to preserve authenticity and challenge social conventions, as seen by its purposeful lack of structure. Brownell affirms this movement was unorganised and never had an official leader or regulations because it would have meant a return to a well-ordered and mainstream society.<sup>53</sup> Aside from having their own philosophy, they also had their own fashion trends, politics, language, and music. Roszak describes how Hippies felt alienated from mainstream materialist society and embraced the sexual revolution and new styles of clothing as a form of self-expression.<sup>54</sup> One of the ways Hippies rejected convention was through their appearance. Miles describes that most of these had a relaxed look, like long hair, baggy clothes, some with psychedelic colours, hand-made prints, beads, beards, fringed vests, blue jeans and sandals.<sup>55</sup> For example, the quote from the novel

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<sup>53</sup> Richard Brownell. *American Counterculture of the 1960s.*, (Farmington Hills: Lucent Books, 2011), 82.

<sup>54</sup> Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 123.

<sup>55</sup> Barry Miles, *Hippie* (London: Bounty Books, 2013), 138.

*The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* by Tom Wolfe further describes the specific style of the Hippies:

I saw about ten people sitting directly under the black light, which was back-draped by a white (luminescent lavender, then) sheet, painting on disembodied mannequins with fluorescent paint ... and on each other, their clothes, etc. I stood under the light and drops of paint fell on my foot and sandal, and it was exquisite. I returned to this light frequently... it was peaceful and beautiful beyond description. My skin had depth and texture under the light...a velvety purple. I remember wishing it could be that color always.<sup>56</sup>

As demonstrated in the quote, the colours were a big part of their aesthetic and people could express how they felt through fashion. However, people were considered Hippie by their actions rather than by wearing long hair and colourful clothes because they felt that behaviour mattered.

Referring back to the first chapter, the Hippies typically refer to subculture and counterculture, depending on how they are defined and interpreted. In line with this rejection of mainstream norms, Stone highlights the Hippies' refusal to embrace a universal belief system that transcended the principles of existing institutions such as class, religion, or government.<sup>57</sup> They did not want to be conformists or governed by any of these "powerful" institutions or desire any actual or imagined opponents. Stone mentions they had little faith in anyone over thirty or in the establishment; these "enemies" included large corporations, the military, the government, and more covert authorities like The Church.<sup>58</sup> The Hippies had views that were different from the norm, and especially younger ones were profoundly influenced by their ideals. Yablonsky states that during the late 1960s, Hippies became the largest and most visible countercultural group in the United States.<sup>59</sup> This movement significantly impacted the cultural and social scene, leaving a lasting legacy.

There are several ways to describe the significance of the Hippies. First, Rorabaugh presents the growth of all 1960s movements, such as civil rights, and environmental activism, which changed the culture of the United States, followed by the appearance of aspects such as looser sexual morals, street protests connected to political radicalism, and environmentalism.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 275

<sup>57</sup> Stone, *Hippies*, 74-76

<sup>58</sup> Stone, *Hippies*, 74-76.

<sup>59</sup> Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip* (New York: Western Publishing, 1968), 21-37.

<sup>60</sup> William Joseph Rorabaugh, *American hippies*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 122-127.



The Hippies greatly influenced the 1960s in America, causing substantial development mainly in civil rights and ecology, which still last until today.

The Hippies were famous thanks to their anti-war activism. The Vietnam War produced one of the most powerful anti-war movements in American history, with millions of people taking to the streets to protest the combat. While the Hippies were obviously opposed to all wars, their main point of contention was the Vietnam War. Davidson talks about how many hippies were conscientious objectors, meaning they abstained from the Vietnam War for moral or ethical reasons and when draft resistance spread, many were burning draft cards, escaping to Canada, or vocally opposing the war.<sup>61</sup> The Hippie attitude of individual autonomy and rejection of authority inspired these acts of disobedience against the military-industrial complex. Farber and Bailey say the Hippies' resistance to the war influenced public opinion and contributed to the final withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. The human cost of the war and the wounds it inflicted on servicemen and Vietnamese civilians were still fresh in the communal consciousness of the country.<sup>62</sup> Hippies wanted to create a peaceful and equal society.

Living in times of the Cold War and the era of technological growth, and space exploration made many Hippies, similarly to the Beats, adopt a back-to-nature mentality and reject materialism and technological alienation. Roszak comments that during the 1960s, American cities had problems with land and water pollution, which are much more severe than today as many industries disposed of toxic chemicals in the water or buried them, causing irreparable damage to the ecosystem.<sup>63</sup> For the Hippies, ecological responsibility was just as important as peace in the country. Roszak adds that they had a philosophy of caring for the Earth through recycling, organic food, vegetarianism.<sup>64</sup> Among the few organisations that drew attention to environmental contamination were the Hippies. Brown states that the movement displayed the gravity of the situation with gestures and demonstrations, and as a result the federal government enacted the first federal emissions rules, the first list of endangered species, and the first Clean Air Act in 1967.<sup>65</sup> All of the things mentioned above contributed to the

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<sup>61</sup> James West Davidson, *Nation of nations: a narrative history of the American Republic* (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008), 875.

<sup>62</sup> David R. Farber, Beth L. Bailey, *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 41.

<sup>63</sup> Roszak, *The Making*, 66..

<sup>64</sup> Roszak, *The Making*, 66.

<sup>65</sup> The Correspondents of Time, *The Hippies*, ed. Joe David Brown (New York: Time Incorporated, 1967), 1-2.

changes in American society, specifically in relevant laws. This is a perfect example of how the Hippies changed the American community.

The way of travelling was one of the many things they shared with the Beats. Yablonski illustrates it as a carefree and spontaneous approach without the constraints of pre-planned itineraries or material possessions; they relied on strangers' kindness and fellow travellers' camaraderie to navigate their journeys.<sup>66</sup> This sense of community and shared experience was a defining feature of the Hippie lifestyle, as individuals often collaborated to meet each other's needs and create a sense of belonging. Yablonski talks about how the lack of material possessions and the emphasis on shared resources also led to a more nomadic lifestyle, with many Hippies opting for alternative forms of transportation, such as hitchhiking or modifying vehicles to create mobile homes.<sup>67</sup> These vehicles, often painted in vibrant colours and extensive decorations, became a symbol of the Hippie counterculture and its rejection of mainstream values. A great example is the bus *Further* from the *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* described in detail in the next chapter.

Another aspect of their ideology is the principle of free love. McElroy says it is a social movement that accepts all forms of love, and it aims to separate the idea of sexual relations from marriage, which is seen as a form of social and financial oppression.<sup>68</sup> Love was not limited to one person; instead, it was something that could be shared with everyone, not only on a sexual level but also among friends. For the Hippies, there were no taboos. In fact, they promoted experimentation, so much so that open relationships and group relations became part of their lifestyle. McElroy describes this as a part of a libertarian philosophy that seeks freedom from state regulation and church interference in personal relationships. Men and women equally have the right to free love without social or legal restraints.<sup>69</sup> Conservatives could not grasp and agree with this concept.

Sometimes, it can be prejudiced that Hippies were just uneducated alternatives. However, it does not resemble the reality. Rorabaugh reports that seventy per cent of Hippies came from upper-middle-class backgrounds, and the typical Hippie was educated and lived on welfare; despite that, they rejected upper-middle-class values and critiqued mainstream society.<sup>70</sup> Many American youths from the middle classes were interested in the conditions

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<sup>66</sup> Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip*, 21–37.

<sup>67</sup> Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip*, 21–37.

<sup>68</sup> Wendy McElroy, *The Free Love Movement and Radical Individualism*. (Libertarian Enterprise .19 1996), 1.

<sup>69</sup> McElroy, *The Free Love Movement*, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Rorabaugh, *American hippies*, 122-127.

inside their class and those in the lower classes and wished to unite them. This was the most significant distinction between them and their families. Rorabough then talks about how they did not want to work or study as a protest against authority, choosing poverty as their way of life and abandoning civilisation to live in harmony with nature.<sup>71</sup> They wanted to live life to the fullest and not work as hard as their parents.

There were several types of Hippies when it came to politics. Miller asserts that some were apolitical, preferring to withdraw from society rather than influence it, while others held the opposite view.<sup>72</sup> They intended to transform society by being rebels. The Hippies preferred to act as they wanted. One of the biggest parts of the Hippie lifestyle was communal living. Miller says that the communes, often perceived by the general public to be sources of drug-fueled sexual immorality as individuals gathered to share experiences and forge bonds, encouraging openness and a sense of belonging within the countercultural movement., captivated and repulsed the American people.<sup>73</sup> By separating, the Hippies demonstrated their detachment from society and avoided conflicts with those who disagreed with their way of life. Issitt describes how Hippies began to move to neighbourhoods mainly because of affordable housing, for example, Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco and Greenwich Village in New York City.<sup>74</sup> The Hippies then came to prioritise community as one of their core ideals. Issitt mentions that cheap housing encouraged the integration of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, including Afro-Americans, white people, Hispanics, and homosexuals.<sup>75</sup> These communities of the 1960s were far more diversified than the cliché of the Hippies implies. The Hippies adopted community as one of their most significant life ideals. As another reason for Hippies to create communities, Rorabaugh states that the generation of Hippies emerged from suburban middle-class families with a little sense of community and unity.<sup>76</sup> Living in these communities united the Hippies more and made the movement stronger.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the selling of certain drugs was still legal in the United States when the Hippie movement initially emerged. This increased the likelihood of accessing drugs quickly and easily. Taking drugs was an indispensable part of the Hippie Movement and another characteristic they had in common with the Beats. Fred and Munoz think that as the

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<sup>71</sup> Rorabaugh, *American hippies*, 122-127.

<sup>72</sup> Timothy Miller. *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 65

<sup>73</sup> Miller, *The 60s Communes*, 65.

<sup>74</sup> Issitt, *Hippies*, 26.

<sup>75</sup> Issitt, *Hippies*, 26.

<sup>76</sup> Rorabaugh, 2015, 168-70.

counterculture blossomed, so did the experimentation with mind-altering substances, particularly hallucinogenic drugs such as marijuana or LSD, which were not merely recreational. It often made users question conventional beliefs and values, including materialism, consumerism, and authoritarianism.<sup>77</sup> Hippies viewed these substances as personal and social transformation methods, challenging established power structures and advocating for greater freedom, peace, and love. It is vital to specify what LSD stands for. The United States Drug Enforcement Administration defines “lysergic acid diethylamide as a potent hallucinogen, abused orally, that has a high potential for abuse and currently has no accepted medical use in treatment in the United States, which is often colloquially called “Acid.””<sup>78</sup>

The quest for spiritual enlightenment sometimes turned into a marketable trend. Some individuals exploited the counterculture for profit, selling drugs or promoting spiritual practices without genuine understanding. Key figures like Timothy Leary and Aldous Huxley, who popularised the therapeutic and transformative potential of psychedelics, contributed to the countercultural movement. Aldous Huxley was a significant contributor to the psychedelic movement. A great example of this is shown in Tom Wolfe’s novel:

Aldous Huxley, who had taken mescaline and written about it in *The Doors of Perception*. He compared the brain to a “reducing valve.” In ordinary perception, the senses send an overwhelming flood of information to the brain, which the brain then filters down to a trickle it can manage for the purpose of survival in a highly competitive world.<sup>79</sup>

His ideas on the nature of consciousness and the ability of psychedelics to foster creativity were influenced by his experiments with mescaline. His support contributed to the rise in popularity of psychedelics as a tool for consciousness expansion and mental exploration.

Another prominent figure in the popularisation of psychedelic drug usage was Timothy Leary. Stevens says that Leary promoted the healing and metamorphic effects of LSD, popularising the expression “turn on, tune in, drop out” and founded the League for Spiritual Discovery in 1966, declaring LSD as its Holy sacrament, which was an unsuccessful attempt to maintain legal status for the use of LSD and other psychedelics.<sup>80</sup> Wolfe states that Leary had

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<sup>77</sup> Davis Fred, Laura Munoz, “Heads and Freaks: Patterns and Meanings of Drug Use Among Hippies,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 9, no. 2 (1968): 156–164.

<sup>78</sup> “LSD,” United States Drug Enforcement Administration, accessed on May 21, 2024, <https://www.dea.gov/factsheets/lsd>.

<sup>79</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 44.

<sup>80</sup> Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream*, (New York: Grove Press, 1987), 7.

given up his academic psychology career for the sake of the psychedelic movement, and, it was difficult for him not to be overly enthusiastic when discussing LSD.<sup>81</sup> His support of LSD as a means of achieving social change and awareness growth made him a pivotal figure in the countercultural movement.

In Hippie communities, drug use came with drawbacks and critiques. Fred and Munoz mention that these include health risks and adverse reactions such as negative psychedelic episodes when being under the influence of drugs, anxiety, and hallucinations, highlighting the unpredictable effects on mental and physical well-being.<sup>82</sup> It is important to mention how long-term psychedelic use could contribute to psychological instability and worsen underlying mental health conditions, raising concerns about the potential harm of repeated drug consumption. Forman claims that addiction and dependency issues emerged within some Hippie circles, with individuals developing drug abuse habits that strained relationships and hindered personal growth.<sup>83</sup> This was to be expected as drugs are highly addictive. On the other hand, Fred and Munoz say that Hippies rejected the use of alcohol and the strongest psychotropic substances, such as cocaine, amphetamine and heroin, were not very popular among members of the movement as they knew how harmful and addictive they were.<sup>84</sup> While not all Hippies suffered from addiction, the frequent use of substances like LSD and marijuana posed risks that could disrupt the lives and social connections of the people involved. Additionally, negative social perceptions of Hippies were seen as problematic due to their drug use. The group was portrayed as irresponsible and disconnected from reality, underscoring the challenges and criticisms associated with drug use.

When talking about drugs in terms of the Hippie Movement, it is crucial to bring Ken Kesey up. Wolfe notes that Kesey was one of the first individuals in the US to experiment with LSD as part of government-funded research at the Menlo Park Veterans' Hospital in the late 1950s, and this experience shaped his worldview and writing.<sup>85</sup> Wolfe describes Kesey's writing, particularly his novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, as a reflection of the countercultural values of the 1960s and notes that it helped to spread the use of psychedelics and the counterculture movement:

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<sup>81</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 249.

<sup>82</sup> Fred et al., "Heads and Freaks," 156–164.

<sup>83</sup> Sarah E. Forman "The Life and Death of the Hippie: A Dance with the Devil and the Media." *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse* 8, no.2 (2016), 12

<sup>84</sup> Fred et al., "Heads and Freaks," 156–164.

<sup>85</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 4.

In short, this young, handsome, successful, happily-married three-lovely-children father was a fear-crazed dope fiend in flight to avoid prosecution on three felonies and god knows how many misdemeanors and seeking at the same time to sculpt a new satori from an old surf—in even shorter, mad as a hatter.[...] Once possessor of a phenomenal bank account and money waving from every hand, now it was all his poor wife could do to scrape together eight dollars to send as getaway money to Mexico.<sup>86</sup>

Kesey's influence on the counterculture was profound, immortalised in Tom Wolfe's novel *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. Kesey's work, and persona embodied the transition from Beat to Hippie ideals, positioning him as an important link between the two movements. He has proven that no matter how talented a person is, drugs can ruin their life.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the relationship between the Hippie Movement and drug use was not without controversy and challenges. While not all Hippies became addicted, some developed drug abuse habits. Frequent use of LSD, marijuana, and other narcotics carried hazards. Using drugs was very popular among Hippies; however, their addiction damaged people's lives, stretched bonds among people, stifled personal development, and many people even died. Although the counterculture's experimentation with psychedelics was a form of revolt against social conventions, it also forced a critical assessment of where individual liberties ended and community obligations began. The repercussions of this era continue to provoke discussions on the intersection of individual autonomy, societal standards, and the desire for greater awareness. Regretfully, drug use was an integral component of Hippie culture. For many individuals, this issue reflected the "dark side" of the community, which is likely why many people rejected them.

In conclusion, this movement cannot be precisely categorised as a single entity due to its integration into the complex social culture of the 1960s that was shaped and influenced by other social movements, historical events, and political contexts. Hippies promoted openness, tolerance, and spiritual exploration. They embraced a unique lifestyle, including communal living and a vegetarian diet. Today, as people worldwide deal with mental health crises, environmental issues, and existential questions, the Hippie heritage serves as a reminder to seek deeper meaning and interconnectedness. Through this chapter, it becomes evident that the use of drugs within the Hippie Movement was a catalyst for expanded consciousness and communal

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<sup>86</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 4-5.

bonding. However, it was also a source of societal tension and moral scrutiny. With its style and principles, the Hippie Movement had an enduring effect on societal conventions.

## 4 Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*

*The chosen novel for the analytical part of the thesis is *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, a novel by Tom Wolfe. Its depiction of the Hippies, the Beat Generation and drug use in this time period fits the topic of the thesis perfectly and provides examples that can be set in literary and cultural contexts. It offers first-hand insights into the experiences of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters with psychedelic drugs, highlighting the countercultural ethos of the 1960s and the influence of substances, one of them being LSD. Second, Wolfe's narrative explores the cultural significance of the Acid Tests and interactions with key figures such as the Grateful Dead and Allen Ginsberg, revealing social dynamics within the Hippie community. It dives deeper into Kesey's evolution from a countercultural icon to a pop culture figure, his encounters with the Beat Generation, and the legal consequences of his drug use, providing an examination of challenges faced by Hippie movement leaders. Lastly, the book expands on social perceptions of drug use, its legal backlash, and the evolving cultural landscape of the 1960s, offering a comprehensive view of the era's impact on American society. The novel's main themes are drug experimentation and psychedelic culture, rebellion, leadership and charisma, communal living, spiritual and transcendental quests, and the search for authenticity.*

For the sake of the thesis, it is essential to briefly summarise the plot of the novel. Tom Wolfe's book *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* is about the story of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters set in the 1960s. The narrative starts with Kesey's path to becoming the author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and his involvement in an LSD experiment conducted by the government. Kesey organises a group of people with similar goals called the Merry Pranksters, and in 1964 they travel from California to New York across the nation on a brightly painted school bus named "Furthur." Their attempts to record their psychedelic experiences on video serve as a reminder that they are on a quest to meet Timothy Leary. After moving back to California, the Pranksters start throwing Acid Tests, which draw a lot of countercultural visitors with music, light displays, and LSD. Law enforcement's interest in them increases with their notoriety, which results in Kesey's repeated narcotics possession charges. Kesey poses as a dead man and escapes to Mexico with a group of Pranksters to avoid going to jail. Eventually, he must face legal repercussions and serve a short prison sentence back home. The Pranksters' actions had a lasting effect on the 1960s counterculture, spreading psychedelic culture and new forms of awareness despite their legal issues and the ultimate weakening of their unity. Wolfe's



story highlights the Pranksters' enormous impact on American society while capturing the era's vitality.

As discussed in this thesis, drugs were a big part of the Hippie Movement. Therefore it is clear that it is the main topic of the novel. The book describes the group's usage of LSD and other psychedelic substances, which they thought would improve their awareness and creativity. Drug experimentation is shown as a critical component in the formation of the counterculture movement, allowing individuals to defy established social standards and explore new forms of self-expression and spirituality. The book focuses on the part that LSD played in the gatherings called „Acid Tests”, where individuals would get high and go on group trips. An immersive and psychedelic atmosphere was produced by combining spoken word performances, light displays, and music during the events. The Pranksters' drug usage is presented as a means of fostering connections between them and the outside world, as well as a sense of shared awareness. This can be exemplified by Wolfe in the following statement from his novel:

We're shut off from our own world. Primitive man once experienced the rich and sparkling flood of the senses fully. Children experience it for a few months—until “normal” training, conditioning, close the doors on this other world, usually for good. Somehow, Huxley had said, the drugs opened these ancient doors. And through them modern man may at last go, and rediscover his divine birthright.<sup>87</sup>

This quote is a perfect demonstration of how psychedelics provide their users with a new perspective on reality. They feel that the normal world is stereotypical and boring, and people fall into uniformity.

However, the book also touches on the darker aspects of drug use, such as the legal and social consequences faced by Kesey and the Pranksters. Kesey's imprisonment and exile to Mexico are portrayed as the result of his drug usage and the government's attempts to repress the counterculture movement. The book contends that drug usage was not just a personal decision but also a political statement, challenging the established social norms and values of the period. This is presented in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*:

Kesey presents his theory of going “beyond acid.” You find what you came to find when you're on acid and we've got to start doing it without acid; there's no use opening the door and going through it and then always going back out again. We've got to move on to the next step... This notion has Owsley slightly freaked, naturally.

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<sup>87</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 44

He has his voice wound all the way up: “Bullshit, Kesey! It’s the drugs that do it. It’s all the drugs, man. None of it would have happened without the drugs”—and so forth. : Kesey keeps cocking his head to one side and giggling in the upcountry manner and saying: *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, No, it’s not the drugs. In fact”—chuckle, giggle—“I’m going to tell everyone to start doing it without the drugs”—and so forth.<sup>88</sup>

This extract from Tom Wolfe’s novel portrays drugs and drug use in a multidimensional way, highlighting both the creative and freeing benefits of the consumption of drugs and the legal and social consequences that come with it. It can be understood that the author talks about addiction and how hard it is to get out of it. Additionally, the character is trying to find a way to get into the right mental state without using acid.

The Merry Pranksters are a diverse group of individuals who join Ken Kesey on his cross-country journey. They come from various backgrounds and walks of life but are united by their shared belief in the transformative power of psychedelic drugs and their desire to break free from societal constraints. The Merry Pranksters' experiments with LSD during their journey were representative of the broader cultural shift towards exploring altered states of consciousness as a means of self-discovery and spiritual enlightenment. The Merry Pranksters were riding high on the success of their wild and experimental Acid Tests, spreading a countercultural message through psychedelic experiences.

One of the most compelling characters to analyse is Ken Kesey, the central figure and charismatic leader of the Merry Pranksters. Wolfe describes Kesey as an energetic individual known for his sense of humour and ability to unite people. Kesey's character is immensely tangled in the book's main themes, including the countercultural movement, drug experimentation, leadership, rebellion, and the pursuit of transcendence. Kesey embodies the spirit of rebellion against societal norms and the quest for authenticity and self-discovery. Kesey's aim to promote psychedelic principles and achieve intersubjectivity is evident in the way he organises Acid Tests. His conflicts with authority officials and society conventions emphasise themes of rebellion and the individual vs society, making him a pop culture phenomenon which questions conventional wisdom. Kesey was caught with marijuana, and its possession carried a significant penalty at the time, leading to imprisonment. As Wolfe writes in the novel:

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<sup>88</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 393

Then Kesey loosens up and smiles, as if he just thought of something. It is as if he just heard Mountain Girl's question about how was jail. "The only thing I was worried about was this tooth," he says. He pops a dental plate out of the roof of his mouth and pushes a false front tooth out of his mouth with his tongue. "I had the awfulest feeling," he says. "I was going to be in court or talking to reporters or something, and this thing was going to fall down like this and I was going to start gumming my words." He gums the words "start gumming my words," to illustrate.<sup>89</sup>

This arrest threatens to disrupt the momentum of the Prankster movement and throws Kesey's future into uncertainty. All things considered, Kesey's persona epitomises the book's investigation of psychedelic culture, social disobedience, and the search for transcendence in the turbulent 1960s.

Another influential member of the Merry Pranksters is Neal Cassady, the driver of the "Furthur" bus. He embodies the free-spirited individualism and spontaneity central to the Hippie ethos. His charismatic persona and adventurous lifestyle reflect a rejection of mainstream societal norms and an embrace of alternative modes of existence. Cassady's role as a prominent member of the Merry Pranksters underscores themes of rebellion, nonconformity, and the pursuit of authenticity. Additionally, his influence on the group's drug experimentation, particularly with LSD and amphetamines, highlights the theme of exploring altered states of consciousness and the quest for transcendence. Moreover, Cassady's interactions with others and his involvement in the cross-country trip on the psychedelic bus "Furthur" symbolise the communal spirit and interconnectedness of the countercultural movement. His energetic and uninhibited persona, coupled with his ability to drive long distances without sleep, epitomises the group's pursuit of expanded perception and heightened sensory experiences through psychedelic substances.

An additional member, Kenneth Babbs, represents the Hippies' anti-war approach. Babbs was a decorated helicopter pilot in the United States Marine Corps, serving in Vietnam from 1962 to 1963. Babbs' military experience gave him a unique perspective on the counterculture movement. He saw the war as a waste of time and resources, and this perspective influenced his involvement in the Merry Pranksters' anti-war activities. Babbs was a charismatic and energetic individual who significantly influenced Kesey personally and professionally, so

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<sup>89</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 25.

he was often called Kesey's substitute. along with Ken Kesey, assumes a leadership role on a spiritual journey fuelled by psychedelic experiences:

Sandy Lehmann is depicted as an outsider within the Merry Pranksters group due to his "bad trips" and struggles with Kesey's leadership and psychedelic experiences. This is contrasted with the more harmonious experiences of Kesey's inner circle. His journey reflects disconnection and alienation as he battles hallucinations and paranoia, resulting in a physical altercation with Kesey, as portrayed in the quote from Wolfe's novel:

Sandy, meanwhile, was swinging wildly from feelings of paranoia to feelings of godly ... Power. And the trip was always the bus. One moment it was covered with the Hieronymus Bosch scenes of his most private Hell. The next—he controls the bus. One night he discovers he can unpaint the bus just by staring at it. He has psychokinetic powers. His stare bears the power of life or death.<sup>90</sup>

The word trip is ambiguous because, in this context, it can be understood as a trip by the bus but also a trip as being on psychotropics. This portrayal shows the darker side of the countercultural movement, serving as a cautionary tale about the potential risks of intense drug-induced experiences. Sandy's strained relationship with Kesey highlights a dynamic of admiration, resentment, and tension, contributing to a different perspective on the impact of psychedelic experimentation within the context of the Pranksters' unconventional lifestyle and ethos. Despite the conflict, Sandy's involvement shapes the narrative of the counterculture movement, providing valuable insights into the era's experimentation with drugs and alternative lifestyles.

Carolyn Adams, nicknamed Mountain Girl, came from an upper-middle class. She was described as "one big loud charge of vitality," her relationship with Kesey demonstrates free love. Because of her strong relationship with Kesey and involvement in the group's events, Mountain Girl has a higher social status among the Merry Pranksters. Mountain Girl hid her loneliness and vulnerability from everyone except Kesey. Unable to stay away from him, she followed him to Mexico when she was eight months pregnant. Their daughter, Sunshine, was born there. She is introduced to the novel in the following quote:

Mountain Girl is a tall girl, big and beautiful with dark brown hair falling down to her shoulders except that the lower two thirds of her falling hair looks like a paint brush

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<sup>90</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 119

dipped in cadmium yellow from where she dyed it blond in Mexico. She pivots and shows the circle of stars on the back of her coveralls.<sup>91</sup>

As she was one of the few women in the group, she did not want to show her vulnerability and nurturing figure in a male-dominated environment.

The main themes connected the Merry Pranksters to the Hippie Movement of the time were the rejection of authority, the exploration of different states of consciousness, and the pursuit of non-stereotypical lifestyles. Despite their chaotic nature, they formed a strong community based on shared experiences and a rejection of mainstream values. Their "Acid Tests" gatherings aimed to break social barriers and foster a sense of connection. Overall, the main characters in the book embody the spirit of the 1960s counterculture movement, exploring themes of freedom, self-discovery, and the search for higher consciousness in a society undergoing profound cultural and social disruption. Through their experiences with LSD and other mind-altering substances, these characters challenge conventional norms and expand the boundaries of human perception, leaving a mark on the cultural landscape of the era.

In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Tom Wolfe uses several literary devices, New Journalism in particular, to capture the spirit of the counterculture movement and the Merry Pranksters' experiences. According to Bainer, New Journalism evolved in the 1960s and 1970s and is defined as nonfiction creative writing that employed narrative methods often associated with fiction. Aside from Tom Wolfe, writers like Joan Didion, Truman Capote, and Gay Talese popularised the genre.<sup>92</sup> This approach required writers to immerse themselves in their writing, develop characters, vividly describe scenes, and create storylines and dramatic suspense. Bainer additionally asserts that New Journalism frequently uses a first-person point of view, a useful tool for conveying background and engaging readers more intimately. Each writer has their own style and method for discovering or telling a tale to their audience.<sup>93</sup> The book combines fiction and non-fiction storytelling to produce a distinctive style. Wolfe alternates between first- and third-person narrative voices to offer a varied and thorough viewpoint on the events he was documenting. Wolfe's novel uses direct scenes to draw the reader in and a third-person narrative to remain objective. Wolfe also used in-depth descriptions of every element of the situation to help the reader empathise with the characters' actions and comprehend their everyday lives. He

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<sup>91</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 14

<sup>92</sup> Samantha Bainer, *New Journalism: Roots and Influence* (Murray: Liberal Arts Capstones, 2020), 4.

<sup>93</sup> Bainer, *New Journalism*, 4.

also included subjective literary aspects like character development, evocative descriptions, and interesting plots to make the story more captivating and immersive. In addition, Tom Wolfe was a chronicler, not a participant. This can be seen in the following extract from his novel:

Now he could see them all clearly, all the Merry Pranksters, and they were much like the bus itself, not merely colorful but exploding in every direction with good-day-glow, the fluorescent color of creation, the magic that was the special color of the 1960s, the color of the edge of all, all that was all going on. And here they were, right now, headed right into America, waving the magic color of creation.

In this passage, Wolfe combines literary techniques with journalistic detail, creating a narrative that reads like a novel. He uses vibrant imagery, for example, the "fluorescent colour of creation," "exploding in every direction with good-day-glow," and a subjective viewpoint to immerse readers in the scene, which is characteristic of New Journalism. He uses third-person narration in the paragraph. This approach goes beyond reporting, and it captures the essence and atmosphere of the countercultural movement.

Wolfe's use of New Journalism, which combines factual reporting with immersive storytelling techniques to offer an engaging and subjective account of events, experimentation with form, and the blurring of lines between fiction and nonfiction. Readers can experience a sense of intimacy through Wolfe's use of dialogue, inner monologues, and vivid descriptions, which enable them to be fully immersed in the surreal and chaotic world of the Pranksters.

To communicate deeper ideas and topics, he also used symbolism and metaphor. As an illustration, the metaphorical and symbolic meaning of the psychedelic bus, *Furthur*, represents the voyage for transcendence and self-discovery. The bus, purchased by author Ken Kesey, is a physical and metaphorical vehicle for the Merry Pranksters' psychedelic journey across the United States. *Furthur* was used for the Pranksters' cross-country trip to New York City's World's Fair in 1964. Painted in vibrant psychedelic colours and designs, the bus becomes a symbol of the counterculture movement, embodying the spirit of freedom, experimentation, and rebellion against societal norms as demonstrated by Wolfe in the following extract from the novel:

The painting job, meanwhile, with everybody pitching in in a frenzy of primary colours, yellows, oranges, blues, reds, was sloppy as hell, except for the parts Roy Seburn did, which were nice manic mandalas. Well, it was sloppy, but one thing you

had to say for it; it was freaking lurid. The manifest, the destination sign in the front, read: 'Furthur,' with two u's.<sup>94</sup>

As seen in the quote, the bus represents more than just a mode of transportation; it also symbolises the Pranksters' quest for transcendence, self-discovery, and a new way of living. It is a mobile platform for the Pranksters to spread their message of unity, freedom, and non-conformity. Like the Hippies, the Pranksters aboard the bus seek to break away from mainstream society, reject materialism, and embrace a communal way of life rooted in love, peace, and spiritual exploration. There is a little twist, though. While intended to be spelled "Further," the name on the bus itself was often misspelled as "Furthur." This misspelling reflects the playful, counterculture spirit of the Merry Pranksters. Additionally, they are always on the go and are not settled in only one place.

Another symbol represented in the book is La Honda, a place where the Pranksters meet. Situated in the secluded forests of California, La Honda serves as a physical space where the group comes together to experiment. The setting of Kesey's house in the woods reflects a rejection of mainstream values as he is far from society and not in the materialistic neighbourhood, so he reconnects with nature. The disruption of the tranquillity of nature in La Honda by the Pranksters' drug experimentation underscores the theme of rebellion against the post-war culture of conformity and the countercultural movement's defiance of societal expectations. La Honda symbolises communal living and nonconformity embraced by the Pranksters. As a shared living space, it fosters a sense of belonging and camaraderie among the group members, who engage in communal activities like drug experimentation and philosophical discussions. By choosing to inhabit a remote and unconventional location, the Pranksters reject mainstream societal norms, finding sanctuary at La Honda where they can express themselves freely. Additionally, La Honda represents interconnectedness and intersubjectivity, as the collective experiences of the Pranksters forge a deep sense of community. Overall, La Honda is a physical manifestation of the countercultural ethos driving the Merry Pranksters' quest.

In the novel, many ambiguous and slang words are used by the author and, consequently, the Merry Pranksters. The Pranksters used and introduced unique slang, reflecting their unconventional and psychedelic lifestyle. Some of the slang terms include the following terms:

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<sup>94</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 68.

acid head, day-glo, on the bus, kairos, freakout, and kool-aid. First, “acid head” refers to someone who regularly uses LSD or other hallucinogenic drugs, as further explained in the following quote from the novel by Wolfe:

Thirty acid heads, with innocent children in tow, in full Prankster regalia, bombed out of their gourds on the dread LSD, veering, careening in delirium sun pulse. In public, stoned out of their skulls on LSD, not only in public but in this momentous heaving Beatles throng amid 2,000 red dog forensic cops, in full go-to-hell costume—exterminate the monsters— .. but... no one lays a hand on them or says the first word, thousands of cops and not even one hassle... because we're too obvious.<sup>95</sup>

The quote clarifies that the author prefers using complex vocabulary and shows his knowledge of the terminology, which can be difficult for some readers. Second, the term “day-glo” presents a trademarked brand of fluorescent pigments and paints, as demonstrated in this short quote from the novel: “We pull up to the garage, and there is a panel truck parked just outside, painted in blue, yellow, orange, red Day-Glo, with the word BAM in huge letters on the hood.”<sup>96</sup>

Third, the phrase “on the bus” is a name for the people who are a part of the psychedelic movement: “You're either on the bus or off the bus.”<sup>97</sup> This suggests that one can either choose to be part of the psychedelic movement, embracing its values and experiences or reject it and remain an outsider. Lastly, “kairos” means the supreme moment. This moment of new experiences leads to insights into which new religions are formed. The quote from the analysed novel shows how the term is used in context:

All the modern religions, and the occult mysteries, for that matter, talk about an Other World—whether Brahma's or the flying saucers'—that the rational work-a-day world is blind to. The—so-called! friends—traditional world. If only they, Mom&Dad&Buddy&Sis, dear-but-square ones, could but know the kairos, the supreme moment... The historic visions have been explained in many ways, as the result of epilepsy, self-hypnosis, changes in metabolism due to fasting, or actual intervention by gods—or drugs.<sup>98</sup>

This quote highlights that many modern religions and occult mysteries speak of an "Other World" beyond the rational, everyday world. It suggests that these experiences are often seen as being beyond rational explanation and are attributed to supernatural or mystical forces. Next,

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<sup>95</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 203-204.

<sup>96</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 12

<sup>97</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 126

<sup>98</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 128



the word “freakout” describes a psychedelic experience or a moment of intense emotional release as seen in the quote from the novel by Wolfe:

They are all jammed into the big yard between the main house and the backhouse, with big bitter lollipop eyes. It’s like every head, freak, boho, and weirdo in the West has assembled in one spot, the first freakout, with a couple of hundred teeny freaks thrown in for good measure. Half of them are hunkered down with their big lollipop eyes turned up as somebody spits them up against the house, and they slide down to the ground like slugs.<sup>99</sup>

This is one of the chaotic scenes at one of Ken Kesey's Acid Tests. The description also captures the unconventional atmosphere of the event, emphasising the altered states of consciousness induced by psychedelic drugs. The last term, “kool-aid”, refers to the LSD-laced drink consumed during the Acid Tests, as seen by the quote from the novel:

Ironically, for Clair, anyway, it was Romney’s inspiration to serve Electric Kool-Aid, as he called it. They had all... yes... laced it good and heavy with LSD. It was a prank, partly, but mainly it was the natural culmination of the Acid Tests. It was a gesture, it was sheer generosity giving all this acid away, it was truly turning on the world, inviting all in to share the Pranksters’ ecstasy of the All-one . . . all become divine vessels in unison, and it is all there in Kool-Aid and a paper cup. Cassady immediately drank about a gallon of it.<sup>100</sup>

These terms and phrases captured the spirit of rebellion, experimentation, and liberation that characterised the Merry Pranksters and their involvement in the counterculture movement of the 1960s. It represents the authenticity of the language spoken by Merry Pranksters, who resembled the Hippie Movement. It also proves that the community had their own typical language.

The transition from the Beat Generation to the Hippie Movement is depicted in the book as a natural progression of the countercultural ideals and values that emerged during the Beat Generation. The book highlights the connections between the two movements through the characters and events Wolfe describes. For example, Neal Cassady, who had influenced the Beats, particularly Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, is portrayed as a bridge between the two movements, as his friendship with Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, who were part of the Hippie Movement, is seen as a spark for the transition.

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<sup>99</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 209

<sup>100</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 273

Another thing highlighted in the novel is the shared values and ideals between the two movements, such as a rejection of mainstream values and a desire for freedom and self-expression. The Hippie Movement is portrayed as a continuation of the Beat Generation's ideals but with a greater emphasis on communal living, alternative lifestyles, and rejecting materialism. The transition between the two movements is marked by the widespread use of psychedelic drugs such as marijuana and LSD. The Pranksters met icons of the Beat Generation and became friends with groups like the Hells Angels.

In the book, the Hippies and the Merry Pranksters are revolting against the government and the mainstream society, represented by the police. As a representation of control and conformity, the police are depicted as constantly seeking and catching the Pranksters for their nonconformist activities, one of them being the drug usage. It seems that the police are disconnected from the counterculture movement and its ideals, which encourages individuality, nonconformity, and self-expression. The following extract from the novel describes the situation involving the police:

On the third day of the countdown, April 23, 1965, 10:50 p.m.; the raid came. Oh God, there was never a better game played by any cops. Here they were, the absolute perfect cop-game cops, the sheriff, seventeen deputies, Federal Agent Wong, eight police dogs, cars, wagons, guns, posses, ropes, walkie-talkies, bullhorns—Cosmo! the whole freaking raid scene—and right up to the end the Pranksters played it as they saw it: namely, as a high farce, an opéra bouffe. The cops claimed they caught Kesey trying to flush a batch of marijuana down the toilet.<sup>101</sup>

The police are also seen as a symbol of the establishment trying to maintain its power and control over society. The Pranksters, by contrast, are seen as a threat to this power and control, as they are challenging the current state of things and promoting a new way of living based on freedom and self-expression.

To summarise the chapter, the novel, which combines features of New Journalism, details Wolfe's intense encounter with the Pranksters on their bus tour of the United States while high on LSD. While not directly part of the Beat Generation or the Hippie Movement, Wolfe was significant in documenting and interpreting them for a wider audience through his writing, particularly this book from 1968. He had significant connections to both movements, so his book can be seen as a bridge between them. The Pranksters and their use of LSD drew inspiration from the Beats' exploration of altered states of consciousness and their rejection of

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<sup>101</sup> Wolfe, *The Electric*, 151

societal norms. Though with a critical eye, it captured the Hippies' spirit, experimentation, and goals. The Merry Pranksters, inspired by the Hippie Movement, actively rejected the norms and values of mainstream society. They sought to create their own reality and communal lifestyle, reflecting the countercultural desire to break away from established societal structures and embrace a more utopian vision. The central themes connected the Merry Pranksters to the broader Hippie Movement of the time were the rejection of authority, exploration of altered states of consciousness, and the pursuit of non-traditional lifestyles. Every character represents one of the Hippie Movement's values. This book brought the counterculture movement and its figures like Ken Kesey to the attention of a mainstream audience. This helped shape public perception of the Hippies.

## Conclusion

To sum up, this thesis has offered a thorough analysis of the Hippie Movement, concentrating on how it is portrayed in Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. The countercultural movement known as the Hippie Movement, which gained notoriety in the 1960s, profoundly impacted American society and culture. This movement, which had its roots in the Beat Generation, was distinguished by its embracing of communal living and psychedelic experiences and its passionate pursuit of spiritual and personal liberation. It also rejected conventional societal conventions.

The thesis has followed the movement's historical track while looking at the social context of the time that contributed to the dissatisfaction of that era. Important personalities, like Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, were examined closely to see how their beliefs and behaviours totalled the considerable countercultural currents of the era. The famous school bus they travelled across the country in and the Acid Tests that followed captured the movement's essence and were pivotal moments that powered the Hippie mentality.

The storyline of *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* offers a realistic and captivating depiction of the movement, encapsulating its vitality and difficulties. It is a generation in which the Hippies search for personal authenticity, greater meaning, and social transformation, while Wolfe's journalistic approach captures the mood of the 1960s. The movement's impact mainly on fashion, politics, and other features of culture has also been emphasised in the thesis.

Furthermore, this thesis's examination emphasises the Hippie Movement's lasting influence. The Hippies' support of environmentalism, peace, civil rights, and a more holistic way of living has had a long-lasting influence on modern society. Their principles have remained inspirational to succeeding generations, impacting contemporary social movements and the continuous development of social values.

Essentially, this thesis has shown that the Hippie Movement was a significant and transformational force that challenged and transformed American society rather than just being a temporary cultural phenomenon. The Movement's influence may be seen in the principles it upheld and the ways it continues to motivate people to pursue social change. Because it provides important insights into the workings of cultural change and the ability of countercultural movements to bring about long-lasting change, the Hippie Movement is, therefore, essential to studying American culture.

## Resumé

Cílem této bakalářské práce s názvem "Hnutí Hippies jako protest proti mainstreamu" je podrobně prozkoumat hnutí Hippies jako formu protestu proti většinové společnosti. Tento výzkum se ponořil do historického, kulturního a literárního kontextu 50. a 60. let 20. století ve Spojených státech amerických, jako například období studené války, vzestupu střední třídy, zvýšených spotřebitelských výdajů a společenských konfliktů mezi tradicí a modernitou, konformitou a rebelií, jednotou a disentem se snaží zasadit hnutí Hippies do kontextu této éry paradoxního napětí. Dalším cílem práce je prozkoumat Beat Generation, předchůdce Hippies, jejich způsoby prezentace především v literatuře, zdůraznit jejich odmítání společenských norem, zkoumání vědomí a kritickou reakci na americkou společnost. Analýzou charakteristických rysů Beat Generation, jako je nespokojenost, anarchická individualita a komunitní život, se snaží ukázat, jak toto literární hnutí zpochybňovalo zavedené společenské mravy a normy a přispělo tak k vzniku hnutí Hippies.

První kapitola této práce se zabývá historickým kontextem 50. let 20. století v Americe a zkoumá hospodářskou prosperitu, vědecký pokrok a společenské změny, které tuto dobu charakterizovaly. Pojednává například o fenoménu "Amerického snu", ale i o problémech ve společnosti, jako byla rasová segregace a nerovnost občanů nebo strach z komunismu a potenciální vyeskalování studené války mezi USA a SSSR. Kapitola zdůrazňuje kromě napětí éry studené války, politický konzervatismus kulturním dopadu na postoje k práci, materialismu a spotřebě. Zabývá se také vznikem různých subkultur, které byly převážně tvořeny mladými lidmi. Tito lidé nebyli spokojeni s životem v americké společnosti a začali usilovat o změnu nebo jednoduše chtěli žít svoje životy podle vlastních pravidel. Celkově je první kapitola důležitá pro pochopení kulturních hnutí nejen 50. let 20. století a jejich vlivu na americkou společnost, jako generace Beatníků nebo hnutí Hippies jako protestu proti mainstreamovým ideologiím a hodnotám.

Druhá kapitola této práce se zabývá vznikem a vývojem Beat Generation se zaměřením na jejich literární přínos a kulturní dopad i na následující generace. Tato kapitola zkoumá počátky a vrchol Beat Generation, kteří se proslavili z velké části díky své literatuře, zabývali se novými a netradičními nástroji a technikami v psaní jako například volná próza, experimentální básnické formy, aby autenticky vyjádřili svého ducha. Kapitola také zdůrazňuje, jak Beatníci pomocí poezie zpochybňovali společenské normy, zkoumali vědomí a kritizovali americkou konzervativní společnost. Kapitola pojednává o tom, jak tito spisovatelé odmítali

například materialismus a tradiční hodnoty a ve svých životech a dílech se rozhodli pro duchovní zkoumání a autenticitu. Kapitola rovněž zkoumá vliv klíčových autorů beatnické generace, jako byli Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Gregory Corso a Lawrence Ferlinghetti, rozebírá a vysvětluje jejich díla, dále zdůrazňuje jejich jedinečný styl, témata a přínos pro kulturní hnutí. Svým rebelským duchem, nekonvenčními metodami psaní a zkoumáním tabuizovaných témat inspirovali představitelé Beat Generation další skupiny lidí, jako byli Hippies pro společenské změny v této transformativní éře.

Třetí kapitola se zabývá hnutím Hippies, zkoumá důvod jeho vzniku, jeho motivaci pro změnu společnosti a následný dopad na americkou společnost v klíčových okamžicích. Cílem této kapitoly je odhalit složitý vztah mezi hnutím Hippies a užíváním drog a prozkoumat důvody, které stály za užíváním psychedelik jako nástroje duchovního růstu a budování komunity. Zabývá se kulturním kontextem, který dal vzniknout tomuto fenoménu, a zdůrazňuje jejich ostré odmítání a kritizování války ve Vietnamu a jejich vzdor vůči společenským normám. Hippies bojovali za rovnost lidských práv a svobodný život. Kapitola pojednává o komunitním životě, který symbolizují místa jako Haight-Ashbury v San Franciscu nebo Greenwich Village v New Yorku, a zdůrazňuje hodnoty svobody, spontánnosti, které vyznávaly skupiny jako Merry Pranksters. Kapitola také analyzuje, jak hnutí Hippies zpochybňovalo očekávání hlavního proudu, podporovalo vzájemnou propojenost a posilovalo smysl pro komunitu prostřednictvím sdílených zážitků a odmítání hranic individuálního ega. Kromě toho je kapitola propojena s analýzou a pomocí díla *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* ukazuje podstatu Hippies a zkušenosti skupin, jako byli Merry Pranksters. Kapitola též poukazuje na šedesátá léta v USA.

Analytická kapitola rozebírá a pracuje s knihou *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* od Toma Wolfe. Wolfe svým poutavým vyprávěním zkoumá zkušenosti a experimentování Kena Keseyho a skupiny Merry Pranksters s psychedelickými drogami jako LSD a jejich vliv na lidské zdraví. Wolfe také zachycuje společné cestování Merry Pranksters v jejich ikonickém a barevném autobusu. Kniha zachycuje témata, jako je rebélie, experimentování s drogami, jedinec versus společnost, vůdcovství, život ve společenství, duchovní hledání a autenticita. Kapitola popisuje hlavní postavy a vysvětluje, jak je každá postava výjimečná a představuje jednotlivé motivy a hodnoty Hippies. Prostřednictvím Wolfeova stylu, který se nazývá New Journalism, se čtenáři přenesou do surrealistického světa Pranksters a zažijí bezprostřednost díky realistickému popisování, dialogům, vnitřním monologům a přechodu z vyprávění v první osobě na třetí. Ke sdělení hlubších myšlenek je použita symbolika a metafora, přičemž hraje velkou roli místo La Honda nebo právě policie, která jim je stále v patách. Kapitola také zkoumá

jedinečný slang, který Merry Pranksters používali a který odráží jejich unikátní a psychedelický životní styl. Celkově Wolfeovo vyprávění poskytuje ucelený pohled na toto kulturní hnutí 60. let 20. století, zachycuje podstatu doby a vliv Hippies na americkou společnost.

Závěr práce obsahuje komplexní analýzu hnutí Hippies a jeho hlubokého dopadu na současnou společnost, jak ji zkoumá Tom Wolfe v knize "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test". Hippies, kteří se objevili v Americe 60. let, se bouřili proti mainstreamovým normám zakořeněným v 50. letech 20. století, ovlivněným historickými událostmi, jako byla studená válka, rasová segregace a genderové role. Měli klíčový význam v hnutí za občanská práva, prosazovali mír, lásku a rovnost a zároveň se postavili proti společenské nespravedlnosti.

Hnutí Hippies se vyvinulo z Beat Generation a ztělesňovalo především komunitní život a snahu o osobní svobodu. Jejich experimentování s drogami dodalo jejich životu na komplexnosti a odráželo touhu po osvícení a změněných stavech vědomí. Prozkoumáním historického pozadí 50. a 60. let 20. století, proniknutím do podstaty hnutí Hippies a pojednáním o klíčových osobnostech a politickém klimatu tato práce osvětluje transformativní éru, která se vyznačovala rebelstvím a kontrakulturními ideály.

Prostřednictvím analýzy knihy *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* se práce zabývá tématy, symboly a postavami, které určovaly tuto dobu, a ukazuje psychedelické zážitky, snahy o osvícení a střet mezi kulturními normami a hodnotami subkultur. Tom Wolfe obohacuje vyprávění pomocí novinářských a literárních prostředků a nabízí vhled do složitosti hnutí Hippies a jeho společenského dopadu. Zkoumání svobody, rebelie a uvědomění, které kniha přináší, zachycuje touhu generace po osvobození od společenských omezení.

Celkově práce poskytuje nejen vědecké zkoumání hnutí Hippies, ale také vystihuje kulturní revoluci, která nadále formuje současnou společnost. Propojením historického kontextu, literárních vlivů Hippies je tato práce ukázkou duchu rebelství, svobody a sebepoznání, které nadále inspirují kulturní změny.

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