PIONEERING HIP:
SAN FRANCISCO AND ITS MID-CENTURY COUNTERCULTURES

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigated the history of San Francisco and how it fostered the development of counterculture movements in the 1950s and 1960s. San Francisco, from its origins as a gold rush boomtown to modern movements of community preservation, has always been more encouraging of alternative viewpoints than other American cities. In the 1950s, San Francisco attracted migrants who expressed their dissatisfaction with American society through poetry and literature; this group of artists, led by Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, became the Beat Generation. As conformity became increasingly frustrating for a growing number of American young people, San Francisco was again the center of youth rebellion in the 1960s. The Hippie counterculture situated in Haight-Ashbury in the 1960s reflected continuity of counterculture ideals from the Beats of the 1950s. The development of these two countercultures in mid-century America was essentially facilitated by San Francisco's historically exceptional urban identity of nonconformity.

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ORIGINS OF YOUTH REBELLION

"Alas! Youth is worried."[1]

-Jack Kerouac, "San Francisco Blues"

Counterculture movements – groups that adopt values that sharply contradict the accepted values of the society of which they are a part[2] – are as diverse in form and practice as the historical array of cultures they have rebelled against. For example, in seventeenth century England, the Diggers and the Ranters sought to establish equality among people and nature in resistance to the dominant, property-driven, hierarchical social structure, and in 1970s China, young people sought to follow more Western standards in opposition to the strict communist ideologies that had driven policy for decades.[3] However, when the word "counterculture" enters conversation, the most often thought of examples are, overwhelmingly, from mid-century America. Never has a non-conformist group received as much attention as the American "Hippies" of the 1960s, and discussing their beliefs and behaviors is impossible without considering the "Beats" of the preceding decade that so strongly influenced them. With the influence of these groups, United States culture has incorporated increasing amounts of space for nonconformists. This space is especially apparent in San Francisco, which has played an unusually prominent role in the development of counterculture in the United States. From the city's modern beginnings as a gold rush boom town in the mid-nineteenth century, inhabited by risk-takers seeking to flee the expectations of

[1] Jack Kerouac, "San Francisco Blues," in *Book of Blues*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 10.
[2] J. Milton Yinger, *Countercultures: the Promise and the Peril of a World Turned Upside Down*, (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 3.
[3] Ibid., 37, 398.

their lives in the Eastern United States,[4] to the recent boom in modern art and gay culture, to name a few, San Francisco has long welcomed outsiders.[5] It was not the only city where those who identified with counterculture movements and their values could be found – New York City, especially, also had a significant counterculture population[6] – but in San Francisco the counterculture became an essential piece of its urban identity. The city's legacy of a pioneering spirit, not only in terms of land and prospecting but also in intellectual and cultural exploration, made San Francisco a natural home for the Beat Generation in the 1950s and the Hippie counterculture in the 1960s, and countercultures flourished there like nowhere else.

The counterculture movements that developed in San Francisco in the 1950s and 1960s fit into a global historical tradition of countercultural rebellion. While undoubtedly the shape and ideology that a counterculture adopts are largely dictated by the values of the time, there are certain elements that are historically consistent among countercultural groups. Although often associated with or linked to political radicals, members of counterculture groups rarely have any overt political agenda. Rather than attempting to change the society whose values they hold so much disdain for, they instead choose to separate themselves from society altogether. Countercultural scholar Theodore Roszak describes counterculture as being so radically disaffiliated from mainstream assumptions and standards that it

[4] Philip J. Dreyfus, *Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 51.
[5] Gayle S. Rubin, "The Miracle Mile: South of Market and Gay Male Leather 1962-1997," In *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 247-272.
[6] Dennis McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, (New York: Random House, 1979), 64.

appears to be a "barbaric intrusion" into mainstream life and expectations.[7] By this standard, members of countercultures are nonconformists, behaving in a manner contrary to what is expected of them; however, nonconformity becomes counter*cultural* when it is supported by a like-minded group that builds a community and lifestyle on their nonconformist values.[8] Robert Flacks specified that the countercultural lifestyle emphasized "cooperation over competition, expression over success, communalism over individualism."[9] This community element is what made the 1950s and 1960s unlike other decades in terms of countercultural development. Mid-century America not only fueled nonconformity – increased emphasis on building national consensus inevitably pushes those that do not agree to the margins of social and cultural life – but also allowed select communities where artistic expression and alternative ideologies were permitted to flourish.

Mid-century America's emphasis on building consensus also inspired alienation – the feeling resulting from a gap between individuals and their social world[10] – which provides the prerequisite feelings for joining a countercultural community. In the twentieth century United States, increased reliance on technology pushed postwar society to a peak of organization, where conformist standards of values and behavior became increasingly accepted. This development of technology, more so than other elements of modernization, inspired alienation.[11] As American youth perceived older generations to become increasingly driven by a

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[7] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 43.
[8] Yinger, *Countercultures: the Promise and the Peril of a World Turned Upside Down*, 30.
[9] James L. Spates, "Counterculture and Dominant Culture Values: A Cross-National Analysis of the Underground Press and Dominant Culture Magazines," *American Sociological Review* Vol. 41 No. 5 (1976): 868.
[10] Kenneth Keniston, *The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), 3.
[11] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 5-9.

"technological totalitarianism" of sorts,[12] they sought to create a positive identity distinct from their parents.[13] Young people entering adulthood in the technological and consumerist boom of the 1950s and 1960s commonly experienced a reorganization of how people interact with and participate in the economy, seeing the shift from manual labor and industrial growth to a technologically-driven, service-oriented economy; Yinger identifies experiencing such a reorganization as a pre-cursor to a significant counterculture movement. This common experience, accompanied by a shift in population demographics as the American population became increasingly younger with the phenomenon of the baby boom, created a bond among youth who were born and came of age in the beginning stages of the Cold War that allowed them to collectively oppose dominant values and power structures.[14] Youth claimed to aspire to future security over values such as creativity, originality and adventure, but society did not equip them to achieve that future security; in industrial societies, young people receive little preparation for the transition from adolescence to adulthood.[15] Mid-century society promised progress, which had always been assumed to be inherently positive, but instead delivered disappointment, and American youth collectively responded to it with alienation.

In his case study of youth alienation, social psychologist Kenneth Keniston highlights the defining experiences for disillusioned young people. His subjects were students at Harvard in the 1950s who were overwhelmingly critical of their fathers' career choices, and saw a futility and soullessness in the fragmented tasks of

[12] Ibid., 23.
[13] Yinger, *Countercultures: The Promise and the Peril of a World Turned Upside Down*, 105.
[14] Ibid., 52-4.
[15] Gary B. Rush, "The Radicalization of Middle-Class Youth," *International Social Science Journal* Vol. XXIV No. 2 (1972): 312-317.

modern occupations as dictated by technology.[16] These alienated young men can identify few perceived benefits of adulthood, and therefore seek to avoid the behaviors classified as "adult" for as long as possible, which becomes increasingly feasible as prolonged education and a special classification of "adolescence" makes youth an extended developmental period.[17] Emphasis on future-oriented goals, driven by occupational advancement, conjure images of negativity and gloom, and rather than pursue these unpleasant goals, alienated youth search for a realm to create a positive identity that emphasizes an accumulation of true experience in the present.[18] Uniting in a countercultural movement became a means for creating a reality that does not expect one to behave as an "adult" as it is defined in modern society, and rebelling justifies a long feeling of "outsiderness" experienced by alienated youth.

Development of counterculture is not necessarily the inevitable outcome of youth alienation, however. Roszak notes that in the twentieth century there were two branches of cultural dissent: bohemianism, a lifestyle that rejects conventional rules and practices and to which the Beats, Hippies and other groups aiming to live according to an alternate set of values belong, and activists, who seek to change the set of values society ascribes to through political change.[19] While activists organized to improve repressive circumstances, counterculture groups instead chose to express their discontent with dominant social values by creating art and communities that uphold a contradicting standard.[20] While these two branches were inherently different in their goals and approaches, they did share some

[16] Keniston, *The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society*, 115, 241.
[17] Ibid., 310.
[18] Ibid., 225.
[19] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 56.
[20] Stanley Aronowitz, *The Death and Rebirth of American Radicalism*, (New York: Routledge (1996), 22.

characteristics that separate them from older generations and from mainstream society; both shared a tendency of self-examination and looking inward to find solutions to the problems they identify in their community at large.[21] This concentration on self-exploration and looking inward to find meaning and purpose pushed counterculture and activists to reject mainstream American culture driven by objectivity as false, instead choosing to find fulfillment and a new definition of progress in a personal, and often unorganized, sense of community.[22] However, in trying to change the system from within, activists adopted practices and characteristics of the politics they are opposing; with courage and creativity bohemian groups practiced their own variety of direct opposition and envisioned a life outside of the accepted cultural norms. Bohemians did not protest mainstream society not by trying to change it – as activists did – but rather they showed that a better alternative existed.[23]

The attitudes and behaviors of counterculture groups can be analyzed on a psychological level, and its members can be identified as possessing a perspective and way of thinking that separates them from mainstream culture. According to legal and social scholar Charles Reich,[24] human populations may be divided into three forms of "consciousness": "Consciousness I" was dominant in the more provincial nineteenth century and by the time Reich was writing was completely outdated; "Consciousness II" dominates American behavior, and is motivated by organization and a pursuit of material progress that has created the modern corporate state; "Consciousness III," which counterculture groups are among the

[21] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*., 63.
[22] Ibid., 206-216.
[23] Yinger, *Countercultures: The Promise and the Peril of a World Turned Upside Down*, 5.
[24] Interestingly, Reich himself has strong personal connections to the countercultural legacy of San Francisco, and his involvement in the rise in gay activism in San Francisco in the 1970s helped him come to terms with his own sexuality.

privileged few to have achieved, is founded on liberation and self-awareness and rejects the unjust nature of modern society.[25] These classifications are useful, because they explain the clash between the established "norm" of American society and the countercultures that rejected it as more than just differences in preferences, but a deeper difference in psychology. The values that the counterculture opposed, in this framework, were ingrained as the very foundation of modern culture, and therefore *cannot* be changed without dismantling American society. This makes the bohemian countercultures' decision to remove themselves from society – in a way dismantling it, and building their own, 'improved' alternative – justified. Different from the activists, who fought an uphill battle to change the dominant consciousness, the bohemian countercultures succeeded in realizing a community founded on a new improved and enlightened consciousness.

Not all eras and sets of values inspire significant countercultural opposition, but some leave themselves particularly vulnerable to this type of rebellion. In the United States, the environment of the 1950s and 1960s pushed youth culture to revolt against social, economic and cultural expectations. In the early 1950s, the United States experienced an unprecedented growth in national wealth; *Life* magazine exclaimed in a 1954 article "never before, so much for so few."[26] To illustrate the magnitude of the economic growth in the immediate postwar period: the gross national product increased 250 percent between 1945 and 1960; between 1947 and 1960, the average real income for American workers increased as much as it had in the previous half-century; by 1960 per-capita income was 35 percent

[25] Charles Reich, *The Greening of America: How the Youth Revolution is Trying to Make America Livable*, (New York: Random House, 1970), 26, 59, 220.
[26] Thomas Hine, "The Luckiest Generation," In *A History of Our Time*, Seventh Edition, edited by William H. Chafe, Harvard Sitkoff and Beth Bailey, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 68-69.

higher than it had been in 1947.[27] There is no questioning that the United States was flourishing economically. A change in the economic distribution of the country accompanied this overall increase in national wealth, and for the first time United States culture revolved around an increasingly large and influential middle class. The rising middle class created the perfect situation for a significant geographical population shift, and the 17.9 million middle class Americans in 1953 – as compared to only 5.5 million in 1929 – were the target population for the rapidly expanding suburbs.[28] With the rise of suburban culture, the definition of what it meant to be a successful American changed drastically from previous decades.

Americans moving to suburbia were far from a majority of the population, but they became the group setting the tone for the entire nation; suburbanites were attractive consumers, and in becoming the ideal targets for advertising, they became the image of what Americans in all communities believed to be ideal for their home and family. As the suburbs became increasingly important in shaping American aspirations, the diversity in Americans' goals for their families and careers diminished rapidly. Suburbanites were great "joiners," working to create community in neighborhoods where every resident was a recent transplant from somewhere else, and in joining together they diminished any diversity that existed from their various backgrounds. Being unusually far away from their families or others who they would normally turn to for advice, these new suburban residents invented standards for each other based on images fed to them by advertisers and advice dispensed by experts.[29] As it became increasingly common and acceptable to rely on these external sources for advice, ambitions and values – authorities and

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[27] Winnie Breines, *Young, White and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 5.
[28] Hine, "The Luckiest Generation," 69.
[29] Ibid., 70.

experts served as "national parents" – Americans became more and more a single nation conforming to the same standards.[30] Home – which became important to families as a secure, private "nest" separate from the imminent dangers of the outside world immersed in a Cold War[31] – carried the narrow definition of a white, heterosexual, nuclear family-based entity as depicted in television shows and advertisements.[32] The affluence and consumer culture of mid-century America bred conformity.

Much of 1950s conformity came out of new economic and occupational standards that signaled a shift away from the pre-war emphasis on industry and manual labor to a technology and service based economy. In the aftermath of World War II, nearly one million returning veterans enrolled in college courtesy of the "GI Bill of Rights," and upon graduation sought jobs outside of the industrial world in offices, as managers, salesmen and "paper pushers."[33] The advancements in technology – expansion of a mass media and advertising culture thanks to the television, introduction of the first computers in the workplace, invention of the credit card to make consumer culture even more pervasive, and so many more – decreased demand for blue-collar workers, and most middle class men woke up in the morning, put on a suit, and went to work for a large company. Business, more so than actual *work*, dominated the economy, and the occupational experiences of those involved were remarkably similar. Becoming an "organization man" – a character immortalized by William Whyte's 1956 novel *The Organization Man* and

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[30] Ibid., 71.
[31] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988), ix.
[32] Breines, *Young, White and Miserable*, 49.
[33] Douglas Brinkley, "America in the Truman and Eisenhower Years," in *Beat Culture: the 1950s and Beyond*, edited by Cornelis A. van Minnen, Jaap van der Bent and Mel van Elteren, (Amsterdam, VU University Press, 1999), 26.

Sloan Wilson's 1955 novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* – was portrayed as the ticket to an ideal, suburban life by advertisements and media, and a passive, supportive wife was necessary to achieve the dream of financial prosperity given by these new business jobs.[34] In the suburbs – and by 1960 more than half of the American population lived in suburban communities[35] – families strove to look and behave in very much the same way as their neighbors. Family structure incorporated a bread-winning husband and father, a subservient, homemaker and wife, and high achieving children who were expected to grow up to head similar families if they were to be 'successful.'

The driving force behind the new American affluence – changes in technology – transformed the way people interacted with the economy. Suburban men in the postwar generation were more career-oriented than their fathers, likely the first in their family to truly succeed economically, and were constantly reassured that their way of life was not only normal, but especially desirable.[36] This prevailing myth that business success led to happiness brought men into office jobs in droves. As manual labor became less important, society as a whole experienced a shift from industrial to technological, which led to an unprecedented fragmentation of tasks that separated home from work and created increased specialization of professional tasks.[37] This fragmentation brought with it an overwhelming number of choices. With these myriad options for every life decision, from occupational choices to choosing a meal from the growing number of fast food restaurants,

[34] May, *Homeward Bound*, 15.
[35] Brinkley, "America in the Truman and Eisenhower Years," 26.
[36] Hine, "The Luckiest Generation," 73.
[37] Keniston, *The Uncommitted*. 241-243.

individuals were expected to integrate fragments of their lives; however, they lacked the tools to make the pieces into a cohesive whole.[38]

As work became increasingly separated from other facets of life and associated with feelings of detachment and lack of fulfillment, family provided escape from occupational pressures. Strong families insulated people not only from the stresses of their jobs, but also from the perceived dangers of the outside world as the Cold War – which in many ways was motivated by advancements in military technology – became more threatening.[39] War was also a motivator in expanding families; as soldiers returned home from World War II, they started families and created a "baby boom" that lasted from 1946 to 1964.[40] This baby boom meant that the population was becoming increasingly younger. A larger than ever proportion of the American population were children, and therefore dependent on family for their every need. These children were young when the suburban conformity of the 1950s was at its most pervasive. (When they came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, many of them used the strength of their numbers, or attempted to do so, to propel radical political and bohemian movements forward.)[41] Feelings of familial security and growth of postwar families were a direct product of their suburban environment, and therefore became wrapped up in the complicated issues created by the dominance of media and consumer technology in the new materialistic society; this became a source of strain as America moved into the 1960s.

Family was intended to be an escape from external pressures, but the same technological dominance existed at home. After World War II, the growth of American consumerism that coincided with the rise of the suburbs accelerated the

[38] Ibid., 271.
[39] May, *Homeward Bound*, 24.
[40] Brinkley, "America in the Truman and Eisenhower Years," 26.
[41] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 27.

arrival of new products on the market, creating an overwhelming number of choices of consumer goods for the home as well. This complete pervasiveness of technology and consumerism, and their consequences, led to what Roszak calls a "technocracy" or "technocratic totalitarianism."[42] The prevailing momentum of Western society during this rise of technology more than ever emphasized an "instrumental activism." Society expected individuals and groups to work unceasingly toward "the good life," defined by continuing material and occupational achievement, developing cognitive rationality, and placing economic and professional goals before all others. In a comparative study of the values stressed by both the mainstream press (specifically *Reader's Digest*, *Life* and *Look* magazines) and the underground press (counterculture magazines such as *San Francisco Oracle*, *East Village Other* and *Los Angeles Free Press*), James L. Spates concludes that mainstream publications overwhelmingly emphasized instrumental orientation, as opposed to the underground press, which projected an expressive orientation.[43] These orientations are essentially polar opposites, with the instrumental placing importance on the future value of an action, or its contribution to some later goal, whereas the expressive primarily focuses on the immediate gratification of needs and desires. For alienated mid-century young people – or at least for young men who had more freedoms to make choices regarding their futures – choosing to reject planning in favor of instant pleasure was the surest way for the counterculture to avoid pursuing the mainstream goal of success and reject the conformity that mainstream society attempted to perpetuate.

The 1950s' singular image of success pushed any social critics to the margins of society. Recovery from World War II not only brought economic

[42] Ibid., 5, 23.
[43] Spates, "Counterculture and Dominant Culture Values," 871-875.

prosperity and technological boom, but also closed-minded fear that preyed on the minds of Americans struggling with a new era. This fear was embodied in the domestic anti-communist struggle propelled into the limelight by the actions of Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI), who built – and then rapidly dismantled – a political career on hunting communists in government. In a speech on February 9, 1950, to the Ohio County Women's Republican Club of Wheeling, West Virginia, McCarthy expressed the sentiments of many Americans felt during the Cold War:

> Five years after a world war has been won, men's hearts should anticipate a long peace, and men's minds should be free from the heavy weight that comes with war. But this is not such a period – for this is not a period of peace. This is a time of the "cold war." This is a time when all the world is split into two vast, increasingly hostile armed camps… Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity… And, ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down.[44]

McCarthy disseminated and acted upon this fear of communism, and swept up much of the nation with him. Even when the Red Scare died down, and leftists no longer actively feared persecution by the United States government, the Cold War propagated a battle against any perceived threat to strong families, rising consumerism or American power; the global conflict against the Soviet Union and communism built a tendency to display American strength and power as defined by military strength, capitalism, and, in the 1950s, political conservatism. Those on the political left were labeled by the political Right as emasculated, soft, and tools of global communism, and some believed their presence put the United States in danger of breach by world radical conspiracies.[45] Moving into the 1960s, social and political expectations only became more ingrained, and dissent and radicalism continued to be seen as illegitimate contributions to American society. To fully

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[44] Joseph McCarthy, "The Internal Communist Menace," In *A History of Our Time*, Seventh Edition, edited by William H. Chafe, Harvard Sitkoff and Beth Bailey, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 51.

[45] May, *Homeward Bound*, 86.

engage with alternate viewpoints, those who rebelled (such as the Beat and Hippie countercultures) had to separate themselves from society altogether.

In the 1950s counterculture movements were relatively small, and social rebellion and rejection of dominant cultural values was very much the exception to a powerful rule. As America progressed into the 1960s, an increasingly visible and vocal number of youth moved to the countercultural outskirts of society as the darker side of the "affluent society" began to show. Criticisms of the American political and economic system emerged as early as 1958, when economist John Kenneth Galbraith outlined how postwar American wealth grew only in the private sector, and income disparities between the lower, middle, and upper classes were perpetuated by this growth.[46] Many Americans, however, did not take his criticisms to heart and simply adopted the book's title – *The Affluent Society* – as a moniker for the prosperity they were enjoying. In 1962, Michael Harrington highlighted that between forty and fifty million Americans were living in poverty, completely outside the benefits of technology that built the "affluent society," and invisible to middle and upper class Americans; these millions were living below levels of basic human decency in "the other America."[47] The fact that the many faces of the poor – Harrington examines the impoverished lives of racial minorities, rural farm poor, urban slums, the mentally ill and the elderly, just to name a few – not only existed in the supposedly affluent United States, but were also ignored by mainstream culture was abhorrent to many in the middle class who had previously been ignorant to these problems. Actions taken to help the poor were completely inadequate, and for many it was easier to go on living as if poverty did not exist. With youthful rejection of mainstream society in the later sixties, choosing a life of voluntary poverty

[46] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958).
[47] Michael Harrington, *The Other America*, (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 1-12.

became a trademark of the counterculture, echoing the actions of intellectuals who lived like the poor (although outside the "culture" of poverty) to escape the "spiritual poverty" of American affluence.[48]

The shortfalls of the "affluent society" were perhaps most deeply ingrained on issues of race relations, and while the early stirrings of the civil rights movement began in the 1950s, in the 1960s the issue of racial injustice came to the forefront of American political life. The decade began with a sit-in at a segregated lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina on February 1, 1960, and nonviolent demonstrations continued to grow in size and number.[49] Civil rights activists became more vocal in their demands that the promises of the Bill of Rights be extended to all Americans. News coverage of the violence against groups such as the Freedom Riders in 1961 and the marchers demanding voting rights walking from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965 made select Americans of all races question the integrity of the "freedom" the United States supposedly stood for.[50]

Additionally, as the United States became further entrenched in the Vietnam War and public opinion grew to see the conflict as hopeless and misguided, the American government's claims of protecting democracy, freedom and prosperity rang hollow with increasing numbers of Americans.[51] The conflict in Vietnam escalated quickly from the time President Johnson signed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in August 1964, and by June 1967 there were 448,800 American troops stationed on Vietnamese soil.[52] Just as appalling to disillusioned young people as the number of troops committed to what many classified as a civil war, in November

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[48] Ibid., 86.
[49] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 81.
[50] Ibid., 138, 168.
[51] Michael Schaller, Robert D. Schulzinger and Karen Anderson, *Present Tense: the United States Since 1945, Third Edition*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 265-6.
[52] Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, 220.

1967 only ten percent of the American public favored withdrawal from Vietnam.[53] While public support for the war faltered as it continued, the initial support for a violent conflict and military build-up convinced many who became New Left activists or members of the Hippie counterculture that the United States was failing to recognize shortcomings of society and government. By the height of the Hippie counterculture at San Francisco's "Summer of Love" in 1967, hundreds of thousands were flocking to the countercultural values articulated by the Beats a decade before, and the conformity and consensus that had dominated middle class life in the postwar era had lost their persuasive power. Interestingly, however, the rigid gender roles that existed in mainstream society were not openly critiqued or changed in the countercultures, and those who were most active in the Beat and Hippie movements were predominantly men.

While countercultures are by definition outsider movements, they inevitably arise out of mainstream society as youthful alienation develops and leads to rejection of dominant values. As Reich sees it, a "revolution" of the new generation is the inevitable outcome of American wrongs, and the alienated made the decision to flee from the "crisis" of the postwar United States rather than compromise or conform. The dominance of "Consciousness II" perpetuated a society that is mindlessly motivated by the single value of technology and its organization; the existence and dominance of consciousness II are necessary for true self-awareness, "consciousness III," to arise.[54] In other words, the defining characteristics of postwar America – mass media and television, affluence, suburbanization – accelerated the dominance of technological organization and instrumental

[53] Ibid., 273.
[54] Reich, *The Greening of America*, 4, 90, 229.

orientation, and became the sources of postwar discontent.[55] Youthful rebellion and the development of counterculture movements was a direct derivative of the postwar environment, and therefore was a significant facet of the culture of the 1950s and 1960s, just like the mainstream values they rebelled against.

San Francisco, more than any other city in America, integrated the spirit of the counterculture into its urban identity alongside the dominant cultural trends prevalent nationwide. It is no coincidence that Beats, Hippies and other rebellious groups of the twentieth century inhabited and defined entire neighborhoods in the Bay Area; the city's pioneering history and tendency towards separation and "outsiderness" made it the perfect habitat for youthful rebellion. In the 1950s and 1960s, there was no escaping the "technological totalitarianism" – characterized by new inventions aimed at perpetuating consumer culture, increased dominance of military goals and advancements, and the rise of television and other media technologies – that dominated American culture and society. However, for American youth seeking a more attainable escape, the flourishing countercultures of San Francisco offered the next best thing. The postwar decades were the heyday of American countercultures, and San Francisco provided the necessary space for them to grow.

[55] Yinger, *Countercultures: the Promise and the Peril of a World Turned Upside Down*, 51.

SAN FRANCISCO

"Frisco is mad, absolutely mad and an almost perfect city at the end of the American continent."[1]

-Jack Kerouac, letter to John Clellon Holmes

From the time Spanish missionaries settled the California coast in the sixteenth century, the town that was originally known as Yerba Buena existed separately from the rest of North America. The early missions were almost entirely isolated from communication with the rest of the continent, and it was not until the discovery of gold in 1848 – the same year the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War and made California property of the United States – that the settlement changed its name to San Francisco and began popping up on the radar of the rest of America.[2] California was, it seemed, beyond the settlement frontier.[3] Even after prospectors began rushing to San Francisco, the city had an exceptionally adventurous spirit and agenda; the rugged geography of hills, fog and wind created a distinct feeling that nature was at hand, and the rapid influx of risk-takers hoping to strike gold immediately created diverse neighborhoods in the city.[4] An individuality bordering on eccentricity, from the city's beginnings, defined urban growth and cultural development.

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[1] Jack Kerouac to John Clellon Holmes, 8 February 1952, *Selected Letters: 1940-1956*, edited by Ann Charters (New York: Viking, 1995), 338.
[2] Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), xxv.
[3] James E. Vance, "California and the Search for the Ideal," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 62 No. 2 (1972): 199.
[4] Philip J. Dreyfus, *Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 6, 51-58.

Maintaining an urban individuality was relatively easy for San Francisco thanks to repeated opportunities to rapidly build and rebuild, allowing for periodic reinvention and abandoning of traditions. After the first major influx of people and construction began in 1848, it took only until 1875 for San Francisco to become the Pacific coast's major metropolis; after the earthquake and fire of 1906, again twenty-five years of rapid building restored San Francisco to its prominence and glory before the market crash of 1929. Construction and development continued in near-isolation from the rest of the United States, partially because the city's peninsula was almost entirely cut off from mainland North America until the completion of the Bay and Golden Gate Bridges in 1937.[5] The speed of construction and the geographical separation contributed to the perception that, even after the city was relatively well established, San Francisco was a frontier. Sitting on the far western edge of the continent, the city became the gateway to the Far East, its settlement became the ultimate achievement of "manifest destiny," and its challenging topography nearly taunted adventurous settlers to try to tame it.[6] A prevailing feeling had settled in San Francisco that living in the furthest Western reaches of the North American continent meant living on the margins of American culture, and allowed for the establishment of an alternative society.[7] Those seeking a tame, safe version of the American dream shied away from the earthquakes, gold rush, Barbary pirates and steep hills that San Francisco had to offer, leaving the city for those in search of individuality and adventure.

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[5] Brian J. Godfrey, "Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco," *Geographical Review* Vol. 87 No. 3 (1997): 312-315.
[6] Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*, 4-9.
[7] Michael Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 11.

The residents that became prominent in San Francisco's cultural development, such as poet Kenneth Rexroth, recognized the defiant attitude of the city and specifically sought it out as their home. In his *An Autobiographical Novel*, Rexroth said of San Francisco:

> San Francisco was not just a wide-open town. It is the only city in the United States which was not settled overland by the spreading of puritan tradition… It had been settled mostly, in spite of all the romances of the overland migration, by gamblers, prostitutes, rascals and fortune seekers who came across the Isthmus and around the Horn… The ocean was at the end of the streetcar line. Down the peninsula and across the Golden Gate the Coast Range was still a wilderness, and the High Sierras were a short day's trip away. More important, nobody cared what you did as long as you didn't commit any gross public crimes.[8]

California as a whole has always been unique in its separation from the traditions of Puritanism and the Protestant ethic; rather than integrating into the American norm, its early history is Latin and Catholic in a fundamentally Anglo-Saxon and Protestant country.[9] Instead of the "old" version of the American Dream, where success comes in modest spurts, slowly but surely, historian H.W. Brands describes how the new "California Dream" centered on "instant wealth, won in a twinkling by audacity and good luck" redefined success by new, more reckless standards.[10] California's state motto, "Eureka!", meaning "I've found it!" has origins in the madness of the early gold rush, but continued to apply to migrants to California long after the gold ran out.[11] Life in California conformed to values unlike those anywhere else in the United States, and for those seeking an environment to explore self-expression or unconventional ways of life, arrival in California was indeed a

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[8] James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters, "Preface," In *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998) viii.

[9] Vance, "California and the Search for the Ideal," 203.

[10] H.W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: the California Gold Rush and the New American Dream,* (New York: Anchor, 2003), 442.

[11] "History and Culture – State Symbols," California State Library, accessed January 12, 2011, http://www.library.ca.gov/history/symbols.html.

"Eureka!" moment. The lack of Puritanism and redefinition of success has allowed for California, from its beginnings, to be more open to dissenters, rebels and eccentrics who found themselves outside the expectations of traditional and mainstream America.

Historical eccentricity and the legacy of the gold rush have permeated almost every period of California history and modern trends in California's culture, particularly in San Francisco. Prospector James Hutchings, in 1853, issued "The Miners Ten Commandments," which were widely reproduced throughout California and became the only "law" regulating gold prospecting. The fifth commandment is particularly telling of the attitude that prospectors had upon arriving in California:

> V. Thou shalt not think more of all thy gold, and how thou canst make it fastest, than how thou wilt enjoy it, after thou hast ridden rough-shod over thy good old parents' precepts and examples, that thou mayest have nothing to reproach and sting thee, when thou art left ALONE in the land where thy father's blessing and thy mother's love hath sent thee.[12]

Hutching's commandments show that the motivation for hunting for gold was, obviously, to get rich, but one was not to do so in order to behave responsibly, save money, or follow parental examples. Rather, the purpose of finding wealth was to *enjoy* it, and this preference for instant gratification over future planning left a legacy in San Francisco that resonated particularly well with the counterculture movements that were established in the next century. In many ways – from their separation from parental influence, to their disregard for traditional manners and customs, and even the male-dominated habits of their culture – these gold prospectors were the Bay Area's first Beats, or first Hippies, rejecting the values of the older generation to pursue their own personal satisfaction and fulfillment.

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[12] James Hutchings, "The Miner's Ten Commandments," The Virtual Museum of San Francisco, accessed January 12, 2011, http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist7/tencom.html.

Beyond the ideals of early settlers, the physical layout of the Bay Area ensured that those with a strong sense of practicality or rationality would shy away from moving there. The peninsula itself has almost no natural fresh water supply; massive aqueducts and elaborate irrigation systems have to be used to get fresh water from the mountains into the city.[13] This issue, coupled with frequent earthquakes and the steep hills, made building residential neighborhoods a project only for the reckless and determined. Despite its challenges, San Francisco's topography naturally created precisely the types of neighborhoods that encouraged diverse communities; throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the city developed a polycentric urban spatial structure and can be described as a "city of realms." Neighborhoods developed in San Francisco that were autonomous, functionally separate and socially distinct activity areas.[14] In short, the hilly topography naturally separated the city and allowed space for different types of groups to thrive. As neighborhoods developed distinct identities, some were more attractive to bohemian and countercultural groups than others; Haight-Ashbury and North Beach, in particular, were among the most ethnically mixed areas of the city, breeding both racial and intellectual diversity.[15] San Francisco was perfectly suited for offering enclaves where unusual communities could flourish, relatively unbothered by anyone else.

The North Beach and Haight-Ashbury neighborhoods have particularly colorful histories of hosting these "unusual communities." North Beach – originally part of the seedy Barbary Coast underworld that in the nineteenth century was a red-light district crawling with prostitutes, gold prospectors recently arrived from

[13] Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*, 78.
[14] Godfrey, "Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco," 319.
[15] Michael Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 203.

the mountains, and corrupt sailors – has flaunted activities that would make mannered citizens blush since the gold rush era.[16] Haight-Ashbury avoided conformity by experiencing periodic, drastic revisions of its identity, shifting from isolated farming community to upper middle class residential enclave and, finally, to a low-rent Hippie hangout.[17] In addition to embracing ethnic diversity – a result of North Beach's blending of it's Barbary Coast pirate legacy with an influx of Italian immigrants, and Haight-Ashbury's repeated transformation and proximity to the primarily black Fillmore district – these two neighborhoods carved out identities separate from the downtown financial centers that, in reality, were only a few blocks away. These neighborhoods developed undisturbed by other residents of San Francisco, and in their own right became woven into the cultural diversity that the city has always displayed.

Natural disasters also offered their own significant contributions to San Francisco's urban development and frequent reinvention. Throughout the nineteenth century, repeated fires – many of which were caused by violent earthquakes – allowed for constant rebuilding, reinvention and renewal. The most significant of these fires, the devastating, earthquake-induced blaze of 1906, destroyed nearly all of the existing downtown development and, in the words of San Francisco State historian Philip Dreyfus, created for San Franciscans a "blank canvas on which to paint the city of their dreams."[18] A continual urban makeover repeatedly dismantled and rebuilt the city not only physically, but also culturally, preventing any traditions from taking firm hold in San Francisco. Multiple

[16] Julie Regan, "Barbary Coast Nightworld," *The Iowa Review* Vol. 24 No. 2 (1994), 199-200.
[17] Dan White, "In San Francisco, Where Flower Power Still Blooms," *The New York Times*, January 9, 2009.
[18] Dreyfus, *Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco*, 144.

renovations repeatedly allowed space for new ideas, communities and values to become a part of the city's identity.

San Francisco residents have developed distinct ideas of what they want their city to look and feel like, or at least what they *do not* want it to look and feel like. In the twentieth century, projects of downtown construction and adding interstate highways were repeatedly shut down; San Franciscans have a history of being unusually eager to challenge the corporate agenda for their city.[19] After World War II, citizens hoping to preserve the independent charm of the existing downtown met proposed urban renewal projects that hoped to "modernize" the architecture of downtown with significant resistance.[20] In the 1950s and 1960s, the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood council embarked on a fierce opposition to constructing a freeway that would go through their neighborhood, using the argument that the project would destroy the "unique and enviable character" of one of San Francisco's "few pleasant and well-integrated neighborhoods."[21] Just like in the city's early development, when it resisted the expected patterns of the rest of the United States, in the twentieth century San Francisco resisted the types of characterless, sweeping "modernization" projects that drastically changed the character of countless other American cities, refusing to conform.

Much of the justification in San Francisco's refusal to follow the standards set by the rest of American culture stem from California's self-perception, from the beginning, of being an ideal, almost utopian place. The word "California" was first coined, in the sixteenth century, to represent an imaginary island to the right of the

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[19] James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters, "Preface," vii.
[20] Richard A. Walker, "An Appetite for the City," In *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 4.
[21] Dreyfus, *Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco*, 182.

Indies, very near the center of the "terrestrial paradise." The discovery of gold in San Francisco only perpetuated this image of California as some sort of blessed, favored or perfect land. Settlers came to California precisely because they were led to expect that there they would find a "transcendent entity."[22] Even the bizarre geographical blend of ocean, desert, mountains, farmlands and forests, all within the confines of a single state, seemed almost otherworldly. While in the early twentieth century it was primarily Southern California that had successfully attracted those seeking a habitat that would foster an ideal life, undoubtedly in the postwar period San Francisco successfully appropriated this role as the image of the ideal; as Los Angeles oriented towards material and monetary success, San Francisco became more idyllic by comparison.[23] The image of San Francisco as ideal and separate from mainstream American values was not purely mythological, it was also partially intentional: former mayor James Rolph, who presided over the city's municipal government for twenty years in the earlier twentieth century, had hopes that San Francisco would become akin to Florence or Paris, a focal point of beauty and culture for the rest of the country to admire.[24] San Francisco's utopian image never seemed contrived or stifling, but rather natural and ever changing, the perfect environment for aspiring artists and social rebels.

The question of why California has encouraged artistic and rebellious migrants can become complicated to answer: deciding if California has a particular natural environment that attracted residents seeking to escape mainstream expectations, or if it is the presence of these nonconformist residents that has created California's distinctly eccentric atmosphere, is a circuitous argument with

[22] Vance, "California and the Search for the Ideal," 195.
[23] Ibid., 195-200.
[24] Dreyfus, *Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco*, 148.

no conclusion. What is definitive is that California exists in a realm separate from the rest of the Unites States, representing some of the same personality of a foreign country within the national boundaries with separate culture and social expectations. Those who move to California, and San Francisco in particular, are essentially expatriates. Especially in the postwar years, artists and writers moved to San Francisco because it offered a lifestyle "alternative to a man's past or the nation's present," and projected a spiritual and intellectual magnetism completely unlike the economic promise offered by other urban centers.[25] The city's diversity and sense of opportunity provided a "cushion" of sorts for those who did not come to San Francisco for economic reasons – whether Beats, artists, students, Hippies, activists, or gays, to name a few – and allowed them the freedom to create the subcultures that became essential to the city's identity and made it unlike any other American urban center.[26] For the same types of reasons American intellectuals fled the United States in the years following World War I in search of a welcoming space for their nonconformist cultural expression, following World War II intellectuals and artists moved to California and San Francisco.

From the city's beginnings, urban identity and artistic vision grew as one. In 1897, novelist Frank Norris observed that, "San Francisco must grow by expansion from within; and so we have time and opportunity to develop certain unhampered types and characters and habits unbiased by outside influence."[27] Even migrants to the city adhered to this distinctive set of values, and as the city's population grew its renegade artistic spirit remained unharmed; in describing the San Francisco literary community, poet Daniel Hoffman called San Francisco the "traditional home of

[25] Vance, "California and the Search for the Ideal," 206.
[26] Walker, "An Appetite for the City," 8.
[27] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 8.

refugees of the burden of tradition." A literature movement distinct from the rest of the United States emerged as early as the 1860s, and this early California literature maintained an artistic separation from American literature as a whole.[28] Much of this early California literature followed the model of Leonard Kip's *The Volcano Diggings*, which was written as a collection of letters from gold-rush-era settlers and very clearly had the intention of appealing to the common San Franciscan.[29] California writers sought to portray authentic accounts of their experiences seeking excitement on the West Coast.

Beyond written literature, San Francisco also found a space for creative performance art early in its urban development. The Bohemian Club, (which in performance style may be a pre-cursor to the San Francisco Mime Troupe which came nearly a century after), offered performances of scenes from Shakespeare with unconventional casting and almost psychedelic lighting and imagery in the 1880s.[30] In the late nineteenth century, a community of bohemian artists formed in the Montgomery Block building near the intersection of Columbus Avenue and Montgomery Street, just a stone's throw from the heart of North Beach. This community, according to poet George Sterling, was founded on the two elements essential to bohemianism, "the first is devotion or addiction to one of the seven arts; the other is poverty."[31] Cultural acceptance of these tenets was thoroughly integrated into San Francisco's culture well before the turn of the century. In the Bay Area, community development encouraged individual expression and artistic

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[28] Ibid., 5-9.
[29] Leonard Kip, *The Volcano Diggings: A Tale of California Law*, (Bibliolife, 2009).
[30] "A New Dramatic Departure," from *The Wasp*, August 22, 1885, accessed January 12, 2011, http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/boho.html.
[31] Nancy J. Peters, "The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent," In *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 201.

creation, and San Franciscans were not obligated to abandon pursuits of expression in favor of economic success or occupational advancement; alternate values have built an inimitable American city.

The attraction of California for the creative and the countercultural went far beyond the appealing, mild coastal climate, as guessed by some of the mainstream press who failed to grasp the allure of a countercultural community.[32] In the postwar period, those seeking a creative community were naturally pulled towards the Bay Area's existing creative and artistic communities. (Or, in the case of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, because it was "the only place [he] knew of where you could get decent wine cheap," and availability of alcohol and other stimulants cannot be underestimated when discussing the growth of artistic communities).[33] In the decades before World War II, significant artistic movements flourished, first in Big Sur – a scenic three-hour drive south of San Francisco – in the 1930s and 1940s, especially after 1945 when novelist and painter Henry Miller brought his antiestablishment attitude to the area.[34] Across the bay in Berkeley in the late 1940s, a larger community of artists collected and started to experiment with alternate forms of expression and unconventional communities.[35] During the war, ideologies of dissent and rebellion also moved near San Francisco when the United States Army placed three-quarters of its conscientious objectors in camps in the West, many in a camp in Southern Oregon that offered isolated forest work. These dissenters came to San Francisco when they left the C.O. camps, and even became the inspiration for Henry Miller's *Murder the Murderers*, which was the only book to

[32] Mildred Edie Brady, "The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy," *Harpers Magazine*, (April 1947), 2.
[33] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation and America,"* 205.
[34] Leonard Wolf, *Voices from the Love Generation*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), xviii.
[35] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 2-3.

express the protests of the nation's conscientious objectors.[36] In a time when the country was almost unanimous in its support of waging all-out war in Europe and the Pacific, the communities surrounding San Francisco allowed space for dissent. In the years following the war, the city only furthered its individualist spirit, possible because of its curious combination of urbanity and obscurity;[37] the sharing and growth of ideas that came with living in a large and diverse city combined with San Francisco's distance from mainstream American culture and allowed for an eccentric artistic culture that embraced the postmodern critiques of truth and reality to flourish.

This legacy of artistic expression, creative communities and political dissent in Northern California naturally influenced San Francisco as the closest urban center, and in the 1940s a significant and innovative community of writers and poets established themselves in the city. This development fulfilled the dreams of Kenneth Rexroth, who had been in San Francisco since the 1920s hoping to spark a literary movement there.[38] In the 1930s, the artistic scene in San Francisco was beginning to grow, and the city's Artists' and Writers' Union gained enough prominence to warrant artistic grants from the Works Progress Administration.[39] By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Bay Area literary community was a bona fide "scene," and Rexroth had become its "grand panjandrum."[40] Aspiring young poets seeking to escape the rigid conventions of the literary scene in the rest of the United States, such as Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, and Madeline Gleason, came to San

[36] Brady, "The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy," 10.
[37] Walker, "An Appetite for the City," 14.
[38] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 39.
[39] David Meltzer, *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2001), 234.
[40] Warren French, *The San Francisco Poetry Renaissance, 1955-1960*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 16.

Francisco to become a part of Rexroth's circle. Rexroth felt a significant connection to the West itself, and pinpointed the coast as the ideal place to begin a movement of modernist poets. In the '40s, Robert Duncan and William Everson notably joined Rexroth in building a new literary scene in the Bay Area.[41] These founders explored new poetic themes and forms and, significantly for the poets that were to follow them in the next two decades, introduced performance poetry to San Francisco in the form of public readings. To Rexroth, San Francisco's poetry culture was above the "trash" that was present in the larger literary scene in New York, and this sense of artistic purity made the infant community of San Francisco's early poetry renaissance both appealing to the most creative varieties of writers and also influential on literary communities that followed.[42]

The literary world of the mid-century United States was, like much of the rest of American culture of the time, conservative. Literary expectations mimicked political ones, and difference was dangerous; San Francisco presented an alternative to this.[43] Rather than the increasing professionalization that fictional writing, poetry and other literary genres were undergoing elsewhere, particularly in America's publishing capital of New York City, San Francisco offered a counter-discourse. Innovation and creativity were encouraged, not discarded, even though, until City Lights established its bookstore and publishing enterprise in the early 1950s, new types of writing were frequently not published. The support of creativity found in twentieth century San Francisco was not exclusive to the artistic bohemian set that grew in numbers as the decades progressed; the cultural "establishment" also made space for innovative work. Around the turn of the

[41] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 35.
[42] Meltzer, *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets*, 242.
[43] Ibid., 61.

century, San Francisco millionaires collaborated to fund and publish a literary magazine called *Overland Monthly*.[44] Additionally, San Francisco became the first Western city to establish a museum of modern art, and the SFMoMA instantly became very popular and among other accomplishments was the first museum to recognize photography as a fine art.[45] The San Francisco cultural community gained a reputation for being both sophisticated and tolerant, which allowed the city to be on the forefront of welcoming modern art and new forms of artistic expression while still maintaining respect from America's mainstream cultural institutions.

The allure of San Francisco became particularly strong when compared to other American cities with active creative, literary or artistic communities, in particular New York City. An active and diverse artistic scene has long been an integral part of New York's urban identity – many of the writers who became leaders of the Beat generation originally met in Manhattan and spent most of their lives in the Northeast – but the type of counterculture that sought to reject the norms of American literature could not have developed in New York the same way it did in the Bay Area. Poet Philip Lamantia saw the San Francisco poets as inherently more mystical than those from the rest of the United States, and the city itself was more political, utopian and environmentally aware than New York, making it more appealing to the Beats.[46] The Bay Area possessed a youthful energy and closeness to nature that placed it outside the frameworks of mainstream American society, an escape that no other urban centers can effectively make. Jack Kerouac, the writer largely responsible for putting the Beat generation on the map of American creative culture, specifically left New York because it was "too big, too multiple, too jaded,"

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[44] Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*, 130.
[45] "Timeline," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, accessed January 12, 2011, http://www.sfmoma.org/pages/about_timeline.
[46] Meltzer, *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets*, 135.

and, speaking to the New York based *Village Voice* of his fellow writers, claimed that "we're saints and villagers, and we're beautiful. And we went to San Francisco and did beauty there."[47] While other bohemian communities more closely resembled the ones in New York, projecting noir and disaffected disillusionment with society, San Francisco's countercultures – particularly the Beats and Hippies – were mystical and ecological, finding strong connections to Eastern religions and the natural environment.[48] This equipped the San Francisco countercultures to engage in a positive identity formation beyond the negative rejection of postwar mainstream American society.

San Francisco in the 1940s had a significant underground artistic community beyond the fledgling poetry movement that established itself there. Lamantia recalls the San Francisco of the late 1940s, which was bustling with a new and innovative music scene: the Fillmore district came alive with after-hours jazz and the "Little Harlem" off Folsom and Third Streets fostered a rhythm and blues movement.[49] The presence of what was a largely African American music movement was not necessarily particular to San Francisco, but what made the city special and appealing to artists seeking creative inspiration was the openness with which white writers were welcomed at performances by African American musicians. Lamantia makes specific note that "San Francisco was unique for the open and friendly relations between black and whites who had gone underground, much more so than in New York. Blacks accepted the white hipster poets."[50] Racial cooperation was, from the 1940s, a part of the San Francisco artistic scene, which

[47] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, 231.
[48] Peters, "The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent," 205.
[49] Meltzer, *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets*, 134.
[50] Peters, "The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent," 203.

allowed for generations of writers to be inspired by jazz music's unconventional beats and nonconformist melodies.

The Bay Area, in the words of Richard Walker, became an "urban oasis for misfits" of all varieties,[51] including not only artistic and literary rebels and racial minorities, but also homosexuals. From the 1920s, gay lifestyles were tolerated in San Francisco. As the twentieth century advanced LGBT communities were embraced by San Francisco's urban community, especially in the neighborhoods of the Embarcadero, the South of Market (SoMa) district, and the Castro.[52] Both the Beat and Hippie countercultures embraced an interest in homosexuality, both out of genuine sexual preferences and as a means of rebellion, as an underlying facet of their communities.[53] The gay community that engaged in very public activism in the Castro in the 1970s and ensured San Francisco would be on the forefront of the gay rights movement was not random, but rather the result of a long legacy of tolerance of gay communities in San Francisco.

San Francisco's long legacy of rebellion, risk-taking, nonconformity, artistic expression, and tolerance had, by the postwar period, created the ideal conditions for the explosion of counterculture that burst upon the city in the 1950s and 1960s. The equation is simple: a cosmopolitan population, combined with a distance from the mainstream culture centers and hubs of political power and an unusual tolerance for eccentricity yields a bohemia teeming with nonconformist artists and

[51] Walker, "An Appetite for the City," 12.
[52] Gayle S. Rubin, "The Miracle Mile: South of Market and Gay Male Leather 1962-1997," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 251-3.
[53] Clinton R. Starr, "'I Want to Be with My Own Kind': Individual Resistance and Collective Action in the Beat Counterculture," in *Reconstructing the Beats*, edited by Jennie Skerl, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 46.

writers.[54] In no other city in the United States did this exceptional combination of circumstances exist, and San Francisco's idiosyncratic history attracted the writers of the Beat Generation and the rebels of the Hippie counterculture like no other place was suited to do. Not only were these countercultures the largest and most influential in San Francisco, but the city was the only habitat where these groups could authentically grow.

[54] Ibid., 199.

THE BEAT GENERATION

"They were… rising from the underground, the sordid hipsters of America, a new beat generation that I was slowly joining."[1]

-Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*

Members of the Beat counterculture that flourished in San Francisco in the 1950s found camaraderie in reacting to the conservatism of postwar American life; they universally rejected the routines and conformity that directed the mid-century version of American success and sought a new way of life based on expression and self-exploration.[2] San Francisco provided an ideal environment for the writers that became known as the "Beat Generation" and their followers to articulate their dissent and create a community founded on alternative values. Following the lead of prominent Beat figures such as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and others, young people identifying with the Beat movement pursued "kicks," or so-called authentic experiences, separated from mainstream American culture.[3] In living and writing in a manner that defied the expectations that dominated the postwar United States, the Beats did not prioritize changing dominant American values, but more so they desired an escape from them. In many ways, the Beats were the trailblazers for rebellious youth that came in later generations, and especially in San Francisco they establish counterculture as a permanent fixture in the city's urban identity.

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[1] Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 54.
[2] Manuel Luis Martinez, *Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomas Rivera*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 23.
[3] Kenneth Keniston, *The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), 227.

The counterculture that became known as the "Beat Generation" was first introduced to American society as such by John Clellon Holmes, himself a novelist and friend of the Beat writers, in a November 1952 article in *The New York Times Magazine* titled "This is the Beat Generation." He chooses as the "face" of this new youth movement he calls the Beat Generation a young woman whose picture appeared in a magazine after her arrest for marijuana possession; her face, the "face of a Beat generation," bears no hint of corruption, no plots of criminality, but rather the complaint that Holmes notices, "Why don't people leave us alone?" This attitude, for Holmes, defines the Beat counterculture and becomes the basis of the philosophies and values that direct both their artistic and personal choices; ironically, he identified this attitude in a woman, when in reality female consciousness had a minimal role in shaping the Beat generation's ideals. Those who identified with Beat sensibilities place no value in the expectations of mainstream American society – whether those expectations come from parents, teachers, government or law enforcement – and instead seek to live separately, by their own set of rules, without the interference of those who do not understand.[4]

A new youth movement emerged in the 1950s and flourished, because its members shared distinct characteristics that, fundamentally, grew from an "instinctive individuality." According to Holmes, individuality developed out of the distrust of the collectivity, or society as a whole, that arose from growing up in the turmoil of global depression and war. With the Cold War's removing any legitimate hope of a postwar peace, youth developed a sense of immediacy, a desire to live in the moment and a lust for freedom that gave the Beats the ability "to live at a pace that kills." This sense of adventure became an exercise in risk-taking and led to the

[4] John Clellon Holmes, "This is the Beat Generation," *The New York Times Magazine*, (November 16, 1952), 1.

emergence of a new culture that sought out narcotics, sexual promiscuity, jazz and bebop music, "hucksterism," and existentialist philosophy.[5] Despite these commonalities in values and experiences that brought the youth of this new Beat generation together, there was no organized movement that may be labeled "Beat." Rather than following the direction of a leader, or adhering to the rules of a set dogma, "beatness" was defined by each individual directing his or her own activity in self-exploration and creating a personal faith. The only collectivity of the Beats came from the natural tendency they had to gravitate towards others with similar ideologies that were identified as "Beat" by outside media and critics. For these young people, "*how* to live seems to them much more crucial than *why*,"[6] and this separated the Beats from their contemporaries.

Defining the Beat generation of the 1950s entices comparisons to other youth rebellion or counterculture movements that came before, particularly the "Lost Generation" of the 1920s that sought similar separation from mainstream America and emphasis on artistic expression. This is particularly tempting because of the manner in which alienated youth of the 1950s idolized their grandparents' generation that challenged gender roles and social expectations in the 1920s.[7] However, unlike the artistic and literary bohemia of the 1920s, "the wild boys of today are not lost."[8] Significantly, Holmes refers to the new Beats as "wild *boys*," since women were largely barricaded from 1950s male-dominated bohemian exploration. The Beats delved into rebellious activities such as drug use and promiscuity out of purposeful curiosity and a desire for self-exploration; they seemed to be on a quest, and their "rebellion" had a feeling of "somewhereness," not

[5] Ibid., 2.
[6] Ibid., 3.
[7] Kenniston, *The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society*, 166.
[8] Holmes, "This is the Beat Generation," 2.

of just another diversion. To find relative contemporaries to the Beats of the 1950s, one needs to go back further than the Lost Generation. The Beat attitudes represented a reconstruction of the idea of the individual on nineteenth century terms, celebrating self-reliance in the acts of movement and expansion.[9] The hipster – one who shares the values of the Beat generation – was not trying to instigate reform in the broken society in which he was raised; "making a mystique of bop, drugs and the night life, there is no desire to shatter the 'square' society in which he lives, only to elude it." The decision to separate from mainstream society, however, was not entirely devoid of politics; escaping majority culture expresses a critique of those values, and in forming a counterculture the Beat generation practiced a certain type of politics of dissent. The "valueless abyss" of modern life was unbearable for these youth, and the "movement and expansion" they sought was defined by distancing from older generations and their values and exploring the experiences and values of the individual.[10]

The use of drugs, especially marijuana and Benzedrine, was significant to the Beat explorations of individuality and expression. In marijuana, hipsters found an aid in self-reflection; the drug creates a mental space for pausing the frenzied activity of living to engage in pensive searching of one's mind. Additionally, the camaraderie felt by those who have shared the common experience of marijuana use creates a sense of community for youth dissatisfied with their isolation in mainstream society.[11] Benzedrine, on the other hand, propels the mind forward at a warp speed and fuels a hyperactive level of energy, making extended, vigorous activity and motion possible. Benzedrine facilitated a rapid accumulation of

[9] Martinez, *Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomas Rivera*, 74.
[10] Holmes, "This is the Beat Generation," 4.
[11] Ibid., 3.

experience, and the combination of experience and reflection created the fast-paced and introspective combination that came to characterize "beatness."[12]

While common interest in drug use and escaping social conformity encouraged the Beats to associate with one another, the camaraderie at the heart of the Beat Generation originated in literature. Those at the core of the counterculture were all writers, most notably the tight-knit group of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, and their friend Neal Cassady. After they met in New York City in 1944, they began to articulate and explore new styles of literary expression that challenged the established standards of American literature, which in the 1950s reflected the political and social conservatism of the decade.[13] Although these writers – who have sometimes been labeled leaders of the Beat generation, but this falsely implies a hierarchical structure within a "movement" that rested on individualism – met in New York City, an escape from the East was necessary for the alternative expression they desired. Poet Kenneth Rexroth had already sought similar goals, moving to San Francisco in 1927 with ambitions of changing literature and culture along new radical lines and confronting the Eastern literary establishment.[14] The Beats followed suit, leaving New York's institutions behind to explore literary expression, performance poetry and creative innovation in San Francisco; North Beach, the "Little Italy" of San Francisco became the center of this renegade literary exploration and the hub of the city's counterculture movement in the 1950s.

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[12] David M. Wrobel, "Movement and Adjustment in Twentieth-Century Western Writing," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 72 No. 3, (August 2003): 403.

[13] Michael Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 61.

[14] Nancy J. Peters, "The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent," In *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 202.

While undoubtedly Beat sensibilities were emerging in San Francisco throughout the early twentieth century, especially once Rexroth really began to build a community around him in the 1940s, the Beat generation as a literary force in San Francisco was truly born October 7, 1955. That night, a poetry reading featuring Philip Lamantia, Michael McClure, Allen Ginsberg, Philip Whalen and Gary Snyder – with Rexroth serving as Master of Ceremonies – was held at the Six Gallery on Fillmore Street near North Beach.[15] The event was billed as a "remarkable collection of angels," and if "heaven" was a flourishing countercultural literary scene in San Francisco, then this billing is undoubtedly true; Lamantia, McClure, Ginsberg, Whalen and Snyder were the core of the poetic culture of the city for decades to come. The audience at the event was nearly as significant, a collection of "mystics" who rejected materialism as the highest level of reality and sought an alternate way of life. Among them was Jack Kerouac.[16] He later recounts the poetry reading in his autobiographical novel *The Dharma Bums*:

> I followed the whole gang of howling poets to the reading at Gallery Six that night, which was, among other important things, the night of the birth of the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance. Everyone was there. It was a mad night. And I was the one who got things jumping by going around collecting dimes and quarters… and getting them all piffed so that by eleven o'clock when Alvah Goldbook was reading his, wailing his poem "Wail"[17] drunk with arms outspread everybody was yelling "Go! Go! Go!" (like a jam session) and old Rheinhold Cacoethes[18] the father of the Frisco poetry scene was wiping his tears in gladness… Meanwhile scores of people stood around in the darkened gallery straining to hear every word of the amazing poetry reading… come eleven-thirty… all the poems were read and everybody was milling around wondering what had happened and what would come next in American poetry.[19]

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[15] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 3.
[16] Dennis McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, (New York: Random House, 1979), 203-4.
[17] The character "Alvah Goldbook" in the novel represents Allen Ginsberg, and the poem "Wail" that the character reads is meant to represent "Howl," which Ginsberg premiered at the Six Gallery reading.
[18] The character "Rheinhold Cacoethes is based on Kenneth Rexroth.
[19] Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 13-16.

The reading became so momentous for the growth of a countercultural literary movement in San Francisco because the atmosphere of the event so perfectly showcased artists seeking a new form of expression and an audience seeking out authentic experiences; also significant, it was the first single event where the writers showcased themselves to the city – and in reality the entire American literary scene – as a cohesive group. All of the readers at the Six Gallery were men, and this set a tone for the movement, which would largely exclude women, for the rest of the 1950s. In the months and years following the reading at the Six Gallery the men of the Beat generation formed a distinctive community upon performance poetry, discussions of life and literature, drug use, and in general "digging" each other, and they quickly became a prominent force in San Francisco.

The influence and use of music became an important element of the booming San Francisco poetry scene in the 1950s, setting it apart from much of the rest of American literature of the time. San Francisco had a flourishing music community, much of it centered around the jazz clubs like the Havana Club in the Fillmore District and the Coffee Gallery and the Cellar in North Beach. The musicians were welcoming and accepting of the writers carving out an artistic space alongside them in the San Francisco community, and poetry was frequently read to a soundtrack of jazz in club performances.[20] Much of this harmony between musician and writer stems from a racial tolerance unusual for the time, much more prominent in San Francisco than in other cities, including New York.[21] A close relationship with the city's community of black jazz musicians and appreciation for their art inspired the white Beat poets to integrate musical instruments into their

[20] Peters, "The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent," 209.
[21] Ibid., 203.

performance poetry. According to poet and publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the fusion of poetry and music in performances built an even wider appeal for the poetic art form.[22]

San Francisco, especially the neighborhood of North Beach, offered an environment in which a Beat literary community could grow. Poet and critic Daniel Hoffman, in the *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*, specifically notes that the neighborhood was a "traditional home of the refugees of tradition."[23] The neighborhood was ethnically diverse – its tourist identity as the "Little Italy" of San Francisco belied the multicultural flavor of the neighborhood, where not only Italians, but other Europeans and many Chinese and Asian immigrants also resided – and the bountiful number of literary bars and coffee shops made it a natural haunt for poets, writers and young people seeking authentic experiences. One bar in particular, called The Place, became the cultural core of the literary bar scene; poet Jack Spicer organized a weekly "Blabbermouth Night," a performance event intended to reinforce the community of the bar scene in North Beach.[24] Such events succeeded so vigorously in North Beach because the European flavor of the neighborhood encouraged businesses to open their arms to artists, and new businesses found their way to North Beach if they had similar ambitions of encouraging creativity.[25]

Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore on the corner of Columbus and Broadway in the heart of North Beach, a performance space and publishing house in addition to retail book seller, solidified the neighborhood's status as the home of San Francisco's literary and artistic Beat generation counterculture.

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[22] Meltzer, *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets*, 75.
[23] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 5.
[24] Ibid., 150.
[25] Meltzer, *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets*, 202.

Ferlinghetti, who spent his childhood and adolescence traveling in Europe and the United States and educating himself in literature, came to San Francisco in 1953 to paint and teach French, seeking to abandon New York where he was a shy observer "leading a quiet life on East Broadway" to become an engaged "poet-prophet" for a new generation of writers.[26] Before long, he became close to Peter Martin, the publisher of the popular *City Lights Magazine*; the two became business partners and opened City Lights Books (Martin left the business two years after the store opened) originally as a means to support the continued publication of the magazine. In 1955 they began publishing local writers in their "Pocket Poets Series," and from that point forward Ferlinghetti and his store were essential to the expansion and sustainability of a Beat literature scene in San Francisco.[27]

From the beginning, the writers published by City Lights sought alternative and rebellious forms of creative expression. Nancy Peters, who worked for many years with Ferlinghetti, described City Lights as "very much a center of protest, for people with revolutionary ideas and people who wanted to change society" through their radical literary styles and the readiness with which they addressed controversial issues.[28] The first few publications City Lights distributed – Ferlinghetti's own *Pictures of the Gone World*, Rexroth's *30 Spanish Poems of Love and Exile* and Kenneth Patchen's *Poems of Humor and Protest* in 1955 – were chosen for their unconventional style and countercultural themes.[29] Ferlinghetti's intention with the Pocket Poets Series was to model the European tradition of publishing

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[26] Larry Smith, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti: Poet-at-Large*, (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 19.
[27] Meltzer, *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets*, 91-2.
[28] Heidi Benson, Jane Ganahal, Jesse Hamlin and James Sullivan, "And the Beat Goes On: City Lights and the Counterculture," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 9, 2003, accessed January 22, 2011, http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2003/06/09/DD158147.DTL&ao=all.
[29] Smith, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti: Poet-at-Large*, xix-xxi.

inexpensive, small editions ready for mass consumption to easily disseminate the innovative poetry to larger communities. The series became widely popular and put City Lights on the forefront of the 1950s literary revolution when, in 1957, Ferlinghetti published the pocket edition of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems*.[30] Publishing Ginsberg put City Lights at the center of a very public obscenity trial, and Beat writers gained confidence that Ferlinghetti would stand behind their innovative and often controversial subject matter and writing style.

Examining the influence of Beat generation counterculture on San Francisco should not be exclusively limited to discussion of literature and the writers that became famous for pushing the envelope; they, in and of themselves, do not make a counter*culture*. Beat sensibilities became a force in a larger-scale cultural movement when they became influential in the behavior of young people beyond the small core group of writers. These "hipsters," dubbed "beatniks" by the media who frowned upon their unusual lifestyle, were young people who spent time in the North Beach coffeehouses and jazz clubs where the poets gave readings. The young people identifying with the hipster persona undoubtedly outnumbered the smaller group of writers, but scholars have long labeled them "weekend bohemians" or phonies trying to appear hip by hanging on the periphery of the literary movement led by Ginsberg and Kerouac.[31] These judgments miss the authenticity and importance of this larger Beat culture, because although the hipster culture did not contribute to the body of literature that most associate with the Beats, they had a genuine attraction to bohemian enclaves where the expectations of postwar conformity were absent. In making the coffeehouses, bars and clubs of North Beach

[30] Ibid., 22-4.
[31] Clinton R. Starr, "'I Want to Be with My Own Kind': Individual Resistance and Collective Action in the Beat Counterculture," in *Reconstructing the Beats*, edited by Jennie Skerl, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 42-45.

the focal points of Beat social life, they were largely responsible for making the ideologies of the Beat writers applicable to a wider group of discontented young people.

While the hipster persona was frequently stereotyped, even mocked, by the media in the form of the "beatnik" – a feature in *Playboy* magazine that depicted the young people who wore black, chain smoked and attended poetry readings as irresponsible outcasts without emotion or faith angered Jack Kerouac in its lack of authenticity[32] – the young people who engaged in the alternative lifestyle advocated by the Beats proved that there was space for a wider counterculture, beyond just an artistic movement. Most failed to recognize the significance and value of the Beat culture beyond the writers, and the Beats were also belittled on television; most Americans were first introduced to the existence of a Beat subculture through Maynard G. Krebs, a character on the *Dobbie Gillis* show who was stupid, incapable of work or any other significant activity, and in general child-like.[33] While young viewers adored the character, his persona ignored the intellectual conversations and creative, cultural activities that occupied the time of young people in Beat haunts in North Beach. The activity of the hipsters of the larger community surrounding the Beat writers made certain public spaces integral to the Beat counterculture and became the space where young people engaged in a "quotidian politics of resistance," actively challenging the conservative family structures, occupational expectations and sexual norms promoted by mainstream American society.[34] The Beat writers do not, on their own, constitute Beat counterculture, although they have had a more tangible and enduring legacy in countercultural

[32] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, 255.
[33] Ibid., 271-2.
[34] Starr, "'I Want to Be with My Own Kind': Individual Resistance and Collective Action in the Beat Counterculture," 45-6.

sensibilities because their activities were published literature that continues to be read.

For the first generation of male Beat writers, much of the inspiration for their desire to remain continually on the move and in search of the type of "kicks" that place them outside the expectations of mainstream society were personified by one man, the explosion of energy that was Neal Cassady. Cassady grew up in Denver, the son of estranged parents, and spent much of his childhood in the company of his alcoholic father in the street culture he occupied. Speed and travel were long a part of his idea of excitement – his first adventures hitchhiking were on summer trips with his father as a young child – and by the time he was a teenager he had stolen over 500 cars. His autobiographical novel *The First Third* is littered with stories of reckless, whirlwind searches for adventure.[35] After meeting Cassady in 1946, Jack Kerouac approached life and writing with a new energy – the pair often likened themselves to brothers, and inspired self-exploration and adventure in each other – and the fast-paced, cross-country travel that made Kerouac's writing famous partially grew out of a desire to keep up with Neal. Even Kerouac's trademark spontaneous prose style grew from a letter he received from Neal written in such a manner.[36] Cassady's impulsive nature and desire to live in the moment became the impetus for the travels and adventures that made the lives and work of the Beat writers truly exceptional.

The close connection that the Beat writers had to San Francisco could also, largely, be attributed to Cassady. While the city's history of nonconformity and literary innovation was attractive to Kerouac, Ginsberg, and other writers with

[35] Neal Cassady, *The First Third and Other Writings*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971), 22, 38, 105.
[36] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, 90-5, 133.

countercultural tendencies, Cassady's relatively permanent home there gave these men the immediate cause to visit and, eventually, make San Francisco a home of sorts as well. After Neal married Carolyn in 1948, his second wife with whom he had three children and lived fairly consistently for nearly twenty years, the couple made their home in San Francisco, and Neal would always return there after his travels. Kerouac's first of many sojourns to San Francisco in 1949 was with the express purpose of meeting up with the Cassadys, and he even lived with them for an extended stay in 1952 (during which time, at the encouragement of Neal, who himself never proscribed to expectations of monogamy, he and Carolyn were lovers).[37] Cassady frequently wrote to his friends, encouraging them to join him in San Francisco and help him periodically escape the family life which he loved, but found to be mundane; in a letter to Kerouac, Cassady described San Francisco as "land's end. The horizon here is the sea. I lay me down on the brink, the West end. Frantic Frisco, yes, frenzied Frisco, yes Fateful Frisco. Frisco of frivolous folly; Frisco of fearful fights. Frisco of Fossilization. Frisco: Fully Fashioned Fate."[38] This version of San Francisco, full of spontaneity, "frenzy" and fun, came to life for Neal when his buddies joined him and they could adventure throughout the city in search of their kicks.

In addition to their adventurous personal behavior, the Beats were artists, and the driving force behind much of their literary activity can be attributed to Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg, perhaps more so than the other writers of the Beat Generation, existed outside of the conservative, mainstream American lifestyle in almost every conceivable way. Most obviously, Ginsberg identified with the outskirts of society

[37] Ibid., 120, 136.
[38] Carolyn Cassady, *Off the Road: My Years with Cassady, Kerouac and Ginsberg*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990), 96.

because of his homosexuality, and he struggled with the stigma this placed on him for much of his younger life; after being rejected from the draft for admitting to being gay, he wrote to Burroughs, "I feel more guilty and inferior by reason of faggishness than intellectualization will admit is proper." Ginsberg's Judaism also contributed to his feelings of isolation.[39] In the conventional literary world, he didn't fit in, and his exercises in exploring consciousness were too much for his professors at Columbia; he sought refuge in the intellectual company of Burroughs, Kerouac, Lucien Carr and the other writers beginning to articulate a new wave of literary innovation after meeting in New York in 1944.[40] His close relationships with Kerouac, and then later Neal Cassady – with whom he had a tumultuous and formative romantic involvement[41] – became directing forces of his life for the next twenty or so years.

Ginsberg dedicated himself to creating a literary community and movement founded in creative and innovative forms of expression. He worked tirelessly to promote the success of Beat literature, not only his own, but also the work of his friends; he acted as an agent for Kerouac, Burroughs and others, bringing their novels from publisher to publisher, facing repeated rejections, but persevering until they were accepted and published.[42] The emotional and psychological importance of maintaining a thriving literary community, and finding support and friendship within it, was paramount for Ginsberg, both for advancing his poetry and continuing his spiritual explorations. In 1954, he wrote in his journal: "Fortunately art is a community effort – a small but select community living in a spiritualized world

[39] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, 80.
[40] Ibid., 76.
[41] Ibid., 94.
[42] Ibid., 151.

endeavoring to interpret the wars and solitudes of the flesh."[43] For Ginsberg, poetry and literature were an essential means of self-exploration, and in deciphering his own place in the world; he saw in art the potential to redeem life.[44] By 1954, Ginsberg decided that his place in the world, at least physically, was in San Francisco. Although partially drawn there by his romantic feelings for Neal Cassady, Ginsberg found the city to be a more authentic environment for exploring his ambitions and emotions both in literature and spirituality. He had been confused and often depressed in hectic New York, and he wrote in his journal on April 16, 1954 that he "left that party in New York for peace."[45] San Francisco's thriving artistic community and connection to the Far East appealed to Ginsberg; he continued to be a public spokesperson for Beat lifestyles as he led literary movements alongside experiments in Zen Buddhism and spiritual exploration in San Francisco well into the 1960s.[46]

Artistically, San Francisco inspired and influenced Ginsberg immensely. Immediately after moving to the city in 1954, he began working on the poem that would define his career, and Beat Generation poetry as a whole, "Howl."[47] He first read the poem at the Six Gallery reading in 1955, and his reading became the most talked-about element of the influential night.[48] The poem famously begins, "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked," and he spends the poem lamenting the evils that mainstream American culture had leveled on the "angelheaded hipsters" who did not fit into society's expectations.

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[43] Allen Ginsberg, *Journals: Early Fifties – Early Sixties*, edited by Gordon Ball, (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 78.
[44] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, 103.
[45] Ginsberg, *Journals: Early Fifties – Early Sixties*, 52.
[46] Martinez, *Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomas Rivera*, 65.
[47] Peters, "The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent," 206.
[48] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 3

The immorality of American capitalism and consumerism, which Ginsberg personifies as a "Nightmare of Moloch," is alienating and destructive, and Ginsberg laments how "Moloch" has frightened him out of his "natural ecstasy."[49] The poem resonated with alienated young people of the postwar generation who had hopes of escaping the conservatism of suburban America. While the poem's provocatively sexual and openly critical subject matter and non-traditional style generated significant buzz among the growing San Francisco literary community, it became widely known by the public at large after a highly publicized obscenity trial that followed its publication by City Lights Books in 1957. After copies of *Howl and Other Poems* were seized first by customs officials, then by the San Francisco police, America watched as poets, editors and critics from all over the country supported Ginsberg's work and City Lights throughout the long trial, in which the small publishing company had the help of the American Civil Liberties Union and its lawyers. When Municipal Judge Clayton Horn, a devout Christian whose strict religious beliefs were widely noticed, ruled that *Howl* was not obscene because it was "not without socially redeeming importance," the Beats' particular form of creative expression and social critique was validated as having a legitimate space in American culture.[50]

The influence of San Francisco on Ginsberg's poetry is more readily apparent in his poem "Sunflower Sutra," published alongside "Howl" by City Lights in 1957. In this poem, he sits alongside Jack Kerouac in a train near San Francisco and experiences a deep experience of companionship; "we thought the same

[49] Allen Ginsberg, "Howl," in *Howl and Other Poems*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1956), 9-20.
[50] Peters, "The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent," 206-7.

thoughts of the soul."[51] These thoughts reflect on the authenticity of the self and the beauty of the individual in the cold industrialism of America:

> we're all beautiful golden sunflowers inside, we're blessed by our own seed & golden hairy naked accomplishment-bodies growing into mad black formal sunflowers in the sunset, spied on by our eyes under the shadow of the mad locomotive riverbank sunset Frisco hilly tincan evening sitdown vision.[52]

Visions of the city inspire these reflections of individual beauty, and the companionship Kerouac and Ginsberg find in each other are equally important in facilitating this recognition of beauty; this soul-searching thought project became characteristic of the writers' relationship with each other, influencing both of their lives and writing.

While Ginsberg may undoubtedly be credited with helping the Beat Generation blossom into a literary movement and sustaining many of its values, Jack Kerouac also shoulders much of the responsibility for making the Beats famous. He grew up on the outskirts of American culture – the son of French-Canadian parents in Lowell, MA he did not learn to speak English until age 6 – and from his adolescence, Kerouac consistently moved further away from the mainstream society within which he never felt truly comfortable. After displaying talent in the most "all-American" of sporting endeavors, football, Kerouac won a scholarship to Columbia University. However, this conventional success – a college degree, football glory – did not appeal to Kerouac in the slightest, and as the world entered the crisis of World War II, he saw continuing his studies and athletics as nonsensical and began exploring ideas and expression.[53] He quit the sport and dropped out of Columbia, found his community of writers that will become his companions for the remainder

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[51] Allen Ginsberg, "Sunflower Sutra," in *Howl and Other Poems*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1957), 28.
[52] Ibid.,, 30.
[53] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, 6-8, 46.

of his life, and dedicated himself to literature. His novels chronicle his quest to find and articulate his place in the world, a process that was largely mimicked by the Beat community as a whole.

Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* propelled Beat literature to a new level, both in pushing boundaries of style and creativity and, especially, in popularity with the wider American public. Getting the novel accepted by publishers proved difficult, as the spontaneous prose style and the manuscript – was originally typed on one long scroll in essentially one continuous thought – proved too unconventional for most New York publishing houses until Viking decided to take a chance and published the novel in 1957. Despite his desire to reject the constraints of mainstream literary culture, Kerouac depended upon the power of the New York publishers to get his work out into American culture.[54] The success of *On the Road* made Kerouac the public face of the Beat Generation. The attitudes and actions of Dean Moriarity and Sal Paradise articulated Beat sensibilities to fans and critics alike. The character of Dean, based on the real-life Neal Cassady, presented a blatant disregard for rules and obsession with motion and energy that defied conservative American sensibilities; poet Gary Snyder interpreted Dean as a depiction of "the energy of the archetypal West, the energy of the frontier, still coming down. Cassady [Dean] is the cowboy crashing."[55] The novel's events, based on the travel Kerouac and Cassady experienced together in 1947, unfold in such a way that the pursuit of authentic experiences, "kicks," is the consistent theme throughout the various long drives and crazy trips. After reading *On the Road*, millions of young men – women were restricted from the freedoms that Sal and Dean enjoyed – found role models that

[54] Ibid., 151.
[55] Ann Charters, introduction to *On the Road*, by Jack Kerouac, (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), xxviii.

were using their alienation from mainstream America as fuel for adventures and personal growth. Sal (the character Kerouac based on himself) provided a new way to envision the American dream and its promises of unlimited freedom, a dream that Dean had already achieved.

While pinning down any one geographic location as the setting of *On the Road* would be impossible – as a story of repeated cross-country travel, the setting changes with the same speed and energy the characters embody – Kerouac managed to pay homage to the special place San Francisco played in his self-exploration. Sal describes the city, "There was the Pacific, a few more foothills away, blue and vast and with a great wall of white advancing from the legendary potato patch where Frisco fogs are born. Another hour it would come streaming through the Golden Gate to shroud the romantic city in white."[56] Throughout the novel, San Francisco is described as white, sitting as a virgin, uncharted land on the Western edge of the United States, shrouded in a layer of fog and mystery. This element of mystery, of constantly being new, creates hope for Sal in setting out for San Francisco with ambitions of finding a fresh new place to explore a new creative life. Sal's journey to the West Coast in 1947 had the express purpose of meeting up with Dean,[57] a voyage he would frequently repeat, and his "itching" to get onto San Francisco comes from the strong magnetic pull of his friend's energy:

> All my New York friends were in the negative, nightmare position of putting down society and giving their tired bookish or political or psychoanalytical reasons, but Dean just raced in society, eager for bread and love; he didn't care one way or the other, "so long's I can get that lil ole gal with that lil sumpin down there tween her legs, boy," and "so long's we can *eat*, so, y'ear me? I'm *hungry*, I'm *starving*, let's *eat right now!*" – and off we'd rush.[58]

[56] Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 78.
[57] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, 120.
[58] Kerouac, *On the Road*, 8.

San Francisco has a positive atmosphere that New York and other cities lack, and this "hunger" that Dean exclaims mimics Sal's "ah-dreams" of San Francisco, when he notices the vibrant, multi-cultural energy of the city through the scents of food.[59] This energetic pursuit of experience becomes intertwined with Sal's feelings and attitudes about San Francisco, and only more permanently places the city and the Bay Area at the center of the Beats' collective, creative experience.

The prominence of San Francisco and the Bay Area as a setting solidified in Kerouac's 1958 novel *The Dharma Bums*. The novel follows Ray Smith (again, an autobiographical character) as he explores Zen Buddhism as a means of self-exploration under the tutelage of Japhy Ryder, a character based on San Francisco nature poet Gary Snyder. A distinct duality between the urban speed of San Francisco and the peace of the nature that surrounds it permeates the entire novel; scenes of San Francisco are littered with friends, poetry and plenty of alcohol, while rejuvenating hiking excursions, meditation and solitude characterize Ray's time in the mountains. The close proximity of the city to nature makes the reflective meditations Kerouac expresses in *The Dharma Bums* possible. Scenes in the mountains and natural environs surrounding the city have a sense of peace to them; Ray reflects, "It was really a magnificent kind of way to live in Sunny California, I realized, with all this fine Dharma connected with it, and mountain-climbing."[60] The urban scenes contrast with the nature ones by emphasizing the energy involved in poetic creation, bar hopping, and frantic sharing of ideas and experiences; Ray and Japhy "went to San Francisco… and then went up to Skid Row in the drizzling rain. As we were walking in the drizzly exciting streets… I got the overwhelming urge to

[59] Ibid., 174.
[60] Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 178.

get drunk and feel good."[61] Experiencing these two types of enjoyment, the natural and the urban, strongly influences Ray's perception of San Francisco, and he prophesies a "revolution" as those who pursue truly authentic experiences grow in number:

> See the whole thing is a world full of rucksack wanderers, Dharma Bums refusing to subscribe to the general demand that they consume production and therefore have to work for the privilege of consuming… I see a vision of a great rucksack revolution thousands or even millions of young Americans… all of 'em Zen Lunatics who go about writing poems that happen to appear in their heads for no reason and also by being kind and also by strange unexpected acts keep giving visions of eternal freedom to everybody and to all living creatures.[62]

In this passage, Kerouac describes his visions of a community that used self-exploration and artistic expressions to achieve a new type of freedom that all could enjoy. With this expansive and inclusive vision of a counterculture community Kerouac shared his explicit belief in the value of the type of life and experience he and his fellow Beats were creating in San Francisco, not only for himself, but also for the alienated or disillusioned youth of mid-century America seeking new forms of expression.

Kerouac explored the form and shape of this community of "outsiders" in 1958's *The Subterraneans*. In the novella Kerouac, this time as the character Leo Percepied, recounted his romance with a young black girl and their experiences in the North Beach scene of jazz clubs and poetry readings. The story develops as a series of nights out in the "excitement of softnight San Francisco bop in the air but all in the cool sweet unexerting Beach,"[63] and the allure of the communities outside mainstream American culture, especially the African Americans and their jazz music, keep Leo drawn into North Beach. The neighborhood was one of San

[61] Ibid., 189.
[62] Ibid., 97.
[63] Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 12.

Francisco's most ethnically mixed neighborhoods,[64] and this potential for interacting with black jazz culture motivates Leo to continue his relationship with Mardou and integrate himself into the black cultural community in San Francisco. He seeks out Charlie Parker, performing in a club the "Red Drum," and pops from club to club, taking in as much music and experience as possible;[65] the spontaneity of Kerouac's prose even mimics the improvisational style of jazz. Significantly, the real-life romance Kerouac is referencing actually took place in New York, where an interracial musical and artistic community also existed, but his publishers had him change the setting of *The Subterraneans* to San Francisco, hoping to capitalize on the city's close association with the Beat counterculture with the media and public.[66]

Kerouac is undoubtedly known primarily for his novels, but he was also a prolific poet, and he used poetry to explicitly reflect upon the cities that shaped him personally and artistically. These "blues" poems, posthumously published as *Book of Blues*, expose the complicated and dynamic relationships Kerouac had with the cities he planted himself in; "San Francisco Blues" in particular reads with emotional turmoil. He begins the twenty-fourth chorus "San Francisco is too sad," the twenty-sixth chorus "San Francisco is too old," and in the twenty-seventh he accuses, "San Francisco/San Francisco/You're a muttering bum."[67] While he laments these problems, implying that San Francisco has lived a difficult life already, he later shifts to express his love for the city, calling it "This pretty white city/On the other side of the country."[68] Kerouac's east coast upbringing prevents him from classifying San

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[64] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 203.
[65] Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, 13.
[66] Martinez, *Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomas Rivera*, 88.
[67] Jack Kerouac, "San Francisco Blues," in *Book of Blues*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 25-28.
[68] Ibid., 81.

Francisco as "home," but the city still serves as a "white" beacon on the western coast; complicated or not, Kerouac's relationship with San Francisco was undoubtedly formative.

As Kerouac's career advanced – and his alcoholism consistently worsened – his complicated feelings about San Francisco, and the Beat generation literary movement in general, became even more tumultuous and conflicted. In 1962's *Big Sur*, which Kerouac considered an obituary of sorts for the Beat generation that he anticipated the demise of,[69] he reveals the city's role in instigating the madness that led to the downfall of his career. San Francisco began to represent for him his literary fame – "I've bounced drunk into his City Lights bookshop at the height of Saturday night business, everyone recognizes me"[70] – and the alcohol he must consume to escape the pressures of it. He spends a great portion of the novel trying to escape these pressures at a friend's cabin on the ocean at Big Sur. The book concludes with "Sea," a long, vivid poem about the Pacific Ocean that Kerouac wrote while at the cabin. Through this poem Kerouac revealed that the defining element of California that shapes his attitudes about his role in the community there was the seemingly definitive end of the continent that the Pacific represents.[71] San Francisco is "at the end of the American continent and culture," and this makes it significant.

Kerouac's letters provide further insight into his complicated relationship with San Francisco. While he is never content sitting still, he is continually drawn to return to the Bay Area, and San Francisco's spirit changes his perspective on what is possible. In 1952, he wrote to John Clellon Holmes, "In California… there is the

[69] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, The Beat Generation, and America*, 297.
[70] Jack Kerouac, *Big Sur*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 3.
[71] Jack Kerouac, "Sea," in *Big Sur*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 217-41.

feeling that everything is golden, light, nothing's going to happen, miracles are not rare, and most of all everything seems unreal and undangerous."[72] This feeling of safety and security makes San Francisco a "home" of sorts for Kerouac, and for his friends that encourage him to repeatedly return. The immediate pull of the city is undoubtedly the people; early on it is Neal and his wife Carolyn who make him feel comfortable in the "strange California time,"[73] but as the Beat generation community expands more figures emerge that tie the transient Kerouac to San Francisco. He writes to Philip Whalen in 1955, "Now I know that the hidden reason for my coming to California again when I really didn't want to, was to meet you and Gary [Snyder] – the two best men I ever met."[74] The Beats not only expanded their numbers in San Francisco, but poets like Whalen and Snyder expanded their intellectual and spiritual habitats and encouraged Kerouac, Ginsberg and the other writers to study Zen Buddhism and connect more closely with nature. Sentiments of hope and spiritual growth are absent from Kerouac's letters written from other cities, and the influence of nature and Eastern religions that originated in San Francisco became a characteristic element of Beat writing and significant to the Beats' influence on other counterculture groups that would follow them.

Perhaps more so than the other Beat writers, the so-called nature poets, most notable among them Philip Whalen and Gary Snyder, were true "San Francisco poets." Snyder, who was part of the Beat movement from its technical beginnings with his performance at the Six Gallery reading, called San Francisco "writers'

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[72] Jack Kerouac to John Clellon Holmes, 8 February 1952, *Selected Letters: 1940-1956*, edited by Ann Charters (New York: Viking, 1995), 338.
[73] Jack Kerouac to Neal Cassady, 8 January 1951, *Selected Letters: 1940-1956*, edited by Ann Charters (New York: Viking, 1995), 276-7.
[74] Jack Kerouac to Philip Whalen, 22 November 1955, *Selected Letters: 1940-1956*, edited by Ann Charters (New York: Viking, 1995), 531.

habitat," the "only city" in which their art could not only exist, but also expand.[75] For Whalen and Snyder, San Francisco's most important assets were its proximity to natural wilderness and the strong presence of Eastern religions, especially Zen Buddhism. Snyder, in his poem "Riprap," reflects on the energy of nature: "The worlds like an endless/four-dimensional/Game of *Go*./…Crystal and sediment linked hot/all change, in thoughts,/As well as things."[76] This link between the natural environment and the poets' thoughts and perceptions became characteristic and important to how the Beats interacted with nature, and was part of the appeal of practicing Zen Buddhism. Japhy Ryder, the character that Kerouac based on Snyder in *The Dharma Bums*, relishes spending time surrounded by the Eastern culture in Chinatown and, having become an expert of sorts on the practices of Zen, serves as a tutor to Ray as he looks to explore meditation and Buddhist self-reflection in a variety of mountain adventures.[77]

This affinity for Buddhism becomes yet another element that sets the Beats apart from the expectations of mainstream, Christian America. Theodore Roszak, in his comprehensive definitions of American counterculture, highlights the role of Eastern mysticism and Zen in creating a countercultural identity; Eastern religions emphasize self-examination and looking inward, and these habits are at the core of American countercultures.[78] In teaching his friends the philosophies of Zen and practices of meditation, Snyder was in essence training them to be members of a counterculture. This desire to explore a new level of consciousness and engage in deliberate and significant self-reflection – a conscious search for what Charles Reich

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[75] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 23.
[76] Gary Snyder, "Riprap," in *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems*, (New York: North Point Press, 1990).
[77] Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 16.
[78] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on a Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1969), 82.

calls "consciousness III" – signified a break from prior patterns of American society. Consciousness III, as opposed to the organization and technology driven "consciousness II" that preceded it, begins with a realization that society is unjust. One must become self-aware in order to be fully alive *now*, rather than as the end result of careful planning and work, as the instrumental orientations of dominant culture would dictate.[79] The philosophical foundations of Zen Buddhism, in their openness, legitimize and include the expressivism appealing to Beat sensibilities, as opposed to the Christian traditions adopted by mainstream culture as part of the image of the ideal, conformist American.[80] The self-awareness brought by exposure to Eastern religions helped the Beat writers to achieve new forms of personal expression, and to inspire the culture of young people that surrounded them to engage in activities of self-exploration.

While the Beats' identity was molded by exploring new forms of literature, traveling, and investigating alternative forms of spiritual expression, their ideological distance from mainstream American values made them a counterculture. Solidifying the significance of this distance, conservative, conventional American society reacted harshly to the early appearances of Beat culture and sensibilities. Mildred Edie Brady, writing in *Harper's Magazine* in 1947, articulated the sentiments of many Americans in describing the new counterculture beginning to form in the Bay Area as "the new cult of sex and anarchy." In her article, she berated the "new bohemia" for their relishing of their "minority status," and their insistence

[79] Charles Reich, *The Greening of America: How the Youth Revolution is Trying to Make America Livable*, (New York: Random House, 1970), 229-32.
[80] James L. Spates and Jack Levin, "Beats, hippies, the hip generation, and the American middle class: an analysis of values" *International Social Science Journal* Vol. 24 No. 2 (1972), 332.

on living in haphazard communities of "amateur shacks."[81] She was even more explicit in her judgments of their behavior, particularly in regards to sex, which she classified as "this lofty inner objective which turns every sexual encounter into a religious rite and gives us, in this day of scientific agriculture and contraceptives, a modern version of ancient fertility cults." She was appalled by the manner in which sex was deified and denigrated the art created by these "bohemians" because of the inspiration they find in sex and "orgastic potency; she placed much of the blame for these attitudes on the popularity of Wilhelm Reich's *The Function of the Orgasm*."[82] Even the developments of the Bay Area bohemia that are less of a radical departure from mainstream American life – opening bookstores and coffee shops, for example – she classified as a threat for allowing the young residents of North Beach and Big Sur to "reject rationalism, espouse mysticism."[83] Despite the clear disdain with which the older generation viewed the development of the new counterculture, how well San Francisco's environment was suited for creating new modern art and literature did not go unnoticed. Brady ventured to call San Francisco "the new Paris," and acknowledged that the city is "the most cosmopolitan, tolerantly sophisticated city in the United States," but she feared that the bohemians were exploiting this tolerance.[84] Brady's disgust indicated that the values the Beats chose to live by were indeed countercultural.

The new values and forms of expression of the Beat Generation – both its writers and the many young people that made up the larger Beat community – helped to define modern American art and establish a pattern of generational

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[81] Mildred Edie Brady, "The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy," *Harpers Magazine*, (April 1947), 1-2.
[82] Ibid., 4-5.
[83] Ibid., 12.
[84] Ibid., 13.

rebellion that had widespread significance for American culture. However, the most apparent impact of the Beat generation was much more focused: the Beat generation – their literature and the community they created in North Beach – were the direct predecessors to the counterculture that followed in the 1960s. The ideologies of the Beat counterculture, combined with the example of nonviolent resistance modeled by the civil rights movement,[85] provided the necessary precursors to the 1960s Hippie counterculture. According to Lawrence Ferlinghetti:

> The Beats were stone age hippies. They articulate all the themes that became the major shibboleths of the hippie counterculture. The first articulations of an ecological consciousness. There were people like Gary Snyder and a big dissent antiwar stance, pacifist stance, turning towards Buddhism.[86]

It can be hypothesized that the two movements, Beats and Hippies, were perhaps one singular evolving counterculture that situated itself in the heart of San Francisco. Some of the most prominent members of the Beat community of the 1950s even continued to be public faces of the counterculture into the height of Hippie consciousness in the 1960s. Allen Ginsberg, for example, became a direct and active member of the Haight-Ashbury community of the 1960s, giving interviews with the neighborhood's definitive newspaper, *The San Francisco Oracle*,[87] and reading poetry at the Haight's ultimate event of 1967, or perhaps the entire decade, the "Human Be-In."[88] Other poets from the Beat movement became, in essence, Hippies. Gary Snyder and Michael McClure, for example, would frequently perform poetry readings as the opening acts to the rock concerts that were among the characteristic gatherings of the second wave of San Francisco's

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[85] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 39.
[86] Meltzer, *San Francisco Beat: Talking With the Poets*, 97.
[87] *The San Francisco Oracle* Vol. 1, No. 6, in *The San Francisco Oracle, Facsimile Edition*, (Berkeley, CA: Regent Press, 1991), 149-200.
[88] Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, 85.

mid-century counterculture;[89] as the Beat sensibilities transitioned into the 1960s, the male-dominated rhetoric of the 1950s opened up, and female poets such as Joanne Kyger and Diana di Prima were finally heard.[90] While Kerouac did not transition his role in the Beat community to sympathies for the Hippies, whom he considered to be delinquents, he did prophesy the growth of countercultural appeal in the 1960s in predicting a "rucksack revolution" of young people seeking an alternative life.[91] The increased political and social turmoil in 1960s America – the expansion of the civil rights movement, opposition to the Vietnam War – society provided the fuel to allow the prophesy of a large youth rebellion to come true. While the Hippies that flocked to Haight-Ashbury in the 1960s can be credited with bringing the idea of counterculture to America at large (the Beats, while relatively famous, still escaped the notice of many American families) they would not have been as large or as popular without the precedent of the Beats who came before them.

[89] Ibid., 203.
[90] Amy L. Friedman, "Joanne Kyger, Beat Generation Poet: 'a porcupine traveling at the speed of light'," in *Reconstructing the Beats*, edited by Jennie Skerl, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 76.
[91] Peters, "The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent," 213.

THE HIPPIES

"The whole thing was a world full of rucksack wanderers."[1]

-Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*

As America moved into the 1960s, alienation and dissatisfaction among youth continued to grow from the small numbers that rejected mainstream American society in the 1950s.[2] As more young people, especially those of draft age, developed these feelings, the appeal of a countercultural lifestyle grew; teenagers and twenty-somethings fled their middle class families and flocked to San Francisco, hoping to find a community sharing their desire to create a society and lifestyle based on an entirely new set of values. By the time of the "Summer of Love" in 1967, thousands of young migrants to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood had already established their community as the nucleus of countercultural sensibility by creating a distance from modernity and technology, instead turning to personal relationships and psychedelic drugs for their direction and experiences.[3] Sharing many fundamental values and behaviors of the Beats that preceded them in the 1950s in nearby North Beach, the "Hippies of the Haight" not only continued the long bohemian tradition of San Francisco, but also turned counterculture into a widely noticed, increasingly popular and increasingly radical nationwide

[1] Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 97.
[2] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1969), 5.
[3] Nadya Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspective on Late Sixties San Francisco*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 5-10.

phenomenon. This solidified San Francisco's identity as the countercultural capital of the United States.[4]

The Hippie community stood out to observers from the American mainstream precisely because it was so far outside of their expectations and experiences. The young people inhabiting Haight-Ashbury in the 1960s largely articulated their beliefs in opposition to the phoniness and what Hunter S. Thompson called the "plastic pretense" that fueled twentieth century American culture; because they "know" what's really happening in the United States, they may reject it and live a "natural life" free of consumerism and conformity that they see in mainstream culture.[5] Sociologist Sherri Cavan, herself a resident of the Haight and friend of many who identified themselves as "Hippies," sought to observe the behaviors of the Hippie counterculture and, through analysis of their behavior, identified the specific values that became the fundamental basis for the life they chose to live. Their values emphasized pursuit of immediate satisfaction and personal freedom and offered little regard for future plans; according to Cavan, Hippies believed:

> … that man should be free
> … that man's psyche can set him free
> … that drugs can set man's psyche free
> … that no individual free man could act in a way to jeopardize his freedom
> … that beauty and freedom are one in the same
> … that the realization of all of the above is a spiritual manner
> … that all those people who realize the above form a spiritual community
> … that that spiritual community can be nothing other than ideal
> … that all the above is the truth
> … and that those who believe otherwise are mistaken[6]

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[4] Sherri Cavan, *Hippies of the Haight*, (St. Louis: New Critics Press, Inc., 1972), 25.
[5] Hunter S. Thompson, "The 'Hashbury' Is the Capital of the Hippies," in *American Society Since 1945*, edited by William L. O'Neill, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), originally published in *the New York Times Magazine*, May 14, 1967, 124.
[6] Cavan, *Hippies of the Haight*, 57-8

These fundamental values sought to advance the personal freedom and, therefore, the spiritual development of the members of the Hippie community, and the search of this freedom became their principle activity. This pursuit, which rarely involved any conventional "work" and not only allowed but encouraged the use of mind-altering drugs, distanced those who identified as members of the Hippie counterculture from the occupation and technology-oriented American mainstream. Cavan observed that this inherent and irreconcilable distance between the Hippies and the "straights" necessitated the formation of a self-contained community in a permissive neighborhood where conflict might be minimized and they can "just be."[7]

Any analysis of the values and behavior of the Hippie counterculture, in San Francisco in particular, would be inaccurate and incomplete without acknowledging the connection to the behaviors and values of the Beat generation that they perpetuated and expanded upon. Writer Leonard Wolf, who conducted and compiled extensive interviews with individuals in the late 1960s at every level of the Hippie community, claimed, "The Hippie movement is Beat – with wings."[8] With the Hippies, "Beat" did not die, but rather the tendencies of worshipping primitivism and spontaneity that defined Beat behavior in the 1950s continued, but with an even stronger community element. Participants in the Hippie counterculture acknowledged this connection with the Beats; San Francisco State English professor Patrick Gleeson, who identified with the Hippie counterculture from its beginnings, observed that the Hippie "movement" existed in San Francisco because of the Beats, and their precedent created a "nice climate" for hundreds to live out the "Neal

[7] Ibid., 52, 94.
[8] Leonard Wolf, *Voices from the Love Generation*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968), xx.

Cassady myth."[9] Helping each other to discover the means of self-exploration to truly experience the freedom they so valued was a collective motivator for behavior throughout the Haight community, and the feeling among the young residents of the Haight resembled a type of tribal kinship. The larger Hippie community in the Haight was by no means homogeneous; rather, there were many smaller segments that collaborated to advance their pursuits of freedom and spirituality. Cavan identified these groups – the "intensified drug scene," the political activists, the "mystics," the "intensified self-seekers," those who were "simply living," the Diggers and the Hell's Angels[10] – that shared common fundamental values, and collaborated in their varying behaviors to create a strong sense of community among, as well as within, each of their groups.

Although the Hippies who made their home in Haight-Ashbury found much of their identity in rejecting the conservatism and consumerism of mid-century American society, as a counterculture they avoided negativity in their behavior and values. Rather than emphasizing the negative rejection of outside values, they instead accentuated a positive creation of something beautiful, free and new. While bohemians who preceded them, some Beats included, were, Wolf noted, largely "dark, silent, moody, lonely," Hippies were, overwhelmingly, "bright, vivacious, crowd-loving, joyful" and full of positive energy.[11] Peter Mackaness, who, as the director of the Hip Job Co-op, was central to making the Hippie lifestyle of the Haight sustainable, found himself drawn to the Haight by waves of energy. San Francisco was special, he noted:

> This is the city of St. Francis. It's no accident that it is that. This is all part of the plan. A seed was planted here… the people that kept coming kept

[9] Ibid., 66.
[10] Cavan, *Hippies of the Haight*, 33.
[11] Wolf, *Voices from the Love Generation*, xxi.

> feeling… they came because they have been moved to come to the Haight, because there's energy being generated here, and it's positive.[12]

This positive energy was largely responsible for making the Hippie counterculture so much larger and more popular than other countercultures that came before; young people were drawn to the Haight because of its undeniable positive energy that could provide comfort to young people who left their parents and families to seek out an alternative existence. They sought an escape from support for the Vietnam War and opposition to civil rights agitations that a majority of Americans still believed in, and the Haight provided the optimistic alternative, as opposed to the negativity the Hippies associated with the New Left political activists in Berkeley.[13]

This underlying youthful, optimistic energy did not need to be artificially created; the Hippie counterculture was undoubtedly a youth movement, born of inter-generational conflict, populated by young people eager to search out something new. Journalist Tom Wolfe sarcastically refers to these young people searching for a new life as the "Beautiful People." He named them this after the letters they wrote their parents upon their "escape" from their middle class home; the letters followed a formula:

> Dear Mother,
> I meant to write you before this and I hope you haven't been worried. I am in [San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York… Mazatlan, Mexico!!!!] and it is really beautiful here. It is a beautiful scene… I really tried, because I knew you wanted me to, but it just didn't work out with [school, college, my job, me and Danny] and so I have come here and it is a really beautiful scene. I don't want you to worry about me. I have met some BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE and…[14]

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[12] Ibid., 10-12.
[13] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1987) 127.
[14] Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, (New York: Picador, 1968), 135.

These letters inspired panic in the hearts of conservative parents, who feared their children had abandoned "decent" values in favor of drugs and rebellion. However, in escaping their parents and their middle class upbringing, the young people who moved to the Haight to become part of the Hippie scene believed they were making progressive and positive change in their lives. In interviewing young people in the Haight in the spring of 1967, writer Joan Didion repeatedly observed Hippies escaping the negativity they perceived to be present in middle class American life. For instance, a young man named Max explains his rationale for moving to San Francisco as a desire to live "free of all the old middle-class Freudian hang-ups" and to create a life that is a "triumph over 'don'ts'."[15] Jeff and Debbie, sixteen and fifteen years old, respectively, share similar motivations of removing themselves from the tyranny of "too strict" parents.[16] Didion recounts these interviews with scorn for their irresponsibility, but the genuine desire for something better rings true for everyone she talked to. Like the Beats and other counterculture movements that came before them, the young people gathering in Haight-Ashbury and identifying themselves as Hippies were not deliberately instigating any large scale social change or seeking to reform the society directed by their parents' generation; rather, they simply wanted to escape American society and create a more experimental way of life outside of it.

The growing momentum of the 1960s Hippie counterculture could also be traced to its fundamental identity as a youth movement. Theodore Roszak notes that, by the 1960s, young people comprised a growing percentage of the overall American population because of the baby boom that began in the immediate

[15] Joan Didion, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968), 87-8.
[16] Ibid., 91.

aftermath of World War II. Not only did these young people gain power from their sheer numbers, but also from a cohesive group identity born from common experiences. They were raised with the relatively permissive child-rearing philosophies popularized by Dr. Benjamin Spock, and the rapidly increasing numbers of young people enrolled in college gave them yet another opportunity to solidify a group identity.[17] Ironically, the very consumerism and prosperity that made young people want to run away from their homes was simultaneously what made their escape possible. Extended youth became viable only because of America's expanding wealth, which allowed young people to delay being productive members of the economy and explore alternative lifestyles.[18] Even more so than in the 1950s adolescents created their own set of goals and values in the 1960s, and young people possessed significant power. They were able to channel that power into the creation of a counterculture that changed the expectations of American society.

1960s Hippie counterculture also distinguished itself from other counterculture and youth rebellion movements that preceded it because of the importance they placed on psychedelic drugs in creating their alternative lifestyle and mental framework for experiencing the world. While drugs have long been a part of rebellion – for instance, the Beats integrated Benzedrine and marijuana into their culture[19] – the invention of LSD as a psychedelic completely transformed the manner in which drugs impacted consciousness and perception. Once drug adventurers, such as writer Ken Kesey and his crazy group of "Merry Pranksters" or

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[17] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, 27-30.
[18] Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, 134.
[19] David M. Wrobel, "Movement and Adjustment in Twentieth-Century Western Writing," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 72 No. 3, (August 2003): 403.

psychologist Timothy Leary, brought the "gospel" of psychedelic drugs to the masses of young people in need of aids for expanding their perceptions of themselves and the world, "dropping acid" became a central, and to some an essential, ritual of the Hippie experience.[20] The potential for expanding one's mind and exploring uncharted areas of consciousness was irresistible for the young people building a Hippie culture in the Haight.

Timothy Leary actively promoted the use of LSD and recruited people to participate in his "League for Spiritual Discovery" that he founded in 1966; as a former Harvard psychology professor, he approached taking acid and studying its effects as a scientific experimentation that would lead to discovering and living a better, alternative life outside of conservative American expectations.[21] Integrating LSD into everyday life was a way to accelerate and enhance achieving a "groovy" frame of mind and avoid the "bummers" that would prevent positive experiences.[22] The benefits of LSD for the Hippies' project of expanding consciousness to experience higher levels of sensory stimulation and alter perceptions of reality were truly profound; proponents of the LSD "ideology" relished that the drug introduced the user to new levels of reality that are not ordinarily perceived and created a feeling of fusion or closeness to all living things.[23] While certainly unconventional and undoubtedly shunned by conservative Middle America, early experiments with and promotion of LSD were not illegal, because California did not outlaw acid until

[20] Cavan, *Hippies of the Haight*, 118.
[21] Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco*, 14.
[22] Cavan, *Hippies of the Haight*, 113.
[23] John Robert Howard, "The Flowering of the Hippie Movement," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 382, Protest in the Sixties (1969), 48-9.

October 1966.[24] This perceived gap in the law only further proves that the new Hippie counterculture explored realms of experience so new that the "straights" had not yet thought to prohibit it. More than anything else, 1960s counterculture became about finding anything and everything new and better than the traditional, conservative, consumerist values that dominated the rest of American society.

Through drug use, deep meditation, or any other method of altering perceptions and expanding consciousness, the Hippie counterculture integrated art and life, which propelled them forward in their pursuit of authentic experience. The young people who identified with the Hippie counterculture and built a community separate from the mainstream in neighborhoods like the Haight succeeded, probably to the highest level of any group, in achieving an elevated, self-aware level of consciousness that helped them to achieve happiness and improve society. This "consciousness III," as social scholar Charles Reich refers to it, allows one to be "alive" *now*, and is at its core founded on liberating one's self from the oppression of society and engaging in intentional expression of this freedom.[25] This tendency towards an expressive orientation, unlike the instrumental orientation (emphasis on actions that are seen as contributing to a later goal) that dominated American culture, permeated every level of Hippie life: magazines and newspapers, poetry and novels, theatrical performances and, perhaps most importantly, music.[26] By using creative and authentic expression as their form of rebellion, the Hippies saw the

[24] Scott MacFarlane, *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective on the Counterculture*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., Inc., 2007), 1.
[25] Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America: How the Youth Revolution is Trying to Make America Livable*, (New York: Random House, 1970), 225.
[26] James L. Spates, "Counterculture and Dominant Culture Values: A Cross-National Analysis of the Underground Press and Dominant Culture Magazines," *American Sociological Review* Vol. 41 No. 5 (1976), 870.

potential to enter into a "new age of man" that was beyond the soulless rigidity of the industrial era.[27]

Countercultures before them, especially the Beats, emphasized poetry and literature as the highest level of artistic expression, but the Hippies emphasized performance of all varieties, in particular theatrical and musical; the counterculture of the 1960s lacked a truly cohesive literary narrative.[28] This is not to say that the Hippie culture was devoid of literature – Richard Brautigan, in particular, is credited with writing the ultimate "Hippie novel" with *Trout Fishing in America*, and pioneer of psychedelic culture Ken Kesey was first a novelist[29] – but the type of authentic experience and self-expression the Hippies sought was situated even more distant from the mainstream of published literature.

If one person may be credited with initiating the particular variety of expressive orientation that characterized the Hippie counterculture, it would be Ken Kesey, who has been called "America's first Hippie."[30] After growing up in rural Oregon, Kesey moved to the Bay Area for a creative writing fellowship at Stanford and had his first experiences with countercultural living on Perry Lane in Palo Alto, "Stanford's bohemian quarter." Through one of his Perry Lane friends Kesey stumbled upon the opportunity that would change his life: he volunteered for experiments at Menlo Park Veterans Hospital and had his first experience with LSD. Able to sneak out samples, Kesey brought the LSD experience back to his friends, and Perry Lane became the first community to collectively experience acid in late 1959 "a full two years before Mom&Dad&Buddy&Sis heard of the dread letters

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[27] Reich, *The Greening of America: How the Youth Revolution is Trying to Make America Livable*, 355.
[28] MacFarlane, *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective on the Counterculture*, 10.
[29] Ibid., 68.
[30] Ibid., 2.

[LSD] and clucked because Drs. Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert were french-frying the brains of Harvard boys with it," as journalist Tom Wolfe observed.[31] Not long after, Kesey published *One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest* (many passages written under the influence of LSD), and went to Oregon to write a follow up, *Sometimes a Great Notion*; he considered his literature to be a continuation of the legacy that Kerouac and Burroughs established in the 1950s, but his work reflects a shift away from themes of pure, rugged individualism towards a critique of modern societal pressures.[32] After achieving immense success, especially with *Cuckoo's Nest*, Kesey used his new wealth and fame to abandon the literary world, buy a house in La Honda, California, and establish a new community for continuing his psychedelic experiment.

Kesey's experiments with LSD and the antics of his followers, a group of eccentrics that called themselves the Merry Pranksters, introduced the experience of dropping acid and an entire culture to accompany the drug to the newly forming Hippie counterculture. They began this project in 1964, when they bought a bus, painted it in erratic day-glo patterns, and drove it cross-country share the LSD experience and film their summer-long trip. Significantly, at the wheel of the bus was none other than Neal Cassady, who had become famous as a driver as the inspiration for Dean Moriarity in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*; the frenzied speed with which he drove and lived had only increased.[33] Upon their return to San Francisco, the Pranksters sought means to continue bringing the acid experience to the larger community. Posters emblazoned with the taunting question "CAN YOU PASS THE ACID TEST?" enlisted the American penchant for competition to incite

[31] Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, 43.
[32] MacFarlane, *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective on the Counterculture*, 27.
[33] Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, 69.

people to test their consciousness in the first mass acid experience.[34] These acid tests, staged in 1965 and 1966, with the first several in the Bay Area, pushed the idea of a communal drug experience to new levels. What made the acid tests innovative and exciting was the entire atmosphere that the Pranksters created with videos, wiring the space with microphones to record and replay the sounds of the party, strobe lights, Day-Glo paint and live music. These acid tests, because of their community mission and the diversity of the attendees, brought the LSD lifestyle to the fledgling counterculture of Haight-Ashbury and provided a model for life there over the next several years. The biggest acid test, the Trips Festival in San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf in January 1966, went on for three days, and could be credited with beginning the "Haight-Ashbury era," and LSD, Day-Glo paint, strobe lights and "acid rock" became a lifestyle for San Francisco's youth culture.[35]

While Kesey undoubtedly was largely responsible for inspiring the Hippie counterculture to use LSD and live in a corresponding psychedelic lifestyle, by October 1966 he encouraged the youth culture to go "beyond acid." This idea became the basis for an "Acid Test Graduation" – a concept so intriguing that law enforcement in California let Kesey off with a small fine and probation for outstanding narcotics charges that had exiled him to Mexico so they can see the graduation happen – an event that excited the "straights" of San Francisco with the potential to end the Hippies' love affair with LSD. He advocated this, however, not because he saw LSD as dangerous, but rather because he believed the psychedelic movement was ready to move on, to "graduate" to other, more progressive means of altering consciousness. The actual graduation itself took place in the Warehouse, an abandoned parking area in the South of Market neighborhood of San Francisco that

[34] Ibid., 229.
[35] Ibid., 250-63.

the Pranksters had made their headquarters. The crowd was small, with few beyond the Prankster core in attendance and the message of ending LSD use was not well received by the larger youth culture that had already bought into the lifestyle surrounding the psychedelic experience.[36]

Perhaps Kesey's most influential decision in orchestrating the acid tests was teaming up with Jerry Garcia's rock band the Grateful Dead as the musical entertainment for the events; the band went on to become the one of the founders of an entire genre called "acid rock." At the acid tests, the Grateful Dead met the famous LSD manufacturer Owlsly, who went on to finance the band and purchase the electronic music equipment that made their sound legendary and influenced the musical and performance choices of an entire generation of rock musicians.[37] Shows the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Muddy Waters, Cream and countless other bands of this new "plugged in" genre of rock – "acid rock" quickly developed an identity inseparable from the electric amplifiers that projected it as much as the LSD that inspired it – played in San Francisco venues, especially the Fillmore Auditorium, in many ways recreated the sensory experience of the acid tests, which were the model for the "mixed media" entertainment that was so popular in the late 1960s.[38] Sociologist John R. Howard captures the sensory stimulation created by these new rock shows in his description of his first show in the fall of 1966 at the Fillmore:

> A new cultural style was evolving and was on display that evening. The rock group blasted its sound out through multiple amplifiers, the decibels beating in on the room like angry waves. Above and behind them. A mélange of colors and images played upon a huge movie screen… Image and color fused and swirled, then melted apart. The total effect was that sought by the

[36] Ibid., 363
[37] Ibid., 213.
[38] Zimmerman, *Countercultural Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco*, 17, 37.

> Dadaists in the early 1920s, a breaking up of traditional linear habits of thought, a disconnection of the sensory apparatus from traditional categories of perception.[39]

The first issue of the *San Francisco Oracle*, a newspaper of sorts that covered events and issues that concerned the Haight-Ashbury community, expressed the excitement that the entire community shared over the uncharted musical ground being broken by the new bands emerging in the Haight; the paper identified it as the "beginning of a new musical world," noting the "odor of creativity in the air."[40] After the Monterey Pop music festival in June of 1967, the American public at large noticed the creativity and energy embodied in the new acid rock music of the counterculture, and the influence of rock music only increased the counterculture's appeal to American youth.[41]

The songs the Grateful Dead played at the acid tests, or that any of the bands played at their shows at the Fillmore, give great insight into the counterculture's desire to introduce new forms of expression. Some of the early songs from the Grateful Dead express a tendency to worship nature; "Sugar Magnolia," one of the band's most famous songs, blends elements of folk, blues and country that represents the "naturalness" of "America's roots," which they believed the nation had abandoned in the technological modern society. The importance of nature and its role in setting priorities outside of social expectations is immediately clear; the last verse begins with "sunshine, daydream, walking in the tall trees, going where the wind goes."[42] The band mimicked the feel of their music in their lifestyle, adopting a non-commercial mission that would, ideally, allow them to experience

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[39] Howard, "The Flowering of the Hippie Movement," 44.
[40] *San Francisco Oracle: Facsimile Edition*, (Berkeley, CA: Regent Press, 1991), 4.
[41] Zimmerman, *Countercultural Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco*, 17.
[42] Grateful Dead, *American Beauty*, (New York: Warner Brothers Records, 1970).

the American frontier long after the achievement of manifest destiny; however they seemed to have no qualms about making massive profit with their band's growing popularity.[43] As their career progressed, the band's music evolved, becoming increasingly influenced by psychedelic culture. For example, "The Eleven" creates a sensation of disorientation by introducing a circuitous form that makes discerning beginning and end impossible, and using a highly unusual eleven beat meter, rather than rock's standard four beat.[44] Lyrically, the Dead also became more introspective, musing, "No more time to tell how, this is the season of what, now is the time of returning with our thought."[45] The musical evolution of the Grateful Dead from upbeat and natural to psychedelic and reflective paralleled the growth of the counterculture in Haight-Ashbury, the neighborhood that they called home during their early career; the Haight became increasingly self-contained, functioning in an economic, social and environmental universe independent from the rest of the world.

In the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, the perfect set of circumstances existed to allow the counterculture to thrive, undisturbed by the values and judgments of mainstream America that the young people who identified as Hippies wanted so desperately to escape. When many of the stately Victorian homes were originally built, the area was an upper-middle-class neighborhood, but as the city grew the wealthier residents moved to swankier haunts and rented out their large homes. The expanding black population of the city moved in throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and then were joined by "beatnik refugees" moving from a North Beach

[43] Zimmerman, *Countercultural Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco*, 99, 113.
[44] Ibid., 113.
[45] Grateful Dead, *Live/Dead*, (New York: Warner Brothers Records, 1969).

that was becoming increasingly commercialized.[46] For the young people seeking a space to create their expressively-oriented community, the Haight had a multi-faceted appeal: it was more ethnically and racially mixed than any other San Francisco neighborhood at the time, which created an atmosphere of tolerance and progressivism;[47] low rents made housing in the neighborhood affordable for young people who resisted any type of regular employment;[48] and the businesses along Haight Street lacked the commercialism that was plaguing so many other neighborhoods in San Francisco.[49]

Journalist Michael Fallon, who wrote a three-part spotlight on the emerging Hippie counterculture for the *San Francisco Examiner* in 1965, highlighted the coffeehouse culture and intentional bohemianism that made Haight-Ashbury distinctive from the rest of 1960s San Francisco. He interviewed a young woman named Peggy Caserta, the operator of a clothing shop on Haight Street, who had managed to keep a steady business of young people buying her bohemian style wares and the made the Haight her home; she said, "I love it here, I don't think there's anywhere in The City I'd live beside this place. It's like a small town of its own."[50] The close community atmosphere of the Haight made it appealing to the young people who flocked there in increasingly large numbers. Coffeehouses like the Blue Unicorn, a popular spot Fallon designated the "new hip hangout," meshed with the anti-commercialism mission of the counterculture despite existing as businesses. Owner Robert Stubbs described the Unicorn and its culture, "A coffee house is a creation that must harmonize within itself rather than being run as a

[46] Howard, "The Flowering of the Hippie Movement," 45.
[47] Michael Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Midcentury*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 203.
[48] Wolf, *Voices from the Love Generation*, 174.
[49] Michael Fallon, "Bohemia's New Haven," *San Francisco Examiner*, (September 7, 1965).
[50] Ibid.

business to make money. I think of it as an art form." Michael Fallon's article in the *San Francisco Examiner* describing the economic identity of the counterculture in the Haight is the first printed instance of referring to the youth of the new counterculture as "Hippies."[51] This further demonstrates that, although businesses like Caserta's and Stubbs' functioned as "the pulse of Haight-Ashbury," the neighborhood did not develop a business-oriented model, and this rejection of traditional capitalist economics became inextricably intertwined with what it meant to be a "Hippie."[52] The young people who created the new bohemian counterculture in the Haight and all of the institutions that supported its development rejected traditional expectations of markets and economics, and instead created their own community in a social vacuum of sorts, where necessities like food, shelter and, for some, drugs were freely and openly shared.

Psychedelic culture became such a defining feature of the Haight-Ashbury scene that the separation from American reality that the Hippies sought accomplish existed on every sensory level. Richard Alpert, who along with Timothy Leary and Ralph Metzner published a guidebook of sorts for journeying with LSD, described it best in his interview with the *San Francisco Oracle*: "The Haight-Ashbury is, as far as I can see, the purest reflection of what is happening in consciousness… people just wanting to live and do it quietly and gracefully and gently."[53] Increasingly, this pure reflection of explorations of consciousness manifested into large events intended to "turn on" more people to the possibilities opened by the simultaneously psychedelic and natural lifestyle practiced by the residents of the Haight. On January 14, 1967, the growing number of Hippies in the Haight gathered in nearby Golden Gate Park

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[51] Michael Fallon, "New Hip Hangout – The Blue Unicorn," *San Francisco Examiner*, (September 6, 1965).
[52] Michael Fallon, "Are 'Beats' Good Business?" (*San Francisco Examiner*, September 8, 1965).
[53] *San Francisco Oracle: Facsimile Edition*, 91.

to showcase their community's values at the great "Human Be-In." The event was advertised as a great "gathering of the tribes," a "joyful, face-to-face beginning of this new epoch," and used Native American imagery to identify the Hippies who gathered there as both "antimodern primitives" and something fundamentally American.[54] The "tribes" that were to be brought together were the political radicals, mostly from across the Bay in Berkeley, and the "acid devotees" that inhabited the Haight, a union that former activist Todd Gitlin believed would not be "too easily consummated." While the event was a success, an enduring union between the two "tribes" remained elusive.[55] The event itself featured poetry readings by Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, musical performances by the Grateful Dead, as well as myriad community-building activities such as drum circles and meditation sessions.[56] The *Oracle* recounted the event as a "baptism, not a birthday party," and those participating saw themselves undertaking important work of spiritual development and, to a certain extent, embracing pacifist politics.[57]

Perhaps more importantly for the historical and social significance of the Hippie counterculture in the Haight, the Be-In garnered significant media attention, not only from counterculture publications like the *Oracle*, but also in mainstream press. Disaffected youth across America could readily see that other like-minded individuals hoping to establish an alternative set of social values were gathering in San Francisco, and they wanted to be a part of it. In the aftermath of the Human Be-In, the summer of 1967 became the "Summer of Love," and Haight-Ashbury experienced a drastic increase in young people identifying themselves as Hippies

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[54] Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco*, 8.
[55] Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, 208.
[56] *San Francisco Oracle: Facsimile Edition*, 115-146.
[57] Ibid., 124.

and seeking to experience an alternative lifestyle. Joan Didion observed the influx of young people to the Haight in 1967, "San Francisco was where the social hemorrhaging was showing up. San Francisco was where the missing children were gathering and calling themselves 'Hippies'."[58] The cohesive community identity of the Haight became so strong precisely because its residents, even as they grew to number the hundreds of thousands, shared this common label as "social hemorrhaging" or "missing children;" they simply did not fit into the middle class America their parents had conformed to, and needed something different. The harsh "goodbye" the Hippies received from mainstream American culture – Didion's intention in referring to the youth of the Haight as a hemorrhage was certainly not to flatter – did not dampen the relief young nonconformists felt in escaping to the "tribal" community in the Haight. Again, when the *Oracle* "officially" announced the Summer of Love, they used the context of American Indian imagery and philosophies and elements of Eastern mysticism to create an otherworldly feeling surrounding the Haight and frame the upcoming summer in a spiritual context.[59] Interviews with young migrants to the Haight revealed this intense feeling of kinship that drew them to San Francisco. Sandra Butler described the Haight as a "place where you can be yourself," and her lover Pancho actively wanted to be close to "other Haight-Ashbury type people" because he felt alike to them.[60] The influx of people into the neighborhood in the summer of 1967 was the fulfillment of the "rucksack revolution" that Kerouac prophesied in *The Dharma Bums*, and the "Summer of Love" earned its moniker because a pure, almost familial type of love drew youth to San Francisco.

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[58] Didion, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," 85.
[59] *San Francisco Oracle: Facsimile Edition*, 203-242.
[60] Wolf, *Voices from the Love Generation*, 149, 174.

The love that the young people experienced and expressed in the Hippie community in Haight-Ashbury manifested in different ways. At its core, this love became the creation of a community of mutual care and understanding born out of a common spiritual journey of consciousness that brought the young people of the Haight together in the first place. In addition, expressing and sharing love with uninhibited sex, many times with multiple partners and outside the context of a conventional romantic relationship – a lifestyle that earned the nickname "free love" – became an essential part of the Hippie social constructs. The new freedom from sexual taboos that enabled youth of the sixties to build a culture around sharing and community distinguished the Hippies from other counterculture movements that preceded them; some of this liberation came along with increased availability of contraception and the introduction of the birth control pill, although sex without consequences was still unavailable to many women. Poet Lenore Kandel, who herself was close with many of the Beat Generation writers in the 1950s, encapsulated the values of the "love generation" in her short book of poems "The Love Book," which she read from at the Be-In, by writing of the pure joy of free, erotic activity and fantasy.[61] The book was seized by police for being obscene, because her work was a pure reflection of sexuality as the Hippie counterculture embodied it. With "The Love Book" she explored an important realm of expression and experience essential to creating an accepting community. Kandel, in an interview with Leonard Wolf, emphasized the Hippie counterculture's separation from the "straights," and this sexual liberation marked one of the most fundamental and, to conservative mainstream America, shocking differences between the Hippie

[61] Ronna Johnson, "Lenore Kandel's *The Love Book*: Psychededlic Poetics, Cosmic Erotica, and the Sexual Politics in the Mid-sixties Counterculture," In *Reconstructing the Beats*, edited by Jennie Skerl, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 95-6.

counterculture and the society they are escaping.[62] When combined with LSD culture and Eastern mysticism, "free love" helped create a new framework for viewing the world and social interactions.

The Haight-Ashbury community articulated and practiced their alternative lifestyle especially effectively because they had a map of sorts to follow; the *San Francisco Oracle*, a periodical that began with Allen Cohen's dream of a "rainbow newspaper," became a guidebook of sorts through the new states of mind opened up by Hippies through meditation and LSD, as well as a means of examining new social forms that were needed to align the world with the Haight's vision.[63] By providing this essential service – guidance in exploring a new and unknown way of life and level of consciousness – the *Oracle* became the most important publication in the Haight during its run from September 1966 to February 1968. In the second issue – the first published under the title *San Francisco Oracle* after the first issue came out as *P.O. Frisco*, with the "P.O." standing for "Psychedelic Oracle" – the contributors articulated their mission: "We are in the most dynamic period of change in Western history. We hope to create a desire to participate in the revolution now happening."[64] The publication, over its twelve issues, succeeded in their mission by publishing a combination of instructional pieces on Eastern philosophy, environmental protection and enhancing psychedelic experiences, while also covering the major "newsworthy" events happening in the Haight, such as the Human Be-In and the "Houseboat Summit" with Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Gary Snyder and Allan Watts.[65] Additionally, the *Oracle*'s pages contained myriad examples of psychedelic art, which were especially attention grabbing and thought

[62] Wolf, *Voices from the Love Generation*, 33.
[63] *San Francisco Oracle: Facsimile Edition*, xxiii-xxviii.
[64] Ibid., 18.
[65] Ibid., 89-112, 149-200.

provoking as more color was introduced into the printing process beginning in January 1967 with the "Human Be-In" issue. The *Oracle* was representative of the "underground" or countercultural press as a whole in its overwhelming emphasis on expressive themes over political and instrumental ones.[66] The *Oracle*, just like the neighborhood that created it, cared much more about how and what to *feel*, rather than to think or do; experiences and ideas were simply a means to the desired end of happiness, self-awareness and love.

Performance became an essential part of creating this expressively oriented culture. The San Francisco Mime Troupe pioneered the particular type of theatre performances that resonated strongly with the Hippie counterculture; their performances, partially scripted, partially improvised and usually involving audience participation and direction, sought to dissolve the boundaries between actors and audience, and by extension the boundaries between art and life.[67] Thematically, the Mime Troupe presented shows that, they hoped, would push America to honor her ideological promises – democratic government and equal opportunity for all – and live up to the principles expounded at home and abroad. The civil rights struggles of the early sixties and the escalation of the Vietnam War in the end of the decade sent a message to the Mime Troupe and their followers that the United States was failing to provide equality for all citizens and allow for democratic free will for the world's peoples.[68] The group's shows were political, for instance their "Minstrel Show" used outdated theatrical elements, such as

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[66] James L. Spates, "Counterculture and Dominant Culture Values: A Cross-National Analysis of the Underground Press and Dominant Culture Magazines," *American Sociological Review* Vol. 41 No. 5 (1976), 877.
[67] Peter Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 1998), 17.
[68] Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, 5.

"blackface," to explore issues of race and discrimination in the United States.[69] The Troupe's shows were popular, and their tours to universities and youthful communities around the country spread the egalitarian and expressive values of the Haight-Ashbury community to other areas of the United States. Additionally, the Mime Troupe had a lasting impact on the musical element of the Hippie counterculture – the rock shows at the Fillmore Auditorium that popularized and developed the "acid rock" scene began as fundraisers for the Mime Troupe, who racked up large legal fees with their radical behavior[70] – and in general brought an element of enthusiasm and innovation to all types of performance, mimicked in the rock performances that served as a cohesive element to the growing Hippie community.

In creating a community in the Haight whose values differed so radically from the mainstream, creating institutions to manage the inevitable "trouble" that would arise as the community grew became a necessity. These institutions were varied – the Hip Job Co-Op, where people could find and share sporadic work; the Huckleberry House, that took in teenaged runaways; the Communication Company, that helped publish periodicals like the *San Francisco Oracle* and community pamphlets – but the Diggers were the most widely known and influential of these Hippie institutions.[71] The Diggers, similar to the Mime Troupe, promoted "life acting," or living in an improvisational manner, as a framework for actions and decisions. The group's pamphlets encouraged escapism, along with a planetary frame of reference for experiencing the world; they sought to join with other like-

[69] Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, 39.
[70] Ibid., 50.
[71] Cavan, *Hippies of the Haight*, 163.

minded people and groups to create a "free family."[72] This free agenda was at the core of the Diggers' mission, and illuminates why the group resonated so strongly with the young Hippies in Haight-Ashbury seeking to escape the consumerism and materialism of 1960s America. They sought to make it possible for life to cost nothing.[73] They offered a free store, free food, a free clinic, and a variety of other services to the entire Haight-Ashbury community; the idea behind these services was not to help the needy, but rather to display life free of monetary constraints for everyone and critique the unnecessary evils of capitalism.[74] In reality, money continued to be necessary as long as the Diggers and their Hippie supporters continued to exist within the city. For instance, drugs that were freely traded in the Haight-Ashbury community entered the neighborhood with a purchase from somebody.[75] However, even though the Diggers could not entirely escape monetary frameworks, San Francisco was the only city in which staging a free city would garner attention and have any impact. After spending the summer of 1968 in New York City, Peter Coyote and other Digger leaders realized the distinctly hospitable environment San Francisco offered, the "more manageable stage and larger support system" in Haight-Ashbury highlighted just how "entrenched in various levels of corruption and territoriality" New York was.[76] If the Diggers were going try to transform one city into their "free city," San Francisco was the only one open enough to accommodate their vision, even though it was on a relatively limited scale.

Ultimately, the desire to live in isolation from the rest of the world earned the Hippie counterculture disdain, even from groups that shared the vision of

[72] Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, 66, 91-5.
[73] Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco*, 99.
[74] Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, 222.
[75] Cavan, *Hippies of the Haight*, 120.
[76] Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, 106.

rejecting the mainstream. The New Left political radicals whose influence was also growing in the 1960s shared a critical view of American culture with the Hippies, especially in their opposition to the Vietnam War, but the Hippie counterculture failed to integrate with the activists of the New Left. Todd Gitlin, who served as president of one of the largest New Left activist groups, Students for a Democratic Society, criticized the young residents of the Haight for their failure to integrate with the New Left and create an even larger, more powerful movement.[77] Even Jack Kerouac, who many Hippies looked up to as a visionary leader in the quest to create counterculture and explore alternate areas of consciousness, was politically quite conservative and eventually became a vocal critic of what he saw as an "irresponsible" way of living that the Hippies were engaged in. He feared that his ideas were contributing to a counterculture that believed to be increasingly commercialized, lacking authenticity, and full of delinquents.[78] More practically, the ideal of communal living that the Hippie counterculture held at its core was not applicable in the wider world; the Haight-Ashbury culture was not, and really could not be, duplicated anywhere else. Ultimately, the communal lifestyle was not sustainable in the long term, even in the Haight.

The Haight-Ashbury community lived by a code of trust and shared experience which, while making their counterculture truly authentic, also left the Haight vulnerable to exploitation from outside their movement. In the fall of 1967, after the influx of new residents, media, and merchants of the Summer of Love, the Diggers staged a "Death of the Hippie" parade; they saw their community changing as many of the original Hippies of the Haight moved out of the neighborhood and the

[77] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, 225.
[78] Manuel Luis Martinez, *Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomas Rivera*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 111.

scene became increasingly commercialized and crowded. The number of residents in the Haight seeking to create a legitimate alternative lifestyle and future – a legitimate counterculture – were becoming a dwindling minority as the Hippie lifestyle became increasingly trendy and exploited by American capitalism.[79] While the beautiful counterculture experiment in Haight-Ashbury was starting to disperse in 1967, by 1969 it was definitively over. The Altamont Music Festival on December 6, 1969 at the Altamont Raceway just East of San Francisco was intended to be a community experience with free music and free love; instead, the security forces provided by the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang combined with an angry crowd to create a violent mob scene.[80] Peter Coyote expressed the sentiment of the Hippie community after the festival, "After that, the party was definitely over, and what ensued, in the streets, in the Hell's Angels, and across America was harder, colder and all business."[81] When the community of Haight-Ashbury became too large and infiltrated by too many who did not fully embrace the consciousness-expanding mission of the original Hippie movement, the Hippies moved away or moved on.

However, in San Francisco, counterculture by no means died. In the decades following the departure of most of the Hippies, the city experienced significant movements in gay and lesbian culture, a vibrant mix of ethnic and racial groups, and an influx in innovative modern art and muralists, just to name a few. The countercultural spirit introduced by the Beats and expanded by the Hippies has become a permanent part of San Francisco's urban identity, and has slowly trickled out to have a larger influence on American culture as a whole. It is not a misconception when people immediately associate the word "counterculture" with

[79] Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco*, 166-72.
[80] Ibid., 163.
[81] Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, 124.

the image of a Haight-Ashbury Hippie; their culture, after several other bohemian and rebel groups before them created the space they needed to thrive, finally made counterculture a permanent image in the overall American cultural identity.

LEGACIES OF THE COUNTERCULTURE

"Ah, life is a gate, a way, a path to Paradise anyway, why not live for fun and joy and love..."[1]

-Jack Kerouac, *Big Sur*

Even though the mid-century countercultures in San Francisco diffused and essentially died out, this does not mean that they have had no continued significance. Rather, the Beat Generation and the Hippies not only left their mark on San Francisco's urban identity, but also on American society as a whole; countercultures are, in many ways, engines of social change, and the Beats and Hippies helped to make countercultures an essential fixture in the modern United States. Youth who identified with the Beat Generation or the Hippie counterculture helped to construct a safe space for dissent in American society, and despite the disdain these groups earned from mainstream society at the time, they have been essential in countercultures earning the respect – even if true understanding is still elusive – of many more conservative Americans. For instance, Warren Burger, former Chief Justice of the quite traditional institution of the United States Supreme Court, has said that "turbulent American youth, whose disorderly acts he once 'resented,' actually had pointed the way to higher spiritual values."[2] Without dissent, culture cannot be pushed to grow, and the Beats and the Hippies undoubtedly encouraged growth.

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[1] Jack Kerouac, *Big Sur*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 42.
[2] J. Milton Yinger, *Countercultures: The Promise and the Peril of a World Tuned Upside Down*, (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 285.

Younger generations form counterculture movements as a means of pointing out the wrongs and shortfalls in the society created by the older generations that precede them. The vitality of mid-century countercultures was more than just a historical accident; according to Charles Reich, a "revolution" of the younger generation was an inevitable outcome of American wrongs.[3] As the wrongs done by American society became more appalling to more young people – conservatism, conformity, materialism, failures on civil rights, ignoring poverty, the Vietnam War – the youthful "revolution" grew. While the growth of the Beat Generation, and then the explosion of the Hippie counterculture, were directly related to and encouraged by the social and political problems of the 1950s and 1960s, their inspiration gave youth a voice and a space in directing social and cultural change for future generations. This increased power of young people came to rest not only in counterculture communities that attempted to separate from mainstream culture, but also with new roles in the established American power structure. It is no coincidence that in 1971, in the immediate aftermath of the height of the Hippie movement, the United States Constitution gained its twenty-sixth amendment: "The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age."[4] Through demonstrations and cultural dissent young people gained respect and legitimacy in showing their competence at offering social critiques and creating alternative community models, a change the United States government was forced to acknowledge by extending suffrage to younger Americans.

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[3] Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America: How the Youth Revolution is Trying to Make America Livable,* (New York: Random House, 1970), 4.
[4] *United States Constitution*, Amendment XXVI.

The manner in which development of counterculture intertwines with youthful alienation ensures that as long as there are discontented young people, countercultures may continue. Kenneth Keniston links alienation in youth to the phenomenon of prolonged adolescence and a discontinuity between childhood and adulthood;[5] moving further into the twenty-first century, this developmental state of adolescence, or "pre-adulthood," is becoming increasingly longer. A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* noted how young people are avoiding the economic and social expectations of adulthood further into their twenties than ever before.[6] Logically, then, the number of young people primed for alienation and, by extension, for joining countercultures will continue to grow. Thanks to the Beats and the Hippies, the creation of a counterculture movement has become the expected outcome of youth alienation, a phenomenon that results directly from the growth of technology and social expectations that have become the unfailing standard in American society.[7]

However, while alienation continues to exist among young people, the extent to which youth disagree with their parents on key social issues has in fact grown smaller since the 1960s. In a comparative study of generational feelings, Tom W. Smith found that on crucial issues such as abortion, civil liberties and sex, the differences in views between young people (ages 18-24) and older people (over age 65) has steadily decreased.[8] The strange development of prolonged adolescence

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[5] Kenneth Keniston, *The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), 301-4.

[6] Kay S. Hymowitz, "Where Have All the Good Men Gone?" *The Wall Street Journal*, February 19, 2011, accessed February 23, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704409004576146321725889448.html.

[7] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 5-9.

[8] Tom W. Smith, "Changes in the Generation Gap, 1972-1998," *GSS Social Change Report* No. 43 (October 2000), accessed March 27, 2011, http://cloud9.norc.uchicago.edu/dlib/sc-43.htm.

and the accompanying rise in alienated youth occurring simultaneously alongside a closing of the generation gap complicates the continued influence of countercultures. While still alienated, members the younger generations of the 1990s and 2000s have had a harder time articulating their discontent in a manner that effectively distances them from their parents' generation, which may explain why surges of counterculture on the levels we saw in the 1960s have failed to occur in the decades since. Rebellion and countercultural development continues to be influential, but it is more localized and individualized.

In San Francisco, the legacy of bohemianism and rebellion continues to be felt in everyday life. The Beats and Hippies, and later the city's gay subculture, shaped a political and cultural life in San Francisco that is further to the left and shows a more "ferocious" spirit of independence than any other city; in this way, San Francisco is truly "bizarre," rejecting orthodox party systems and values.[9] The spirit of rebellion is kept alive, partially, by continuing to incorporate the Beats and the Hippies into the cultural life of the city, despite the fact that those countercultures are now history. Today, near the intersection of Broadway and Columbus in the heart of North Beach, the Beat Museum allows visitors to view Beat memorabilia and first editions of many of the most influential Beat writings. Perhaps more significantly, however, the museum has made it part of its mission to continue the types of public events that made Beat culture so appealing in the first place, including poetry readings, instructional events on Zen and meditation, and annual birthday celebrations for Kerouac, Cassady and other Beat legends.[10] In Haight-

[9] Richard A. Walker, "An Appetite for the City," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 15.

[10] "Events at the Beat Museum," The Beat Museum, accessed February 25, 2011, http://www.thebeatmuseum.org/events.htm.

Ashbury, the main commercial corridor along Haight Street is still populated by vintage clothing and record stores, as well as more mystical offerings such as yoga studios and astrological shops. The level of affection residents of the Haight still have for their Hippie past comes alive the second Sunday in June each year for the Haight Street Fair which, in some ways, recreates the community atmosphere of past events like the Be-In with live music and free food.[11] Through celebrations and remembrances, San Francisco incorporates its historical countercultures, as well as its more modern ones, into the daily life of the city.

San Francisco's official tourism website, onlyinsanfrancisco.com, highlights the city's unique spirit and identity both in name ("only in San Francisco") and in content. The site's home page showcases links under the heading "What To Do," and two of the eight choices are "Diverse SF" and "Gay Travel." Clearly, the city is celebrating multiculturalism and nonconformity in a time when anti-immigration sentiment and opposition to gay marriage are sweeping the nation's political life. A few clicks lead to a section titled "SF Neighborhoods," where both North Beach and Haight-Ashbury are highlighted, with each mentioning the countercultural history of the neighborhood; Haight-Ashbury even boasts a "Flower Power Walking Tour."[12] Decades after the decline of the Beat and Hippie countercultures, one cannot plan a trip to San Francisco without being reminded of its countercultural past. While there is a certain amount of irony in the fact that the official tourism organization exploits the city's countercultural past to attract visitors, it is impossible to deny that counterculture and nonconformity have become an essential part of San Francisco's identity. In promoting counterculture as an attraction for visitors, the

[11] "San Francisco: The Haight," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, accessed February 25, 2011, http://www.sfgate.com/neighborhoods/sf/haight/.
[12] "San Francisco Travel," accessed February 23, 2011, http://www.onlyinsanfrancisco.com.

city's tourism industry has managed to turn the historical rebellion against capitalism and its values into a profitable force in the city's economy. However, whatever the motives for embracing counterculture, the legacy of the Beats and the Hippies have become an integral part of the San Francisco experience, both in official city bureaucracy and in the everyday lives of the city's residents.

Examining the continued relevance and development of countercultures only serves to reinforce the truly essential role San Francisco has played in encouraging many varieties of nonconformity and rebellion. Other cities have experienced influxes of counterculture movements of their own, but only in San Francisco has counterculture become an integral piece of the city's urban identity. New York City, especially, has repeatedly been the destination of young people seeking to form alternative cultures.[13] Bohemians and Beats made themselves at home in Greenwich Village in the 1920s and 1950s, respectively, and other neighborhoods have housed small communities of artistic rebels and social nonconformists into the twenty-first century.[14] Despite this, however, New York has not developed into a countercultural city; small enclaves of counterculture have been able to exist there because the immense size of the city and its population allow some space for practically every type of community. But New York does not embrace nonconformists more than any other group, nor does it openly celebrate its countercultural past and present. New York's official tourism guide, nycgo.com, compiles lists of attractions and activities for tourists. Museums, theatre and dining are highlighted, and spotlights on several neighborhoods are featured; a mention of

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[13] Dennis McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, (New York: Random House, 1979), 64.

[14] Clinton R. Starr, "'I Want to Be with My Own Kind': Individual Resistance and Collective Action in the Beat Counterculture," in *Reconstructing the Beats*, edited by Jennie Skerl, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 42.

counterculture of any type is notably absent.[15] New York City is the perfect example of a city that accommodates counterculture, but does not embrace it. Among major American cities, only San Francisco has done that.

San Francisco not only embraces counterculture movements in how it projects its history to potential tourists, but also has continued to welcome and promote alternative lifestyles in everyday life. Gay culture, especially, has long thrived in the city. The Embarcadero, along the waterfront of San Francisco Bay, was known as a congregating and cruising area for gay men since the 1920s, in the 1960s a community of gay men identifying as "leathermen" began making a home for their subculture in the South of Market (SoMa) neighborhood, and, most famously, the Castro, a neighborhood adjoining the Haight to the south, became a center of gay activism and politics in the 1970s.[16] Today, these neighborhoods continue to welcome gay culture, and the city adopts the image of the LGBT community as a part of its identity. On the official San Francisco tourism website, after clicking "Gay Travel" on the homepage, one finds a warm welcome encouraging visits to the Castro (labeled on the site as the "gay capital of the world"), SoMa (with its famous annual Folsom Street Fair celebrating gay culture), and the Embarcadero; the page is emblazoned with the slogan "The Gate is Always Open for You."[17] The Castro became famous as a haven for gay men largely due to Harvey Milk, a Castro resident who became the voice of the city's gay community when he was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1978, California's first openly gay elected official. While Milk was murdered, along with Mayor George Moscone, by

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[15] Harrison Peck and Jonathan Zeller, "Must See NYC," accessed February 23, 2011, http://www.nycgo.com/must-see-nyc/.

[16] Gayle S. Rubin, "The Miracle Mile: South of Market and Gay Male Leather 1962-1997," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 251-3.

[17] "San Francisco Travel."

conservative former Board of Supervisors member Dan White just ten months into his term, his legacy on San Francisco's gay community continues to be felt; he is remembered as a hero and a martyr who died for the cause of gay rights. The gay community's struggle – and with the recent battle over gay marriage in California, it is still a struggle – for equal rights has only become more permanently associated with San Francisco's urban evolution with the recent media attention given to the tragedy, led by Sean Penn's Academy Award winning portrayal of Milk in the 2008 film *Milk*.[18] Undoubtedly, San Francisco has not only tolerated alternative sexual orientations and lifestyles, but has encouraged the growth of a distinct and thriving gay culture that has seemingly permanently embedded itself in San Francisco's urban life and identity.

Cultural diversity of the LGBT variety is not the only type flourishing in San Francisco; vibrant ethnic communities have integrated themselves into the multicultural life of the city as well. The city has long been known for its large and bustling Chinatown – a consequence of geographically being more closely situated to the Far East than any other major American city – but the culture flourishing there makes San Francisco's Chinatown distinct from others. For example, in the 1920s and 1930s, a modern art collective that called itself the Chinese Revolutionary Artists' Club was founded in San Francisco, and it left behind a legacy of innovative and modern visual art in the Chinese community that helped to solidify art as part of Chinatown's identity.[19] Similarly, the Chicano culture that found a home primarily in the Mission district has used art, specifically literature, to

[18] Richard Gonzales, "The Moscone-Milk Anniversary – And Legacy," accessed March 27, 2011, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97338444.

[19] Anthony W. Lee, "Another View of Chinatown: Yun Gee and the Chinese Revolutionary Artists' Club," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 178-9.

construct a vibrant culture distinct from the other ethnic and cultural groups of the city. Through the work of the so-called *Raza* writers, creative and innovative writing and poetry has perpetuated connections to the Latin American cultures the Mission residents identify with, while also creating a body of "American originals" reflective of the neighborhood's distinct cultural identity.[20] San Francisco's ethnic multiculturalism does not end with these two groups, but the Chinese and Chicano cultures serve as exemplars of how the city has created space for ethnic diversity and expression.

While these distinct cultures that continue to flourish in San Francisco readily make their presence known, likely the most visible nonconformist cultural movement in the city is the artistic movement centered on murals and graffiti. The number of murals scattered about the city and the Bay Area, the largest concentration of them in the Mission, exceeded seven hundred by the 1980s, and public art in the form of murals and graffiti has continued to proliferate with the support of the Community Murals Movement and the influx of innovative new artists into the Bay Area.[21] The culture surrounding mural and graffiti art in San Francisco has been accepting and evolutionary, embracing modern, or more recently, postmodern, styles of many types. The messages of these art pieces is also diverse, from the celebrations of Chicano community in the Inner Mission district, to comic book inspired work by graffiti artist "Twist," or Barry McGee, and finally a new wave of politically-motivated billboard "corrections" that seek to make

[20] Juan Felipe Herrera, "Riffs on Mission District *Raza* Writers," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 227-8.

[21] Timothy W. Drescher, "Street Subversion: The Political Geography of Murals and Graffiti," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 231-2.

commentary on American consumer culture.[22] These murals in many ways show continuity with Beat performance poetry or the rock shows from the Hippie counterculture in bringing new, creative forms of artistic expression to the city at large that in many ways contradict or rebel against the expected standards of behavior and art from mainstream America. The fact that San Francisco has not only allowed graffiti and murals to remain on display, but also encouraged new artistic projects, shows the city's continued willingness to create space for innovative, countercultural forms of expression.

There is, potentially, another side to these observations. Since counterculture movements have become so thoroughly integrated into San Francisco's city culture, have they ceased being countercultural? Or, perhaps more likely, has San Francisco become a countercultural city, having developed an identity so far outside the mainstream United States? The answer is somewhere in between. Undoubtedly, San Francisco has developed an atmosphere that encourages and accepts counterculture movements like no other American city has; in this sense, if any city were to earn the title, San Francisco is the countercultural city. However, the idea of counterculture has evolved in such a way that it has lost some of its shock value. With the expansion of technology and the internet, expressing countercultural or rebellious ideals can take increasingly varied forms, and countercultures have come to use the internet and social networking to promote the growth of their communities, rather than rebelling against new technology.[23] While San Francisco undoubtedly continues to provide a welcoming environment for cultural dissonance, in the current technological climate of the

[22] Ibid., 239-41.
[23] Fred Turner, "Where the Counterculture Met the New Economy: The WELL and the Origins of Virtual Community," *Technology and Culture* Vol. 46, No. 3 (Jul., 2005), 488.

United States this physical space becomes less necessary for creating communities. In many ways the Beats and Hippies were indeed pioneers in the practice of creating countercultures, and can serve as a model for other young people hoping to create any type of community around alternative sets of values. The evolution that counterculture communities have undergone does not negate the influence of San Francisco and its mid-century countercultures; rather, it amplifies and globalizes that effect.

In 1955, Jack Kerouac wrote to Allen Ginsberg, "LET'S SHOUT OUR POEMS IN SAN FRANCISCO STREETS, PREDICT EARTHQUAKES."[24] With this exclamation, Kerouac shows himself to be prophetic. While it has been many decades since San Francisco had an earthquake that has caused major destruction, the life of the city has undergone a complete transformation since World War II. The "earthquake" that instigated this change was not caused by plate tectonics, but by a shift in cultural and artistic expression begun by Kerouac, Ginsberg and the Beats, expanded by the Hippies, and perpetuated by the countercultures that have come since. San Francisco has had a rebirth as a countercultural city and, for nonconformists, has become the closest facsimile of a utopia that the United States has to offer.

[24] McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*, 198.

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