

Welcome to Psychedelphia:
Identity and Community in the Haight-Ashbury District of San Francisco,
1965 – 1967

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A Thesis in the Department of History
Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (History) at Concordia University,
Montréal, Quebec, Canada

August 2006

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ISBN: 978-0-494-20670-6
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ISBN: 978-0-494-20670-6

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Abstract

**Welcome to Psychedelphia: Identity and Community
in the Haight-Ashbury District of San Francisco, 1965 – 1967**

Stephanie D. Jowett

From early 1965 until the autumn of 1967 the Haight-Ashbury community of San Francisco underwent a period of rapid change as it became an icon of the larger countercultural movement of the 1960s.

Early psychedelic “happenings” helped to create and consolidate a non-conformist identity for the district and its inhabitants, as the area was transformed into a liberated zone of countercultural carnival. Attracted by the vivid visual style and exotic nature of the new culture, the mass-media and commercial interests helped to construct a standardized and stereotypical image of “the hippie” that then drew tens of thousands of tourists, teenyboppers, and “plastic hippies” to the Haight. These newcomers came to sample the commodified lifestyle elements of the Haight-Ashbury experience, often mimicking patterns of consumption deeply internalized by American society as a whole.

This thesis examines the creation of community identity in the Haight-Ashbury district, and the subsequent transmission, standardization, and consumption of that identity.

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my family, whose support and encouragement are worth more than I could ever express in words.

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Introduction and Historiography

In January 1966 over 20,000 of San Francisco's rapidly expanding population of "freaks" and "heads" attended a three-day long "Trips Festival".¹ An ecstatic celebration of countercultural identity, the festival served as an initiation rite binding together the city's non-conformists into one kaleidoscopic community. During that same month a new commercial enterprise opened on San Francisco's Haight Street. Catering to the rapidly emerging non-conformist and bohemian flavour of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, the Psychedelic Shop would, for the twenty months of its existence, be at the centre of the experimental community that gave birth to what is now known as the 1960s counterculture movement. While the Trips Festival was a declaration of emancipation from dominant notions of the American identity, the Psych Shop, as a typically capitalist enterprise, represented more of an acceptance of such notions than their rejection. A community based upon alternative values, the Haight-Ashbury was a repudiation of mainstream America at the same time as it reproduced many of its deeply internalized conventions.

Although the Haight-Ashbury community had its origins before January 1966, and had in fact been a nascent Bohemia from as early as 1963, the twenty months between January 1966 and October 1967 represent a critical period in its history. These months saw the community undergo a process of rapid change from a close-knit, tribal, social experiment to a nationally publicized visual subculture. This transformation took place at

¹ Eugene Alonzo Smith III, "Within the Counterculture: The Creation, Transmission, and Commercialization of Cultural Alternatives During the 1960s." PhD Diss. Carnegie Mellon University, 2001, p. 116.

staggering and often overwhelming speed, as the community developed into a national archetype for a more generalized countercultural movement.

During the initial creation of the Haight-Ashbury community, residents were responsible for the active production of a non-conformist identity. This was achieved through the creation of, and participation in, alternative cultural forms and social structures.² However, with the intrusion of mass-media publicity and commodification the parameters of this identity shifted, resulting in a standardized image of “the hippie” that was passively consumed by later participants rather than actively created. These forces created alternative identities for the Haight-Ashbury district, often conflicting with the community’s own sense of self: media coverage resulted in an “othering” or stereotyping of the community that framed the “scene” in terms of danger and disease or played up certain elements of the community’s culture (usually sex, drugs, or rock music) as signifiers of its totality. At the same time, commercialization created whole industries based on counterculture chic, ultimately resulting in a standardization of the “scene.”

Newcomers flooded the Haight-Ashbury district during the “Summer of Love” in 1967, drawn by the spectacular nature of the community, media-hype and alternative forms of consumption. The majority of these outsiders arrived either as tourists seeking a voyeuristic experience of the “other”, or as aspirants looking to partake in the

² By cultural forms I mean artistic innovations such as those of graphic artists like Rick Griffin, Victor Moscoso, and Mouse & Kelley; or musical innovations such as those who pioneered the “acid-rock” sound (I am thinking specifically of the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe & the Fish, and Big Brother and the Holding Company). There were also cultural innovations such as the psychedelic ballroom, which differed from previous dancehalls in its use of liquid light shows, the sense of community and participation invoked between audience and performer, and the encouragement of wild displays of individuality in dance and costume. I am also referring to the embryonic “arena rock” form which had its origins in events such as the Love Pageant Rally and the Human Be-In, as well as street theatre forms such as those staged by the Diggers. By social structures I mean both alternative lifestyle forms such as the “tribe” or communal living arrangements, and the series of social networking services set up in and around the Haight-Ashbury area.

“authenticity” of the Haight-Ashbury identity through the consumption of symbolic commodities. These tourists, teenyboppers, and “plastic” or “weekend” hippies had a very limited understanding of the internal commitment required for active participation in the original incarnation of the non-conformist community.

The performance of community and identity in the Haight-Ashbury district was achieved through ritualistic events that were staged as street theatre or artistic performance and were intended to evoke community participation. Such “acting out” was not contrived as mere performance but was instead intrinsic to the countercultural philosophy that viewed life and society as comprised of a series of games or roles unconsciously acted out on a daily basis. The purpose of such performance was both to acknowledge the artificial nature of societal roles and to attempt to create alternatives to those roles – alternatives that would result in the creation of a society based on humanism rather than technocracy.³ However, while some events were staged as explicit commentaries on various aspects of the American identity, the community identity, or the transformative forces at work within the community, they were often unconsciously modelled on larger, intrinsic themes of American culture. As such, they provide vital clues into the philosophy of the counterculture, as well as its internalization of fundamentally “American” values such as individualism and consumption.

Many of the events that took place during 1966/67 had a deep resonance within the community, often spawning public dialogue on their wider meaning. The planning,

³ Theodore Roszak defines “technocracy” as a form of totalitarianism where “those who govern justify themselves by appeal to technical experts who, in turn, justify themselves by appeal to scientific forms of knowledge. And beyond the authority of science, there is no appeal.” Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995 (1969), pp. 8-9.

execution, and reaction to these events provide the historian with a multi-angled view of the dynamics at work within the community. This thesis will focus on such artistic performances and street events as cultural signposts: markers of identity, politics, and the internal dynamics of the community. Especially important in this respect are the early psychedelic “happenings” put on by the Family Dog (October to December 1965), as well as the Mime Troupe Benefits (December 1965) and the Trips Festival (January 1966). These events helped to create and consolidate the community’s sense of shared identity. Street theatre events such as the Love Pageant Rally (October 1966) or the Death of Money / Re-Birth of the Haight parade (December 1966) were conscious attempts to act out the alternative identities consolidated during earlier “happenings,” all of which culminated in the Human Be-In of January 1967. The Human Be-In served as the national “coming-out” of the Haight-Ashbury community and soon its culture was being standardized, commercialized, and exoticized through events such as the First Annual Love Circus (March 1967), the Monterey Pop Festival (June 1967), and the Grey Line Bus Tours (April 1967). Overwhelmed by media hype and tourist invasions, 1967’s Summer of Love was the beginning of the end for the Haight Ashbury community. October 1967 saw two official acknowledgements of this fact: the closing of the Psychedelic Shop, and the Death of Hippie parade.

Of course, it is misleading to speak of “the community,” as the new bohemia emerging in the Haight-Ashbury district was by no means monolithic.⁴ Several groups

⁴ The term “community” has been the cause of endless sociological debate. However, for the intents and purposes of this thesis, my use of the term is meant to signify an “intentional community” based upon a common and shared notion of countercultural or non-conformist identity. Although this identity was later transmitted beyond the borders of the Haight, I am limiting my use of the word to those non-conformists who resided in the Haight-Ashbury district. In this I am excluding “straight” residents of the Haight-

dominated the “scene,” if one can even refer to domination in a subculture that often shunned leadership as an ego-tripping power game. Among the most prominent of these groups were the Diggers, an autonomous anarchist collective of former Mime Troupe members. The Diggers were radically anti-materialist and as such their main rivals were the Haight Independent Proprietors (H.I.P.), a group of countercultural merchants who published an underground newspaper called *The Oracle* and ran the Psychedelic Shop. Also important to the scene were Ken Kesey’s Merry Pranksters, a colourful caravan of misfits interested in pushing the limits of personal experience. Kesey was interested in exposing and creating alternatives to the “games” played by mainstream society, and so the Pranksters essentially shared the Diggers’ philosophy of “life acting”. Other important members of the community include those figures prominent within the musical underground, most notably the entourage of the Grateful Dead and the promotional group the Family Dog. Although each of these groups considered themselves committed members of the “hip” community, they held different opinions about the meaning of their community as a whole, as well as the processes at work within that community. It is by examining the interplay of these groups that we can come to a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the community, its philosophy, and its notions of identity.

Luckily, each of these groups was vocal about its opinions and although the archival material left behind is often challenging,⁵ it is nonetheless rich in detail and revealing

Ashbury, who did not share the countercultural identity. In this sense, then, “community” here denotes those residents of the Haight-Ashbury district who shared a sense of countercultural identity. This group was largely made up of white, middle-class individuals who ranged in age from their early twenties to late thirties.

⁵ Such sources are usually written in an informal and colloquial countercultural shorthand where, for example, everyday words such as “bread” and “lid” translate as “money” or “a portion of marijuana”, respectively. The *San Francisco Oracle*, in particular, is often challenging in this respect, as well for its

about the groups' particular visions. The explicitly apolitical *San Francisco Oracle* produced several issues throughout 1966 and 1967. This publication documented the philosophy and culture of Haight-Ashbury with beautiful graphics, poems, and articles written by prominent members of the underground.⁶ In contrast to the apolitical nature of the *Oracle* were *The Digger Papers*, broadsides and leaflets critical of the Haight-Ashbury scene that were printed and distributed by the anarchist group. Also valuable in this respect were the Communications Company (Com/Co) broadsides, initially begun by Chester Anderson as an alternative to the *Oracle* and an outlet for the Diggers, but also publishing material associated with the H.I.P. merchants.⁷ Last, but not least, were the music and event posters produced by the musical groups and their associates, which provide both visual and aural representations of the countercultural experience. In addition to these sources are the many underground newspapers that covered the Haight-Ashbury scene with different degrees of commitment: the *Berkeley Barb* (the University of California at Berkeley's radical student newspaper); the *Haight-Ashbury Maverick* (an underground newspaper dedicated to covering the Haight-Ashbury scene); and other papers such as the *Berkeley Tribe* (which replaced the *Barb* during a labour dispute), the

unique visual style, where text is printed in colourful psychedelic "rivers" rather than "blocks," and letters are often distorted beyond recognition.

⁶ The first issue of the *Oracle* was titled *P.O. Frisco*, the P.O. representing a compromised abbreviation for Psychedelic Oracle. The issue was largely the production of the radical political faction of the editorial board, but reaction from the Haight-Ashbury community was "unenthusiastic." As such, the *Oracle's* later issues reflected the more spiritually-oriented nature of the Haight-Ashbury, and tended to shy away from the radical politics covered by the *Berkeley Barb* and *San Francisco Express-Times*. By characterizing the Haight-Ashbury community as "apolitical" then, I am referring specifically to their disinclination to buy into traditional power politics or dominant notions of "left and right." The community was more of an attempt to make the personal political, to get "outside of the system" – a system that they were attempting to change at a personal or conscious, rather than traditionally political, level. *P.O. Frisco*, Vol.1 No.1, Sept. 2 1966; Robert J. Glessing, *The Underground Press in America*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1970, p. 23; Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, p. 37.

⁷ Abe Peck estimates that Chester Anderson produced over 10,000 leaflets for Com/Co. Peck, p. 46.

San Francisco Good-Times, and its successor, the *Express-Times*, which covered the movement sporadically.⁸

These publications are excellent sources for describing at first hand what was happening within the countercultural community, although it is difficult to gauge the impact of their stories. For example, while the *Oracle* claimed to be the voice of the Haight, it was largely a project of people associated with the H.I.P. merchants and was criticized by such groups as the Diggers and those affiliated with Com/Co. Likewise, the Diggers, who claimed to be speaking for the *true* hip community, distributed leaflets of an intellectual sophistication that would not necessarily have been understood by the majority of the “hippies”⁹ in the Haight. However, the popularity of the underground media cannot be lightly brushed aside: at its peak the *Oracle* had a circulation of 117,000 and boasted worldwide distribution,¹⁰ making it one of the largest community underground papers ever published. Its revolutionary graphic style and printing methods “set the standards of graphic excellence for all underground papers to follow,” and were later coopted by such mainstream publications as *Vogue* and *Playboy*.¹¹ The *Oracle* soon became the prototype for other underground publications such as the *Boston Avatar* and the copy-cat *Los Angeles Oracle*.

⁸ These last two sources (the *Good-Times* and the *Express-Times*) covered the scene during 1968 and 1969, after the demise of the *Oracle* (whose last issue was published early in 1968) and therefore are not cited specifically in this thesis.

⁹ The term “hippie” is itself problematic, as it was largely a construction of the media and a key example of how mainstream forces came to dominate the identities associated with Haight-Ashbury. A more detailed discussion of the construction of a “hippie” identity will follow in subsequent chapters.

¹⁰ Peck, p. 51; Smith, pp. 105-6. Smith claims that at its peak the *Oracle* was being distributed as far away as Prague, Moscow, New Zealand, and South Vietnam, where soldiers would send back Vietnamese marijuana in return.

¹¹ Glessing, pp. 23-4.

The *Berkeley Barb* is also a useful source: a radical student newspaper with widespread distribution and readership,¹² it provided insightful commentary on the scene. Founded by Max Scherr in 1964, the paper reflected his bias towards “all the little movements that are divergent from the mainstream of the culture,”¹³ including the anti-war movement, civil rights, the sexual revolution, and the Haight-Ashbury community. The *Barb*’s radicalism was often knee-jerk and reflected a larger tendency within the underground press to essentially fix the facts to suit whatever editorial theory was popular that week.¹⁴ However, despite the *Barb*’s lack of objectivity in reporting the issues and events in the Haight-Ashbury community, there is little doubt that its opinions reflected the perspective of many members of the underground.

Underground sources such as the *Oracle* and the *Barb* are especially valuable in that they provide voices to members of the hip community who may not have felt comfortable expressing their views to the mainstream media.¹⁵ They provide an insider’s view into many of the events happening within the community, with detailed descriptions and analysis of street-level activities to which mainstream reporters did not often have access. As such the underground sources are an excellent counterpoint to mainstream media coverage of the scene, providing insightful clues about how the underground was interpreting the complicated relationship between their reality and the dominant society.

One of the most important of these mainstream media sources was the city’s daily newspaper, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which was published as the *Examiner* on

¹² By 1969 the *Barb*’s circulation had reached 85,000. Peck, p. 183.

¹³ Max Scherr, quoted in Peck, p. 30. Scherr’s original title for the paper was the *Berkeley Bias*.

¹⁴ Glessing, p. xiv.

¹⁵ What Glessing has described as a “demonstrated ability to gain access for dissenters to the marketplace of ideas.” Glessing, p. xv.

Sundays. Early coverage of the Haight scene was provided by the *Chronicle's* well-respected music critic Ralph J. Gleason, whose publicity gave the community a voice and lent it an air of legitimacy and relevance it might not have had otherwise. Gleason was an avid promoter of Haight-Ashbury who believed that the community was providing an important commentary on American culture and values. Although Gleason felt an affinity with the hip community, he nonetheless helped to perpetuate the exoticized stereotypes typical of his newspaper. He later became concerned with the processes of commodification and cooptation that were altering San Francisco's music scene, even though, ironically, these were trends to which he himself contributed. Apart from Gleason's coverage, the *Chronicle* routinely sensationalized the counterculture through spectacular (and often gendered) stories of teenaged runaways, wild drug parties, violence, lawlessness, and skyrocketing incidence of venereal disease.

While the *Chronicle's* coverage helped both to create and perpetuate a stereotypical view of "the hippies" to the "straight" residents of San Francisco, this process was replicated on a national scale by newsmagazines such as *Time*, *Life*, and *Newsweek*. *Time* and *Life* both dedicated special issues to the countercultural phenomenon,¹⁶ while *Newsweek* followed the Haight scene with interest throughout 1967.¹⁷ Even the more liberal-left media participated in the "othering" of the Haight-Ashbury phenomenon: the pseudo-radical *Ramparts* magazine published a much-protested special "hippie" issue,¹⁸

¹⁶ "The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture." *Time*, July 7, 1967, cover story, pp. 18-22; "Strange New Love Land of the Hippies." *Life*, March 31 1967, pp. 15-16.

¹⁷ "Dropouts With A Mission." *Newsweek*, Feb.6 1967 p. 92; "The Hippies Are Coming." *Newsweek*, June 12 1967, pp. 28-9; "Love Needs Care." *Newsweek*, July 17 1967, p. 98; "Trouble in Hippiland." *Newsweek*, Oct. 30 1967, pp. 84, 87-90.

¹⁸ Warren Hinckle, "A Social History of the Hippies." *Ramparts*, March 1967, pp. 5-26.

while the *New York Times Magazine* commissioned Hunter S. Thompson to investigate the “scene.”¹⁹

As the Haight-Ashbury district became associated with a spectacular subculture throughout 1966 and 1967, media coverage drew interested scholars to San Francisco with the promise of exotic rituals and cultural forms. Sociologists, anthropologists, and historians were drawn to the scene, resulting in some of the first attempts to describe it in academic, rather than popular, terms. Throughout the summer of 1967 scores of academics went “under cover” or were “guided” through the mysterious rites and rituals of hippiehood, resulting in the publication of several studies between 1968 and 1969. The most notable of these are Leonard Wolf’s *Voices From The Love Generation* (1968), Lewis Yablonsky’s *The Hippie Trip* (1968), and Theodore Roszak’s *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969). Also of note is historian Arnold J. Toynbee’s analysis of the hippie culture, published concurrently by the *London Observer* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* after Toynbee’s May 1967 tour of the Haight-Ashbury district.²⁰

While these more academic-style texts reflected genuine attempts to understand and explain the significance of the growing countercultural community, most continued to perpetuate many of the stereotypical or exoticized notions of countercultural identity that were being popularized by the mainstream media. In many ways the very presence of these observers in the district reinforced the notion that the hippie subculture was some kind of exotic anthropological spectacle worthy of scientific demystification. Regardless

¹⁹ Hunter S. Thompson, “The ‘Hashbury’ is the Capital of the Hippies.” *New York Times Magazine*, May 14, 1967.

²⁰ Leonard Wolf, *Voices From the Love Generation*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1968; Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip*, New York: Pegasus, 1968; Arnold J. Toynbee, “A New Challenge to Conformity,” “Toynbee Tours Hippie Land,” and “Hippie Revolt on War.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 16 (pp. 1, 14), May 17 (pp. 1, 13), May 18 (pp. 1, 18) 1967; Roszak.

of their affinity for their subjects²¹ and despite attempts to “infiltrate” the inner workings of the countercultural community, these social scientists and historians were always viewed as outsiders by those they wished to study, and therefore the information presented in their final studies was often flawed or speculative. This is particularly evident in Yablonsky’s work, which features many misguided attempts to boil “the hippie” down to one personality type, includes several misinterpretations of the countercultural philosophy, and deliberately undermines one of his interviewee’s’ fascinatingly critical analysis of the Haight-Ashbury scene.²²

Leonard Wolf’s *Voices From The Love Generation* is an exception, and offers a surprisingly accurate description of the significance of the Haight community, as well as interviews with several key members of the scene – many of whom are women. The inclusion of women in Wolf’s book was a rarity both to an historiography that often neglects female voices and to a community that was male dominated and often sexist. Indeed, very few prominent female figures, with the notable exceptions of musicians Janis Joplin and Grace Slick, are given much coverage in the history of the period. However, despite this valuable inclusion of women in his book, Wolf (like Yablonsky) is still obviously biased towards his subjects.²³ Like Yablonsky, Wolf also attempts to trace the psychological makeup of his subjects. This is done in a rather subtle way, but Wolf’s

²¹ Leonard Wolf was a professor of English Literature at San Francisco State University who participated in the community by establishing an “academic outreach project” called Happening House. Wolf offered an “affectionate” dedication of his book to “the entire Haight-Ashbury community.” Wolf, p. i.

²² Yablonsky, pp. 206-12, 295-6, 314-5. Yablonsky was a professor of sociology and criminology at California State University, Northridge. He specialized in juvenile delinquency.

²³ Another commonality between these texts is their approach to the subject of drug use, something that they are careful to neither condone nor condemn, despite usually ending by suggesting that there may be some religious or psychological value to drugs such as marijuana or LSD. Wolf argues that “[o]ne has to accept the possibility that the psychedelic experience is as ecstatic, as transcendent, as holy as it has been reported,” while Yablonsky’s text contains a chapter detailing his “remarkable fifteen-hour LSD experience.” Wolf, p. xxiv; Yablonsky, p. xiv.

constant inquiries about the childhood and early life of his subjects suggests that the mysteries of the countercultural mind can be easily unlocked with a little help from Dr. Freud.²⁴

A notable exception to the generalizations and Freudian psychoanalysis common in these sociological examinations of the counterculture can be found in Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture*, a classic text for any student interested in the cultural context and philosophical underpinnings of the countercultural movement. Roszak argues that the counterculture arose out of a deep-seated mistrust of the "technocratic" turn of society and declining emphasis on humanism, authenticity, and personal relationships. Roszak's is a passionate and articulate examination of the movement, which he identifies as a serious protest that raised deep philosophical issues, "delving into the very meaning of reality, sanity, and human purpose" from which "grew the most ambitious agenda for the reappraisal of cultural values that any society has ever produced."²⁵ However, despite his insightful explanations of the countercultural philosophy, Roszak's text is nonetheless flawed because of his failure to address the Haight-Ashbury scene. This omission is all the more curious given his geographical proximity to the district as a professor at Berkeley. This type of oversight is avoided in Arnold Toynbee's commentary on the countercultural phenomenon, based largely on his brief tour of the Haight-Ashbury district during the spring of 1967. The eminent British historian, then in his late seventies, offered interesting interpretations of activities such as panhandling for spare change or

²⁴ Again, see Wolf.

²⁵ Roszak, p. xxvi.

the Digger feeds in the park, and goes on at length about the spiritual underpinnings of the countercultural philosophy.²⁶

Following the decline of the counterculture in the late 1960s and its fragmentation into several different movements (the environmental movement, the feminist movement, Gay Pride, etc.),²⁷ studies of the 1960s presented generalizations rather than focusing upon the counterculture's origins. By the 1980s this simplification fostered a tendency to examine the counterculture alongside other, more political, trends of the 1960s, such as the Civil Rights, New Left, and Anti-War movements.²⁸ In such surveys of the Sixties the counterculture is usually relegated to one chapter, following what Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle have identified as a canonical narrative touching upon such elements as the discovery of LSD, links to the Beat movement, Kesey and his magic bus, Timothy Leary, the Beatles, the Summer of Love, and Woodstock, all wrapped up with the "ritually invoked...mutually-reinforcing tombstones" of Charles Manson and the Altamont concert.²⁹

²⁶ Arnold J. Toynbee, "A New Challenge to Conformity." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 16 1967, pp. 1, 14; "Toynbee Tours Hippieland." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 17 1967, pp. 1, 13; "Hippie Revolt On War." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 18 1967, pp. 1, 18.

²⁷ While the environmental movement was in many ways an outgrowth of the counterculture's "back to nature" philosophy, other movements such as feminism and gay rights are better understood as reactions against the continued exclusion of women, gays, and lesbians within a counterculture that was overwhelmingly male and often sexist.

²⁸ See, for example: Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984; Adolf Reed, Jr. (ed.), *Race, Politics, and Culture: Critical Essays on the Radicalism of the 1960s*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986; Howard P. Morgan, *The 60s Experience: Hard Lessons About Modern America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991; David Farber (ed.), *The Sixties: From Memory To History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994; David Burner, *Making Peace with the Sixties*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996; Maurice Isserman & Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (2nd Ed.) New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

²⁹ Peter Braunstein & Michael William Doyle (eds.), *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*. New York: Routledge, 2002. For examples of this "canonical narrative" see: Maurice Isserman & Michael Kazin; Morgan; and Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The Sixties & Its Aftershocks*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

The generalized surveys of the Sixties published during the 1980s and early 1990s were very much a product of their times, reflecting the “culture wars” still being waged within academic and intellectual circles in the United States. Most of the examinations of the Sixties published during this period were produced by self-identified “liberals”, many of whom sympathized with (or were former members of) the New Left and student movements of the Sixties. As such these texts are generally histories of “liberalism” in the Sixties, dedicated to demonstrating how the New Left was responsible for all that was best in the decade, and how the forces of liberalism were “splintered and tor[n]” by the excesses and radicalism of the counterculture.³⁰ Professing to defend the counterculture from conservative and Republican detractors, these authors nonetheless represented it as an unfortunate and naïve rebellion that was doomed to failure because of its apolitical nature and its emphasis on personal liberation rather than social justice.³¹

Of course, this approach also betrays an academic bias in favour of politics over culture,³² where culture has long been neglected as a valid area of historical inquiry. Yet the continued bias within academia towards political struggle rather than cultural manifestations of dissent has had the unfortunate effect of relegating the counterculture to the background, dismissing it as a small, silly, or inconsequential aspect of a wider social phenomenon. Often framed in terms of a juvenile, indulgent, and hedonistic revolt, the 1960s counterculture has had many detractors from both ends of the political spectrum.

³⁰ Burner, p. 5. See also: Matusow, p. xiv, 277; Morgan, 212.

³¹ This interpretation of the counterculture can perhaps be explained as a way to deflect conservative criticism of the New Left: if the counterculture could be painted as all that was negative about the 1960s (something the “right” believed anyways), the New Left could be portrayed as a victim of its excesses, and its authors excused from addressing the movement’s own internal weaknesses.

³² This is, in part, due to the volumes of primary sources left behind by student groups and other organizations of the New Left, which are rich historical sources to which access is easy. This is not so with the counterculture, whose primary sources are often difficult to interpret and which have not been so fastidiously preserved. Echols, p. 17.

Some, such as David Burner, deny that the counterculture was even a culture, claiming that it lacked a real history, produced no canonical texts, and had no leaders.³³ This rejection of the counterculture's status as a culture betrays academia's superficial knowledge of the movement. There is a deep history to the counterculture, going back beyond the Beats of the 1950s, but also to other non-conformists of American history such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and David Thoreau, who were deeply admired within countercultural circles. The movement also drew from the "critique of conformity" that had been circulating throughout liberal society during the late 1950s and which was given legitimacy during the political crises of the early 1960s.³⁴ Both Eugene Alonzo Smith and David Gross make strong arguments in favour of giving the movement cultural status. As Smith explains: "[the counterculture's] founders and members were highly active in creating public symbolic actions, organizing meaningful public ceremonies and ritual, and formulating symbolic means of identification by which adherents could recognize one another."³⁵ Gross takes a similar approach, defining culture as "a commonly held set of beliefs, values, and norms which bind a group together and give it a sense of identity."³⁶

³³ Burner, p. 128. Allan Bloom, that conservative crank, claimed that the sixties produced "not a single book of lasting importance". Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987, p. 322.

³⁴ See, for example: William H. Whyte, *Organization Man*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956; John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window*, New York: Ballentine, 1956; Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*, New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002 (1955); Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders*, New York: D. McKay Co., 1957. In terms of the political crises of the early 1960s, I am thinking in particular of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the Cuban missile crisis, the Civil Rights protests, Sputnik (launched in 1957), and John F. Kennedy's assassination – all of which contributed to a general sense of unease which led to a questioning of America's supposed superiority and morality in a Cold War world.

³⁵ Alonzo Smith, p. 8.

³⁶ David Gross, "Culture, Politics and "Lifestyle" in the 1960s" in Adolf Reed Jr. (ed.) *Race, Politics, and Culture: Critical Essays on the Radicalism of the 1960s*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986, p. 99.

The argument that the counterculture lacked canonical texts is more difficult to assess. Although the movement did produce such popular items as Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*,³⁷ there is no one particular text to which historians can point as *the* book of the counterculture. Indeed, reading material amongst the cultural nonconformists drew from a wide variety of texts. Religious canons like the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* were read alongside such American classics such as Thoreau's *Walden* or the poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. Freudians such as Fritz Perls and Norman O. Brown were studied, as were the works of Hermann Hesse, Georges Gurdjieff, Carlos Castaneda, Allan Watts, and Joseph Campbell.³⁸ Native American novels were quite popular,³⁹ as were fantasy and sci-fi novels such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*.⁴⁰ Ironically, the length of this list belies claim that "few hippies read much".⁴¹

The issue of whether the counterculture had leaders is a contentious one, especially in light of the fact that many non-conformists denied the authority of leadership altogether. Nonetheless, there were many "gurus" within the culture, including Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg, Alan Watts, Gary Snyder, the Beatles, the Grateful Dead, and Ken Kesey. The fact that most of these figures (the Beatles and Grateful Dead excepted) were significantly older than most adherents to the alternative culture also calls into question

³⁷ Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America: How the Youth Revolution is Trying to Make America Livable*. New York: Random House, 1970.

³⁸ Gross, pp. 97-118.

³⁹ Philip Deloria "Counterculture Indians and the New Age" in Braunstein & Doyle, pp. 159-188.

⁴⁰ Tolkien's work, in particular, was widely admired in the underground, a phenomenon that did not escape the attention of the mainstream media. Tolkien himself was mystified and annoyed by his ardent hippie admirers. Humphrey Carpenter, *JRR Tolkien: A Biography*. London: Harper Collins, 2002, pp. 306-313; William Hogan, "Fellowship of the Hobbitomanes." *San Francisco Examiner*, Dec. 18 1966, Sunday supplement p. 44, 51; "The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture."

⁴¹ Matusow, p. 277. A similar claim was made by David Gross, despite his inclusion of a list of preferred countercultural texts in his argument. Gross, pp. 108-9.

the usual characterization of the counterculture as a youth movement.⁴² Indeed, most of the early non-conformists were in their mid- to late-twenties, and it was only after the media saturation and commodification of the counterculture drew national attention to the scene that the movement became characterized by its high proportion of teenagers.⁴³

The fundamental misrepresentation of the demographic make-up of the counterculture has led to widespread denigration of the movement as “little more than an adolescent outburst,”⁴⁴ an historical aberration of “children of the favored classes turning political tantrums into amateur terrorism.”⁴⁵ This characterization of the Sixties’ cultural radicalism is common within conservative circles,⁴⁶ where the very word “counterculture” has taken on a pejorative meaning. Although they represent an extreme minority within academia, authors such as Alan Bloom, Peter Collier and David Horowitz have made ludicrous comparisons between Woodstock and the Nazis’ Nuremburg rallies, and have blamed the upheavals of the 1960s for the AIDS epidemic.⁴⁷

Although such attacks are uncommon, they reflect a widespread belief that the counterculture of the 1960s was little more than a naïve and indulgent party thrown by a group of spoiled white, middle-class adolescents.⁴⁸ This belief spans both ends of the

⁴² Braunstein & Doyle, p. 11.

⁴³ Howard P. Morgan has identified two waves of the counterculture, with the first being “an early group of pioneers who weathered the political shockwaves of the early and mid-sixties,” and the second being “a later teenage wave”. Morgan, p. 170. Likewise, Eugene Alonzo Smith has argued that the counterculture is best understood as comprised of three “generational” cohorts, the last of which were younger than the first. Alonzo Smith, pp. 2, 14.

⁴⁴ Theodore Roszak, “The Misunderstood Movement.” *New York Times*, Dec. 3 1994, p. A23. Roszak was responding to Newt Gingrich’s pejorative use of the term “counterculture”.

⁴⁵ Burner, p. 6. Burner used this phrase as an example of the Republican view of the counterculture.

⁴⁶ For example, Allan Bloom called the student radicals at Cornell “children.” Bloom, p. 315.

⁴⁷ Bloom, p. 314; Peter Collier & David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties*. New York: Summit Books, 1989, p. 16.

⁴⁸ While this does accurately present the demographic make-up of the predominantly white and middle-class countercultural movement, it is nonetheless ridiculous to assert that all non-conformists were the

political spectrum, and has been perpetuated by the continued characterization of the counterculture in terms of that clichéd triad of sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll.⁴⁹ While these elements are central to understanding the counterculture, they are largely stylistic and not necessarily *the* defining elements of countercultural identity. Indeed, the continued perpetuation of the Sixties in these stylistic or “lifestyle” terms tells us little about the wider processes that were at work within the movement, and only furthers the characterization of the culture as naïve, indulgent, and hedonistic.

One book that represents an historiographical exception to the rule is Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle’s *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s*.⁵⁰ A refreshing departure from the tired and clichéd scholastic analysis of the last thirty years, *Imagine Nation* reverses the approach of most books on the Sixties by focusing almost entirely on the counterculture itself, while relegating the New Left to one chapter.⁵¹ Braunstein and Doyle have not only identified the canonical narrative form of the previous historiography, but also problematize the term “counterculture” itself:

The term ‘counterculture’ falsely reifies what should never properly be construed as a social movement. It was an inherently unstable collection of attitudes, tendencies, postures, gestures, “lifestyles,” ideals, visions, hedonistic pleasures, moralisms, negations, and affirmations. These roles were played by people who defined themselves first by what they were not, and then, only after having cleared that essential ground of identity, began to conceive anew what they were. What they were was what they might

result of permissive child rearing. It is equally misleading to characterize the movement as primarily made up of adolescents and teenagers. See above.

⁴⁹ Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, in their analysis of the 1960s, argued that sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll was a “triad that became a clichéd marker for the entire popular culture of the young” and yet go on to examine just those aspects of the decade. Isserman & Kazin, p. 155.

⁵⁰ Braunstein & Doyle, 2002.

⁵¹ As they argue: “In any number of tomes published since the mid-1980s, the counterculture is accorded the requisite chapter wherein cultural revolt is extracted from (and then reinserted within) the rest of 1960s history.” Braunstein & Doyle, p. 7

become – more a process than a product, and thus more a direction or a motion than a movement.⁵²

The authors also provide intelligent challenges to the notion of the counterculture as a youth movement and its equation with “hippies” – an identity they correctly identify as having been created and perpetuated by the mainstream media.⁵³

Considering that the countercultural movement has been given short-shrift in most scholastic analyses of the Sixties, it comes as no surprise that analysis of the Haight-Ashbury community, that iconic and archetypal “epicenter of the hippie movement,”⁵⁴ should appear as no more than a historical footnote in most studies of the decade. Until very recently, students interested in the alternative community that developed in San Francisco had to be satisfied with little more than a few paragraphs in such tomes as Matusow’s *The Unravelling of America*, or Howard P. Morgan’s *The 60s Experience*.⁵⁵ Even more recent works, such as Isserman & Kazin’s *America Divided*, continue to perpetuate the media construction of the Haight-Ashbury as little more than “an instant village with no moral center, where drugged-out vapidness passed for self-knowledge.”⁵⁶

This neglect of the Haight-Ashbury in surveys of the 1960s is all the more glaring when one considers that many of the elements of the countercultural lifestyle that later permeated American society originated with that community.⁵⁷ For example, the guerrilla

⁵² Braunstein & Doyle, p. 10.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p, 11.

⁵⁴ “The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture.”

⁵⁵ Matusow, pp. 275-302; Morgan, pp. 177-183.

⁵⁶ Isserman & Kazin, p. 163. With their assertion that the Haight-Ashbury was “an instant village,” the authors again perpetuate the mistaken notion that the scene had no history.

⁵⁷ Of course, there is also the fact that the Haight-Ashbury inspired the creation of similar bohemian enclaves all around the country, most notably New York’s East Village, Dupont circle in Washington, as well as places like Boston, Philadelphia, and Miami which had small enclaves as well. Also of great import was the London, UK, scene.

theatre tactics of the Diggers were appropriated by Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies.⁵⁸ FM “freeform” radio was inspired by San Francisco’s KMPX and was later appropriated by the mainstream broadcasting industry (most famously with ABC’s LOVE network).⁵⁹ The psychedelic dance-hall scene created by the Family Dog and perfected in the Fillmore and Avalon ballrooms would spawn similar venues across America, many of whose stylistic elements (such as the light show) later became staples of arena rock.⁶⁰ Similarly, outdoor rock festivals began with free concerts in Golden Gate Park and the Panhandle, and would later reach their apogee with Monterey and Woodstock.⁶¹ Haightians such as Stanley Mouse, Alton Kelly, Rick Griffin, and Victor Moscoso pioneered the psychedelic poster art and lettering styles that were appropriated by Madison Avenue.⁶² Tie-dyeing and other countercultural fashions such as beads, headbands, and loud prints originated in the Haight, only to be appropriated by the fashion industry and “lifestyle” marketers such as Peter Max.⁶³ And, of course, psychedelic rock itself, pioneered by the Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and Big

⁵⁸ Doyle, pp. 86-89; Burner, pp. 130-1.

⁵⁹ Michael C. Keith, *Voices in the Purple Haze: Underground Radio and the Sixties*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1997; Susan Krieger, *Hip Capitalism*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979; Steve Chapelle and Reebee Garofalo, *Rock and Roll is Here to Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry*. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1977, pp. 109-120.

⁶⁰ Throughout 1967 psychedelic ballrooms sprung up across the United States, drawing upon the success and cultural cachet of the dancehall scene in San Francisco: Boston featured the Tea Party and the Psychedelic Supermarket, Philadelphia boasted the Electric Factory, while New York had the Electric Circus (and later, Bill Graham’s Fillmore East), as well as the Café Au Go-Go and the Cheetah. Chicagoans had the option of either the Kinetic Playground or the Aragon Ballroom. Denver featured an offshoot of the Avalon, the Denver Dog. Seattle had the Eagles Auditorium and Portland the Crystal Ballroom. Los Angeles had a number of similar venues, the most prominent of which was the Kaleidoscope. Alonzo Smith, p. 275; Chapelle & Garofalo, pp. 140-141.

⁶¹ Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin’ Out: Popular Music in the U.S.A.*, 2nd ed. Boston: Prentice Hall, 2002, pp. 185-6, 193-4.

⁶² See, for example, Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. For examples of these artists’ work, see Amélie Gastaut & Jean-Pierre Criqui, *Off the Wall: Psychedelic Rock Posters From San Francisco*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2005.

⁶³ Again, see Frank, pp. 134, 166, 218.

Brother and the Holding Company, was hyped by the recording industry as a strategy to increase sales and return to profitability.⁶⁴

Historians' tendency to trivialize the importance of the Haight-Ashbury community is not only isolated to their neglect of the scene's cultural forms: in their characterization of the Haight as a village "with no moral center," historians have almost overwhelmingly ignored the broad social service network set up by community members during 1966 and 1967. These services included the Switchboard, which provided people with contact information on where to locate food, lodging, or legal advice, and also helped track down individuals believed to be living in the area.⁶⁵ A Free Medical Clinic, run by Dr. David Smith, provided medical assistance to the community, and was one of the longest running services in the district.⁶⁶ To aid the many inexperienced LSD users in the area there was the LSD Rescue Service, which helped talk people down from "bad trips."⁶⁷ The Hip Job Co-Op found employment for its "hip" patrons, usually with the U.S. Postal Service or local craftspeople.⁶⁸ The Haight-Ashbury Legal Organization (HALO) helped people find free legal representation in the case of narcotics charges, loitering, resisting arrest, juvenile delinquency, harbouring runaways, or other such common criminal charges.⁶⁹ The Diggers provided free services as well, in the form of their daily free meals in the

⁶⁴ Chapelle & Garofalo, pp. 73-77, 93, Clive Davis and James Wilwerth, *Clive: Inside the Record Business*. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1974, pp. 2-113.

⁶⁵ George Gilbert, "Hot Line Between Hip and Straight." *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 10 1967 p.1, 11; William George Thiemann, "Haight-Ashbury: Birth of the Counterculture of the 1960s." PhD. Diss. Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, 1998, p. 139.

⁶⁶ Alonzo Smith, p. 99; David E. Smith & John Luce, *Love Needs Care: A History of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic and its Pioneer Role In Treating Drug Abuse Problems*. Boston: Little Brown, 1971.

⁶⁷ Donovan Bess, "LSD Rescue – Sanctuary From Terror." *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 17 1967, pp.1, 4.

⁶⁸ "Love Community's Plea to Straights." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 27 1967, p. 2; Thiemann, p. 139; Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History*. New York: Random House, Rolling Stone Press, 1984, p. 96.

⁶⁹ Alonzo Smith, p. 244; Perry, p. 188; Dennis McNally, *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead*. New York: Broadway Books, 2002, pp. 193-4.

Panhandle⁷⁰ and the Digger's Free Store.⁷¹ Huckleberry's Home for Runaways provided temporary lodging for visitors or juvenile runaways, as well as assistance with finding a more permanent residence.⁷² Dr. Leonard Wolf founded Happening House, an "academic outreach project."⁷³ There were also such projects as the aborted bus service and Free Hotel, both of which were Digger initiatives.⁷⁴ All of these services were run by unpaid volunteers (excepting Dr. David Smith of the Free Clinic), and were free of charge.

As this list suggests, many of the services provided to the Haight-Ashbury community were Digger projects, and as such it is not surprising that much of the attention garnered by Haight-Ashbury focuses on the anarchist collective as "all that was best" of the counterculture.⁷⁵ Although analysis of the Diggers is usually flawed (often identifying the group as a sort of "hip" Salvation Army), their guerrilla theatre has been deemed interesting enough to merit mention in even the most flawed of the countercultural historiography.⁷⁶ Two notable exceptions are (again) *Imagine Nation*, which contains an insightful essay on the Diggers' use of guerrilla theatre tactics, and Dominick Cavallo's *A Fiction of the Past*, which uses the Diggers to explain the history of the Haight-Ashbury community.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ David Swanston, "The Diggers' Mystique – A Hippie Way of Giving." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 23 1967, p. 6; Ralph J. Gleason, "A Free Frame of Reference." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 23 1967, p. 37; "A Love Feast in the Panhandle." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 3 1967, p. 3; "A Feed-In at City Hall." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 5 1967, p. 3.

⁷¹ Ralph J. Gleason, "A Free Frame of Reference.," Perry, p. 105.

⁷² "No Hackles Raised At Huckleberry." *Berkeley Barb*, Oct. 13 1967, p. 4.

⁷³ Perry, p. 151.

⁷⁴ David Swanston, "The Diggers' Mystique – A Hippie Way of Giving.," Emmett Grogan, *Ringolevio: A Life Played For Keeps*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1973, p. 439.

⁷⁵ Burner, p. 130.

⁷⁶ See, for example: Burner, pp. 130-1; Matusow, p. 300; Morgan, p. 177; Echols, pp. 21-23.

⁷⁷ Michael William Doyle, "Staging the Revolution: Guerrilla Theatre as a Countercultural Practice, 1965-1968" in Braunstein & Doyle, pp. 71-97; Dominick Cavallo, " 'It's Free Because It's Yours': The Diggers and the San Francisco Scene, 1964-1968" in *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History*. New York: Palgrave, 2001; pp. 97-144.

These two books are among the few academic works to provide any kind of detailed and balanced insight into the Haight-Ashbury community. However, due to the popular nature of the counterculture itself,⁷⁸ there has been a significant amount of attention to the subject in the popular press. Much of this attention has focused on the growth and development of the scene's unique musical styles, most notably folk-rock and acid-rock (or psychedelic-rock).⁷⁹ These studies usually focus on specific bands, such as the Grateful Dead or the Jefferson Airplane⁸⁰; individuals, such as promoter Bill Graham⁸¹; or on the phenomenon of freeform radio.⁸² The obvious limitation of such books (besides their lack of scholarly or intellectual analysis) is that they present only a select element of the scene, often offering no explanation of the cultural and experiential politics of the community, and perpetuating the view that the only thing of value to come out of the countercultural movement was its music. Recently there has been an increase in the academic work dealing with the musical innovations of the Haight-Ashbury scene, mostly written by graduate students.⁸³

⁷⁸ By this I mean it was a mass movement, largely disseminated through the mass media and culture industries, and thus appealing to a widespread audience. One only has to think of the box-office and retail sales of *Forrest Gump* (1994) and its companion soundtrack to understand the continuing appeal of 1960s culture to popular audiences.

⁷⁹ See, for example: Gene Sculatti & David Seay, *San Francisco Nights: The Psychedelic Music Trip, 1965-1968*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.

⁸⁰ See, for example: Dennis McNally; Jeff Tamarkin, *Got A Revolution! The Turbulent Flight of the Jefferson Airplane*, New York: Atria Books, 2003.

⁸¹ See, for example: John Glatt, *Rage & Roll: Bill Graham and the Selling of Rock*. New York: Birch Lane, 1993; Bill Graham with Robert Greenfield, *Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock and Out*, New York: Doubleday, 1992.

⁸² The "underground" radio format (also known as "freeform" radio) was another of the Haight-Ashbury community's innovations, beginning with Larry Miller's midnight slot on the local FM station KMPX, where Miller would play classical and jazz cuts intermixed with Ravi Shankar ragas, soul, and psychedelic rock. After the station's takeover by "Big Daddy" Tom Donahue, KMPX featuring all "underground" programming, and its success spawned a revolution in the radio broadcasting industry. See, for example: Krieger; Keith.

⁸³ The most common foci of such works are either the stylistic innovations of psychedelic music, or the growth of the underground, freeform radio format. See, for example: Craig Morrison, *Psychedelic Music in San Francisco: Style, Context, and Evolution*. PhD Diss. Concordia University, 2000; Keith.

Other works dealing with Haight-Ashbury are few and far between. Those that have surfaced are mostly written by participants or sympathizers and offer very little in the way of scholarly analysis. These works are often produced as curios to satisfy the demands of a cult audience, such as Hank Harrison's "underground classic" *The Dead Vol.1: A Social History of the Haight-Ashbury Experience*⁸⁴; or are the autobiographical reminiscences of participants such as Emmett Grogan's *Ringolevio: A Life Played For Keeps*.⁸⁵ The most notable of these "insider histories" is Charles Perry's *The Haight-Ashbury: A History*, which provides detailed accounts of community events during 1966 and 1967. This book provides valuable insights into the workings of day-to-day life in the community, as well as events such as the Death of Money / Re-Birth of the Haight parade. Despite its informal style and lack of scholarly analysis, Perry's work remains the only detailed history of the Haight-Ashbury scene yet published.⁸⁶

As I have demonstrated, it has only been very recently that academic attention has been given to Haight-Ashbury. Yet, despite the recent re-discovery of that archetypal countercultural community, much of the literature still perpetuates a narrowly defined vision, focusing on specific aspects of the scene rather than its totality. Here I am thinking specifically of *Imagine Nation* (2004) and *A Fiction of the Past* (2001), whose chapters on the Haight-Ashbury deal almost exclusively with the Diggers. A notable exception is Alice Echol's *Shaky Ground* (2002), which contains a chapter detailing the

⁸⁴ Harrison was an active member of the Haight-Ashbury community, first as a student at San Francisco State University, then as the organizer of the LSD Rescue Service which fielded calls from panicked LSD users and attempted to talk them out of their "bad trips". Hank Harrison, *The Dead Vol.1: A Social History of the Haight-Ashbury Experience*, San Francisco: Archives Press, 1990 (1972).

⁸⁵ Grogan was one of the more prominent figures within the Diggers. While this often volatile autobiography offers an unique insight into the philosophy and life of the Diggers, some of the memories recalled by Grogan can be called into question, given both his frequently stoned or drunk condition, and his penchant for violence and anger. It is also written in the rather disconcerting style of the third person.

⁸⁶ Perry.

rise and fall of the scene. However, despite Echol's attempts at "revisionist" history, her narrative still conforms to the "canon" identified by Braunstein and Doyle.

The most recent academic works to examine Haight-Ashbury without focusing specifically on music or the Diggers are the work of graduate students. For example, George William Thiemann's dissertation, "Haight-Ashbury: Birth of the Counterculture of the 1960s," was one of the first attempts to examine the social and cultural phenomenon of the Haight-Ashbury community in its totality. This thesis is notable especially for its lengthy introduction to the general historiography of the scene and its acknowledgement of the Haight as the birthplace of the counterculture. However, Thiemann's thesis is marred by awkward phrasing and many errors, such as his discussion of the Family Dog, which he mistakenly cites as a nightclub when it was, in fact, the name of a promotional group that ran the Avalon ballroom. This mistake is made all the more glaring when one considers that even a cursory glance at sources such as Gleason's columns for the *San Francisco Chronicle* would have made the distinction clear.⁸⁷

The best scholarly examination to date is Eugene Alonzo Smith III's PhD dissertation (Carnegie Mellon University, 2001)⁸⁸, which is especially valuable for its introduction of a cohort model to explain the rapid changes in the Haight scene and the counterculture's dissemination throughout the mainstream.⁸⁹ However, one has to be careful with this

⁸⁷ Thiemann.

⁸⁸ Alonzo Smith.

⁸⁹ Briefly, Smith's cohort model is as follows: the counterculture consisted of three generational cohorts, each fairly close in age yet with very different experiences of the scene depending on exactly when they came of age and joined the counterculture. The first cohort was made up of those non-conformists of the Haight-Ashbury who were responsible for the creation of the initial scene. The second cohort consisted of those who were drawn to the district through media publicity. This cohort, while not participating in the creation of the countercultural identity, nonetheless had some kind of direct experience of the scene. The

model (as with any model), because it makes neat categorizations of an often messy or blurred reality.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, Smith's dissertation makes an excellent attempt to demonstrate that the counterculture was by no means static or monolithic, an assertion I will develop further in subsequent chapters.

The lack of critical scholarly attention to the Haight community is largely a result of the stereotyped and discriminatory view of "hippies" held by many academics. As Alice Echols explained, "Bluntly put, hippies aren't hip. In contrast to the Beats, who only acquire more cool and more relevance, hippies...seem sillier and more anachronistic with each passing year."⁹¹ As such, academics tend to either shy away from the topic entirely (perhaps from fear of being branded a kook or having their work deemed inconsequential), or else demonize the community as indulgent or amoral. There is a real cultural bias against hippies that assumes that the only people interested in the cultural experiments of the Haight-Ashbury district are ex-hippies or acid-heads – in effect, a cultural minority at the lunatic fringes of society.

Academic neglect of the Haight-Ashbury phenomenon has relegated that community to the sidelines of historical inquiry. What the historiography has failed to recognize is that the development of the hip community in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco reveals deeper patterns of cultural import, such as processes of commodification, cooptation, and consumption; the role of ritual and *communitas* in

third, and last, cohort was younger than the previous two, and characterized by its large proportion of teenagers. This cohort's only experience of the Haight-Ashbury scene was through media representations or the personal narratives of older friends or siblings. Alonzo Smith, pp. 14-15.

⁹⁰ For example: Smith's categorization of the second cohort as a group who had direct experience with the Haight scene but was not present at its creation. This generalization is problematic, as the scene itself was not static, and those experiencing it during the spring of 1967 would have had a qualitatively different experience than someone experiencing it during the late summer or fall of 1967. This is a very important distinction, and one that Smith fails to make.

⁹¹ Echols, p. 18.

modern-day society; the creation and transmission of identity through symbol systems and standardization; issues of style and authenticity; and processes of “othering”, exoticization, and spectacle - deep philosophical and theoretical issues with which hippies themselves were grappling. It is these processes and issues that I hope to address in the following chapters, where I will outline how the Haight-Ashbury’s unique sense of community identity was created, co-opted, commodified, and consumed through the intervention of mainstream media forces, visiting tourists, and business interests.

Chapter One will outline the creation and construction of the Haight-Ashbury’s unique sense of countercultural identity, through an analysis of early ritualistic “happenings” and the functions of spectacle and carnival. Chapter Two will examine how the spectacular nature of the new community attracted media attention, which then created an artificial notion of “hippie” identity based upon standardized and stereotypical elements of the Haight-Ashbury scene. Chapter Three contains a detailed examination of the ways in which the Haight-Ashbury community became commodified, focusing on how the counterculture perpetuated mainstream patterns of consumption. I will conclude with a discussion of authenticity and identity appropriation, and how the latter led to the death of the Haight-Ashbury community.

Chapter 1: The Kaleidoscopic Carnival

Creation and Construction of a Community Identity

“It really didn’t happen overnight. There were so many of these little indications showing up. You’d drive around the Haight and gradually you saw more and more of these people.”

- George Hunter, member of The Charlatans rock group.¹

The seeds of the Sixties were sown across America, but the 1960s counterculture was born in San Francisco. Although much of the political impetus for the movement came from Berkeley, its cultural heart was undoubtedly located in Haight-Ashbury, a small district of some eleven blocks just below the Panhandle extension of Golden Gate Park.² It was here that several groups of artists, musicians, poets, philosophers and entrepreneurs came together to create a working social and cultural alternative to the dominant discourses of the Cold War, an ideal utopian community that would become an icon of the Sixties.

It was not entirely by accident that San Francisco became the central location for the social and cultural experiments of the Sixties, as the city had a long history of diversity and tolerance for alternative lifestyles. In 1849 the Gold Rush turned the small Spanish mission-town into an “instant city,” as tens of thousands of foreigners, speculators, vagrants, roustabouts, and others flocked to the Pacific coast in search of fame and fortune.³ It became known for its tolerance of eccentric figures such as Joshua Norton, an English Jew who declared himself Norton I, Emperor of North America and Protector of

¹ George Hunter, quoted in Gene Sculatti & David Seay, *San Francisco Nights: The Psychedelic Music Trip, 1965-1968*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985, p. 48.

² See the Appendices for maps of San Francisco and the Haight-Ashbury district.

³ John Bernard McGloin, *San Francisco: The Story of a City*. San Rafael, California: Presidio Press, 1978, p. 32.

Mexico after losing a fortune in rice speculation. Norton was the city's first true bohemian: he roamed the streets dressed in a bedraggled uniform complete with epaulets and a cocked hat issuing his own currency and followed by his constant canine companions, Bummer and Lazarus.⁴

San Francisco's tolerance of non-conformity was cemented in the late nineteenth century with the foundation of the Bohemian Club, whose membership was restricted to artists and writers such as Samuel Clemens, Ambrose Pierce, George Sterling, and Jack London. Many of these figures frequented Montgomery Block, "the most notable bohemian haven in the city."⁵ By the mid-1890s self-described bohemians were congregating in the Latin Quarter of North Beach, and although they were steadily replaced by the more well-to-do during the interwar period, the late 1940s witnessed a "white flight" to the suburbs, opening the area to Beatniks who created a small community based around poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights bookshop.⁶ Although North Beach experienced commercial development and economic exploitation of its "scene" in the later 1950s,⁷ it remains a bohemian enclave to this day.

Given San Francisco's bohemian history, especially the later years of the Beat movement, it is not surprising that the counterculture surfaced there. What is curious is that it did so in the Haight Ashbury district instead of North Beach, the city's more

⁴ McGloin, pp.84-5.

⁵ Brian J. Godfrey, *Neighborhoods in Transition: The Making of San Francisco's Ethnic and Non-conformist Communities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p. 87. The neighbourhood was also welcoming to gays and lesbians, although little remains today of the early drag and queer literary scene.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 86-90.

⁷ "The Gossiping Guru." *San Francisco Oracle* Vol.1 No.7 (March 1967); pp. 24, 39; Allen J. Matusow, *The Unravelling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984, p. 287; Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The Sixties & Its Aftershocks*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 19.

traditional countercultural enclave. In 1866, the area now known as Haight-Ashbury was originally planned as part of Golden Gate Park, but a number of squatters there could not be dislodged. Instead, a long, thin stretch of green-space known as the Panhandle was extended eastward from the park through the district.⁸ The area was developed in the late nineteenth century as a building boom fuelled by a silver rush in Nevada increased demand for upper-to-middle-class homes. Many of the area's distinctive Victorians and Queen Anne row houses date from this period.⁹

Growth of the district continued after the earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed many of San Francisco's eastern neighbourhoods, leading to the erection of new houses and the subdivision of many of the larger structures into duplexes and multi-family homes. After the First World War and throughout the Depression, however, the area began to suffer a gradual but steady decline. Rapid population growth during the Second World War only exacerbated the situation, as increased pressure for housing dictated further subdivision, lower rents, and more temporary tenantry. The post-war period saw a quiet but steady flight to the suburbs as property values continued to deteriorate, commercial vacancies increased, and the district developed a distinctly working-class flavour.¹⁰ Despite the shifting demographics of the area, the 1950s witnessed the development of a sense of community as the newly formed Haight Ashbury Neighbourhood Council (HANC) successfully prevented a State Division of Highways plan to build a freeway through the Panhandle. By this time, because of the area's commercial decline and affordable

⁸ Godfrey, p. 179.

⁹ McGloin, p. 90.

¹⁰ Godfrey, pp. 94-183.

housing, a steady influx of African Americans, gays, lesbians, and students from nearby San Francisco State University began to call the district home.¹¹

Among these newcomers were small groups of non-conformists who were drawn to the area because of its cheap rents and tolerant population. These groups were made up of artists, musicians, and poets, many of whom had direct connections with the Beat figures who frequented the North Beach area.¹² However, these disparate groups of non-conformists were still divided and isolated, and until the early months of 1966 San Francisco's counterculture lacked a unified sense of identity or solidarity.

In the months preceding January 1966, the non-conformist community that was developing in the Haight-Ashbury district underwent a period of consolidation and identity-building that revolved largely around a series of "happenings" – events featuring a variety of artistic performances that were organized in a manner designed to elicit audience participation and self-expression. These events were intended to bring together the various individuals in the city who were seeking newer forms of expression and experience that were alternatives to the social norms with which they had been raised. Although many of these individuals shared common values and philosophies that were largely characterized by their disaffiliation and dissatisfaction with the dominant culture of Cold War American society, they had rarely been given opportunities to celebrate or affirm this oppositional position. Indeed, few considered themselves part of a larger

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-187.

¹² Many of the Beat figures rubbed shoulders with the new non-conformists in the Haight: Allen Ginsberg attended parties at the Charlatans' communal Victorian, while the Grateful Dead's Bob Weir shared an apartment with Neal Cassady. Ken Kesey was also a prominent figure on the scene, as were several of Ginsberg's friends such as Gary Snyder and Alan Watts. Sculatti & Seay, p. 27; Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History*. New York: Wenner Books, 2005; Dominick Cavallo, *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History*. New York: Palgrave, 2001; Dennis McNally, *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead*. New York: Broadway Books, 2002.

group or community and contact between small, non-conformist groups remained incidental or tangential. In 1965 the idea of bringing all the disparate groups together as a community was still but a dream-seed sleeping in the subconscious mind.

It was the coming-together of these non-conformists throughout 1965 and 1966 that shaped the countercultural community of the Haight-Ashbury, forging a common identity based on the shared experiences of several ritualistic events. Psychedelic “happenings” such as the Family Dog dances, the Mime Troupe Benefits, and the Acid Tests culminated in the Trips Festival, an initiation rite that created a sense of shared identity based on authenticity and individuality. Parades and rallies such as the Re-Birth of the Haight, the Love Pageant Rally and the Human Be-In helped to consolidate this tribal identity. These events served complex functions that revolved around notions of religion, *communitas*, spectacle, and carnival, and were central to the creation of the Haight-Ashbury community.

Before the early months of 1966 many of the disparate groups that later made up the bulk of that community were attempting to create locations where similarly minded people could gather and partake in what was essentially an embryonic form of the countercultural lifestyle. These “scenes” were relatively small and isolated countercultural islands rather than focal points for a larger countercultural community. One of the first centres of openly countercultural activity was the Red Dog Saloon in Virginia City, Nevada. Conceived by a trio of peyote-eating bohemians living on a nearby plot of land known as the Zen Mine, the Red Dog was “something like a dress

rehearsal for what would later become the San Francisco music scene.”¹³ The Red Dog Saloon featured many examples of countercultural activity, often couched in a Wild West theme that matched the Saloon’s turn-of-the-century décor. Psychedelic drugs were consumed openly, loud rock music was the key to the Saloon’s entertainment, and customers often arrived dressed in eccentric Edwardian and Victorian dress. They were also encouraged to carry firearms, and it was not unusual for patrons to arrive with pistols, rifles, or shotguns.

Despite its overtly countercultural flavour, the Red Dog Saloon’s evocation of the Wild West and the Frontier was essentially an invitation for its clientele to express notions of rugged individualism that were traditionally dominant themes in American history,¹⁴ but which had been somewhat repressed by the perceived conformity and “other directedness”¹⁵ of Cold War society. In recreating a Frontier or Wild West environment the owners of the Red Dog Saloon were in fact embracing American culture at the same time that they sought to reject it. This dialectic would manifest itself in myriad ways throughout the history of the counterculture.

¹³ Amélie Gastaut & Jean-Pierre Criqui, *Off the Wall: Psychedelic Rock Posters From San Francisco*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2005, p. 16. The house band, a group known as The Charlatans, was one of the first rock groups on the San Francisco scene. The Charlatans were just what their name suggested: although they postured as a band and had taken hundreds of publicity stills, they had never even rehearsed together before their opening show. They lived communally in an old Victorian house located on Pine Street, a seedy district nearby to Haight-Ashbury. Perry, p. 9.

¹⁴ These themes were also something with which the younger generation would have been intimately familiar, through the popular cowboy-themed television shows of their youth or President Kennedy’s campaign rhetoric.

¹⁵ This term was coined by David Riesman in his sociological study *The Lonely Crowd*. The term referred to Cold War American society’s emphasis on gaining approval through following set social conventions such as marrying, buying a house, having children, and working for a large corporation. Other-directed people could only define themselves in comparison to others, and what those others earned, owned, consumed, and believed. Because of this they were inherently unable to know themselves. David Riesman with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denny. *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961.

Despite the Saloon's references to classic American culture, it was precisely this rugged individualism that led to its forced closing after only a few months of business. The nightly psychedelically-fuelled weirdness, as well as the patrons' penchant for firearms, provoked increasing hostility from the residents of Virginia City, and eventually forced the Red Dog's owner to padlock the Saloon's doors.¹⁶ However, despite its brief lifespan, the Red Dog's fame had spread within non-conformist circles and was visited by people from as far away as Los Angeles, Portland, and Seattle. The Saloon was also paid a visit by the Merry Pranksters, a colourful group of individuals who were living with author Ken Kesey at his rural home in LaHonda, California.

Similar strangeness to that of the Red Dog was taking place at Kesey's residence, where embryonic "Acid Tests" were being staged as part of the Merry Pranksters' desire to push the limits of personal experience and self-expression with the help of LSD and amphetamines.¹⁷ Kesey and his Pranksters had recently returned from a voyage east in their Day-Glo school bus, a voyage that has been interpreted as a reversal of another classic American trope: the journey Westward towards the Frontier. Indeed, the Merry Pranksters' were taking a voyage towards a new frontier – that of the limits of consciousness. For Kesey and his Pranksters, the idea of the "trip" was a metaphor linking both the "historic American inclination to take to the road in search of another

¹⁶ Perry, pp. 17-18.

¹⁷ The purpose of these "tests" was to examine the limits of consciousness, culminating in what Tom Wolfe described alternately as "The Unspoken Thing", "Cosmo!" or "*the experience*" – essentially a spiritual awareness of the ego's transparency, of becoming one with a vast cosmic, psychic force, of pushing on further and further into NOW. Of course, the experience itself could not be understood by those who had not had it, nor could it be put satisfactorily into words: "To put it into so many words, to define it, was to limit it. If it's *this*, then it can't be *that*... Yet there it was!" Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, New York: Bantam Books, 1968, pp. 111-116.

place,” and the journey through “inner-space” fuelled by LSD.¹⁸ The Pranksters’ use of Day-Glo paints (which they applied to almost everything: their clothes, the bus, even trees) was another metaphor for American culture, “the technological superheroics of the jet, TV, atomic subs, ultrasonics – Postwar American suburbs – glorious world!” of the 1950s and ‘60s. Kesey’s use of Day-Glo was thus a commentary on the outlandish and often garish nature of American culture, a culture he saw as exciting, brutal, and violent.¹⁹ Accordingly, it was also at LaHonda where the Hells Angels were first introduced to the countercultural scene, when Kesey arranged with Hunter S. Thompson, who had been writing an article on the bikers, to have the Angels invited to his remote residence.²⁰

Clearly the failure of both the Red Dog Saloon and LaHonda to become cultural centres for the new non-conformist community was not due to lack of interest or activity. Indeed, both locations were home to specific forms of cultural expression that later became staples of the psychedelic ballroom circuit: The Red Dog featured loud rock bands, as well as a psychedelic light-box which pulsed in rhythm with the music. The Saloon also encouraged the outrageous dress that later characterized the Family Dog dances, the Mime Troupe Benefits, and the Trips Festival. Kesey’s early Acid Tests contributed some of the key elements of the psychedelic ritual such as the Pranksters’ use of drugs to push the limits of personal experience, their insistence upon “doing your own thing,” and their use of technology to stimulate sensory overload. Kesey was also

¹⁸ Cavallo, p. 110. The fact that the driver on this legendary voyage was Neal Cassady (none other than Dean Moriarty from Kerouac’s *On The Road* – the classic road-trip novel) adds substantial weight to this argument.

¹⁹ Wolfe, pp. 32-35; Cavallo, p. 111.

²⁰ Wolfe, p. 150.

responsible for forging the tenuous but exciting relationship between the bohemians and the bikers of southern California.

The failure of the Red Dog Saloon and LaHonda to become focal points for the new psychedelic identity was due more to their geographic locations: the Red Dog was more than three hours drive from San Francisco, while LaHonda was similarly situated in a remote, rural area to the south. These locations were difficult to reach without access to reliable transportation – the Pranksters' 1939 Harvester bus and the Angels' motorcycles notwithstanding – and their populations were not suitable for countercultural recruitment. It was clear that if a true *community* of countercultural devotees was to be established and maintained, it would have to take place in a more urban area.

Brian J. Godfrey has argued that there are many reasons why urban environments are more suitable for the creation and maintenance of alternative cultures than rural environments. Urban centres attract large numbers of migrants, and subcultures or countercultures can draw on their diversity for alternative values. Large populations also produce “subcultural differentiation”, where the critical mass of the urban area allows for otherwise small groups to become active subcultures. These contacts between different subcultures can reinforce a sense of separate social worlds that does not necessarily exist in smaller or rural environments. Finally, Godfrey argues, urbanism reduces contacts with more “traditional” contexts and cultures, allowing for the development and acceptance of alternative cultural forms and lifestyles.²¹

Back in San Francisco, where the urban environment was more suitable for the coming together of a non-conformist community, several locations of countercultural

²¹ Godfrey, p. 35.

activity were popping up. Two nightclubs, The Matrix and Mother's, opened during the summer of 1965, both attempting to cater to the newly developing folk-rock scene. The Matrix was the brainchild of Marty Balin, lead singer and guitarist of the fledgling folk-rock group The Jefferson Airplane, which acted as the club's house band. The Matrix was a distinctly countercultural club, created by and for the bohemian population of San Francisco. Mother's, on the other hand, was opened by former disc-jockey and promoter "Big Daddy" Tom Donahue, and its clientele was more likely to be made up of showbiz characters and record company executives. Despite his attempts to cater to the same audience as The Matrix, Donahue was more connected with the teenybopper scene than the new bohemia. As a result, Mother's suffered from a general lack of interest and was open only intermittently. Part of the problem was that Donahue's audience was primarily underage and could not be admitted to the club because it sold alcohol.²² Like the Red Dog Saloon and Kesey's place in LaHonda, these nightclubs were not suitable centres for community formation. Mother's drew the wrong sort of crowd, and was more likely to be frequented by "suits" than "heads." The Matrix, meanwhile, catered to the right crowd, but missed out on a key component of countercultural identity because it had no dance floor.²³ Finally, the relatively small size of both limited their ability to function as centres of countercultural community.²⁴

Of more import to the burgeoning countercultural community was the Pine Street scene, where the establishment of several communal houses had created an environment

²² The one success that Donahue had with Mother's was the few nights he booked The Lovin' Spoonful, which drew the older, more alternative crowd who was more likely to be hanging out at the Matrix or attending the dances promoted by the Family Dog. Perry, p. 12.

²³ Perry, p. 16

²⁴ Eugene Alonzo Smith III, *Within the Counterculture: The Creation, Transmission, and Commercialization of Cultural Alternatives During the 1960s*. PhD Diss. Carnegie Mellon University, 2001, p. 110.

open both to the use and sale of psychedelic drugs and the encouragement of artistic activity. Nestled between the wealthy foothills of Pacific Heights and the Fillmore district (an African-American ghetto), Pine Street provided an embryonic form of the kind of communal life that was to become a staple of the Haight-Ashbury. Here police turned a blind eye to illegal activities, perhaps in the belief that the bedraggled white bohemians provided a sort of buffer between the blacks of the Fillmore district and the wealthy residents of Pacific Heights. However, much like the other seedlings of countercultural community, and despite the creative and talented individuals residing there,²⁵ Pine Street was not a suitable location for a full-fledged community, because its proximity to two widely different neighbourhoods prevented any kind of expansion. Also, the Pine Street scene, as a collection of private communal residences, did not offer the kind of “public” experiences offered by the Red Dog Saloon, the Matrix, or Mother’s; nor did it encourage visitors on the scale of Kesey’s embryonic Acid Tests at LaHonda.

Here, then, we see that while several groups were attempting to cater to San Francisco’s growing countercultural scene, none was very successful in uniting the disparate elements that later made up the Haight-Ashbury community. However, despite the inchoate nature of the events of the summer of 1965, with Kesey’s fledgling Acid Tests in LaHonda, the opening of the Red Dog Saloon, Mother’s, and the Matrix, it was obvious to those involved with the emerging subculture that something was happening. Accordingly, The Family Dog, one of the Pine Street communes,²⁶ organized and

²⁵ Pine Street was home to several individuals who were deeply involved in the emerging bohemian community: the Family Dog lived here, as did several of the individuals who had been involved with the Red Dog Saloon, including The Charlatans.

²⁶ This group consisted of Luria Castell (a young woman who had been on the fringes of radical society since the 1950s), Al Kelly (the psychedelic artist, who, together with Stanley Mouse, was responsible for

promoted a dance concert at the Longshoreman's Hall in October 1965, choosing an appropriately bizarre name to reflect the spectacular nature of their intended audience: A Tribute to Dr. Strange.²⁷



Figure 1: Dr. Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts.

Source: Steve Engelhart, "Dr. Strange" *Steve Engelhart Writes Comics*. (n.d.)
<http://www.stevengelhart.com/Comics/Dr%20Strange%20MP9-5.html>
 (July 26 2006)

some of the most famous psychedelic posters to emanate from the countercultural underground), Ellen Harmon, and Jack Towle. Later Chet Helms would also join the group, and would continue to use the Family Dog name to promote his shows at the Avalon Ballroom. Ralph J. Gleason, "The Family Dog, Liverpool in S.F." *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 22 1965, p. 51; Sculatti & Seay, p. 45; For examples of Mouse and Kelley's work, see Gastaut & Criqui.

²⁷ Dr. Strange was a character from Marvel Comics, a "master of the Mystic Arts" who stood alone against the forces of supernatural evil, which he combated by casting coloured spells from his palms. His arch nemesis was the Dread Dormammu, "a swaggering megalomaniac whose head was hidden in a pillar of smoke." Perry, p. 29. See also Figure 1.

The first psychedelic dance created by and for the embryonic counterculture, the Tribute to Dr. Strange drew together many of the disparate groups that had been stalking the fringes of the rapidly emerging underground scene. The event was “Pine Street in action,”²⁸ having been organized by the Family Dog and featuring a performance by The Charlatans. The Jefferson Airplane and The Great Society also performed, taking time away from their usual venue, The Matrix. Allen Ginsberg, late of the North Beach Beat scene, also made an appearance.²⁹ This was the first time that many of the members of the growing countercultural community had been assembled together; as one member of the Family Dog stated: “[There was an] exhilarating sense of safety, sanctuary. The feeling was ‘Well, they can’t bust us all.’ There was freedom and a moment of pure recognition.”³⁰ As Charles Perry put it, “[f]or a couple of hundred people it was something they’d been waiting for without realizing it.”³¹ Here then was the first “gathering of the tribes”, the first recognition that there was something of a community developing within San Francisco’s underground.

The Tribute to Dr. Strange was such a success, financially, artistically, and promotionally,³² that another event, billed as A Tribute to Sparkle Plenty, was organized for the following weekend. This time all the people who had attended Dr. Strange brought their friends.³³ Flush with success, the Family Dog followed up with a third dance, A Tribute to Ming The Merciless, yet this dance achieved mixed results: word had

²⁸ Perry, p. 27.

²⁹ Ralph J. Gleason, “Wild Weekend Around The Bay.” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 18 1965, p. 51.

³⁰ Sculatti & Seay, p. 48

³¹ Perry, p. 27.

³² Dr. Strange was promoted via radio on KYA (in exchange for Russ “The Moose” Syracuse as emcee); by Gleason in his column; and through posters and handbills put up at the Matrix and in North Beach. Perry p. 28.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 29

spread about the dances and drunken teenagers brawled on the dance floor. Also, the Dog faced competition from Bill Graham, the business manager for the San Francisco Mime Troupe, who chose the same night to stage one of his Mime Troupe Benefits.³⁴

The Troupe was in legal and financial trouble for performing in public parks without the proper permits, and Graham (with help from the Family Dog) decided to stage a benefit concert featuring three bands that were rapidly becoming staples of the countercultural scene: The Jefferson Airplane, The Great Society, and The Warlocks (who later became The Grateful Dead).³⁵ The first Mime Troupe Benefit, much like the Family Dog dances, was a rousing success, with an estimated 3500 people in attendance, each paying \$1.50 admission.³⁶ The event was more successful than either the Family Dog or Graham had envisioned, and led to two other appeals on behalf of the Troupe in December 1965 and January 1966.

The Mime Troupe Benefits were similar in form and function to the Family Dog affairs, featuring wild costumes and even wilder dancing. At each end of the hall were large hand-lettered signs reading LOVE. The bar did not sell alcohol; instead, psychedelics, not booze, were the chosen intoxicants of the crowd, many of whom waited until well after midnight to gain entrance to the overcrowded venue.³⁷ In his review of the event, Ralph Gleason said that it “was a great deal more than a benefit. It was substantiation of the suspicion that the need to dance on the part of a great number of residents of this area is so great it simply must be permitted.”³⁸ This “need to dance” was

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 31-32.

³⁵ Perry, pp. 30-31.

³⁶ Ralph J. Gleason, “Lesson for S.F. in the Mime Benefit.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 13 1965, p. 47.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

something that had also manifested itself at the Family Dog Tributes. On at least one occasion the emcee was booed off the stage by an audience eager to “dance and get sweaty with their friends.”³⁹

Gleason had hit upon one of the key functions of these early countercultural events: the role of dance. The act of dancing worked on several levels, both as an expression of countercultural values, and as a mode through which a sense of solidarity and shared experience was created. Their senses altered by psychedelics, loud music, light-shows, and projections, the Family Dog and Mime Troupe audiences were invited to push the limits of experience. Wild abandon on the dance floor thus functioned as a kind of catharsis, a manner through which dancers could break Cold War taboos surrounding gender roles, sexuality, and conformity. Of course, their passion for dancing was nothing new, as Gleason was quick to point out in his frequent comparisons of San Francisco’s new dance phenomenon to the Swing era. Here, once again, the city’s nonconformists were re-enacting a classic period in American history. Despite their belief that they were shrugging off the American culture they so despised, the freaks bore some resemblance to latter-day flappers, and the speak-easy’s prohibited wares had been replaced by psychedelics.

By the end of 1965 it was clear to anyone tuned into the underground that what had started as a series of unconnected countercultural events was developing into a wider and deeper phenomenon. The success of the Family Dog dances and the Mime Troupe Benefits, combined with the proliferation of Kesey’s Acid Tests in various locations around the Bay Area, was proof that the city’s underground was gaining coherence and

³⁹ Perry, p. 29.

that the non-conformists were developing a sense of solidarity. As Gene Sculatti put it, “With no lack of audience, energy or increasingly confident bands ready to push on to the next frontier of ogling sensory overload, all that was lacking was some consistent, coherent look and feel – a scene with rituals, rites and revelatory touchpoints that everyone could see, smell, and taste and say ‘That’s it. That’s what it’s all about.’”⁴⁰



Figure 2: Trips Festival Program

Source: “Hipstory: Trips Festival 1966” *Dig That Crazy Far Out.com* (n.d.)
http://www.digthatcrazyfarout.com/trips/trips_festival_history.html
(July 26 2006)

⁴⁰ Sculatti & Seay, p. 63.

Arguably the “next frontier” was reached in January 1966 during the three-day-long Trips Festival. Coordinated by Bill Graham and featuring Kesey and his Merry Pranksters, the Festival boasted performances by Allen Ginsberg, Marshall McLuhan, the Grateful Dead, and Big Brother and the Holding Company. The festival also featured Stewart Brand’s “America Needs Indians” exhibition, Ron Boise and his Electric Thunder Sculpture, the Hells Angels, the Open Theatre, the Tape Music Center, and bizarre sensory experiences such as the Endless Explosion, the God Box, the Congress of Wonders, and the Stroboscopic Trampoline.⁴¹ The stated purpose of the event was “to transform all of mankind into a single, totally involved, all-participating consciousness.”⁴²

Conceived and organized by a young anthropologist named Stewart Brand, the Trips Festival had a distinctly ritualistic and religious air. Bill Graham called it “an initiation rite.”⁴³ The festival grossed over \$12,500 in the three days and was attended by an estimated 20,000 people.⁴⁴ As Tom Wolfe described it,

[T]he Trips Festival was like the first national convention of an underground movement that had existed on a hush-hush cell-by-cell basis. The heads were amazed at how big their own ranks had become – and euphoric over the fact that they could come out in the open, high as baboons, and the sky, the law, wouldn’t fall down on them.⁴⁵

Ron Thelin, co-owner of the Psychedelic Shop, described it in similar terms: “The Trips Festival was the first thing that got the larger, kind of whole city community thing

⁴¹ Perry, p. 41; Ralph J. Gleason, “The Acid Test and Other Marvels.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 7 1966, p. 47.

⁴² Marshall McLuhan, quoted in George Dusheck, “Baby, It Will Be Cool.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 9 1966, p. 4.

⁴³ Bill Graham with Robert Greenfield, *Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock and Out*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, p. 142.

⁴⁴ Wolfe, p. 234; Alonzo Smith, p. 116.

⁴⁵ Wolfe, p. 234.

happening – everybody turning on together. ...It was like we were all born at the same time in some ways. Like all brilliant children. And we liked to be around our fellow brilliants.”⁴⁶ According to a letter in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the festival brought together “[h]ungry people looking for a fix, a psychedelic experience, beyond sex, beyond fulfilment, beyond human concept; looking for God and meeting fellow travellers in their search.”⁴⁷ For the burgeoning counterculture the Trips Festival was “the most historical point,” as Jerry Garcia put it,⁴⁸ the moment in time when all the disparate elements coalesced and the Haight-Ashbury community was born.

These quasi-religious references to birth, euphoria and other experiences beyond description illustrate the profound significance of the event: it was a rite of passage into a community, where the psychedelic experience, the catharsis of dance, and the sensory overload of lights, music, film, and spectacular dress created a liminal experience that suggested a sense of holiness or power. It was an initiation ritual that created a strong sense of *communitas*, solidarity and a shared identity by dissolving notions of individuality into the power of the group. As eminent anthropologist Victor Turner acknowledged, there was a distinctly communitarian function to “happenings” such as the Trips Festival, as participants attempted “to establish a “total” communion with one another. This, they hope and believe, will enable them to reach one another...in tender, silent, cognizant mutuality and in all concreteness. [...] What they seek is a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person’s being and finds in that

⁴⁶ Ron Thelin, quoted in Leonard Wolf, *Voices From the Love Generation*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1968, p. 228.

⁴⁷ “Letters to the Editor: Trips Festival.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Feb. 10 1966, p. 48.

⁴⁸ Sculatti & Seay, p. 62.

root something profoundly communal and shared.”⁴⁹ To better describe the concept of *communitas*, Turner quoted Martin Buber’s definition of community – a definition that accurately describes the transformative function of the Trips Festival:

Community is the being no longer side by side (and, one might add, above and below), but *with* one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from *I* to *Thou*.⁵⁰

The Trips Festival functioned in much the same way, creating a strong and almost mystical bond between participants. Here then was the ultimate coalescence of the scene, resulting in the creation of an identity based upon the knowledge that one had shared an intimate and exciting trip with thousands of fellow travellers. It was a form of *communitas*, a coming together of the disparate groups of the counterculture into one hall, one church where by psychedelic baptismal they were initiated into the Tribe.



Figure 3: “From I To Thou.” Participants at the Trips Festival, Jan. 21 1966

Source: Gene Anthony, “Trips Festival Crowd” *The Gene Anthony Vault*.
July 26 2006. <http://www.geneanthonyvault.com/> (July 26 2006).

⁴⁹ Victor W. Turner, Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Adeline Publishing Co., 1969, p. 138.

⁵⁰ Martin Buber, quoted in Turner, p. 127.

The Trips Festival and its predecessors also served another key function in creating a sense of community for the burgeoning San Francisco counterculture: that of spectacle and carnival. The outrageous and exotic costumes of the participants were key features of events such as the Family Dog dances, the Mime Troupe Benefits, and the Trips Festival, and were the subject of much commentary in the press. In his review of the Family Dog events, Ralph Gleason described the participants as “cued into Frontier days and rang[ing] from velvet Lotti Crabtree to Mining Camp Desperado, Jean la Fitte leotards, I. Magnin Beatnik, Riverboat Gambler, India Imports Exotic and Modified Motorcycle Rider Black Leather-and-Zippers, alongside Buckskin Brown.”⁵¹ His description of the Mime Troupe Benefit was similar, with “free-form Goodwill-cum-Sherwood Forest” costumes.⁵² Likewise, Gleason lingered on the exotic dress at the Trips Festival:

There was a man bandaged all over, with only his eyes peeking out through dark glasses, carrying a crutch and wearing a sign: “You’re in the Pepsi Generation and I’m a pimply freak. Another long-haired exotic dressed in modified Hell’s Angels leather jerkin had “Under Ass Wizard Mojo Indian Fighter” stencilled on his back. Several varieties of Lawrence of Arabia costumes wandered through the crowd...⁵³

Like the countercultural events themselves, this emphasis on outrageous costumes served multiple functions. The “pimply freak” and the “Under-Ass Wizard” of Gleason’s description were using costume as a form of personal expression and individuality, a rejection of the stylistic conformity of mainstream American culture. The very act of this rejection aligned them with other non-conformists, as outrageous dress became a marker of shared countercultural identity, a manner through which fellow “freaks” could be

⁵¹ Gleason, “Wild Weekend Around the Bay.” Gleason’s heavy emphasis on describing the “Frontier” style also speaks of the connection between the Family Dog events and the Red Dog Saloon.

⁵² Gleason, “Lesson For S.F. in the Mime Troupe Benefit.”

⁵³ Ralph J. Gleason, “One Wild Night: A Trips Festival.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 24 1966, p. 49.

easily identified. Countercultural fashion thus became a form of cultural communication and declaration of cultural affiliation. The costumes chosen by these individuals served as complex purveyors of countercultural symbolism, and could reference alternative values such as eastern mysticism (“India Imports Exotic”), anti-consumerism (such as the reference to the Pepsi Generation, or the “free-form-Goodwill” style), or the psychedelic experience (such as the use of Day-Glo colours, tie-dyes, or strange text such as “Under-Ass Wizard Mojo Indian Fighter”). The spectacular dress of the individuals who aligned themselves with San Francisco’s growing underground also served another, more theoretical function: exoticism in dress was a statement of power that was designed to shock and surprise the dominant culture through its implied declaration of loyalties to a different way of life, to alternative values. It was, in essence, a direct challenge to the stylistic hegemonies of mainstream American culture, and an overt statement of difference and disaffiliation, a way to set oneself apart from the norm.

This use of spectacle to challenge the mainstream also took on a more overt form, as manifested in carnivalesque events such as the Love Pageant Rally and the Death of Money Re-Birth of the Haight Parade. These two events, held in October and December 1966 respectively, helped cement the sense of community and identity that had been forged at the Trips Festival. Although Mikhail Bakhtin’s eloquent description of the function and form of carnivalesque has encountered criticism in recent years, his characterization nonetheless meshes beautifully with the carnival atmosphere of the Haight-Ashbury scene.⁵⁴ Bakhtin identified several elements to the form of carnival,

⁵⁴ Chris Humphreys, in his survey of writings on the politics of carnival, has pointed out that “the view that medieval misrule constituted an entirely oppositional or radical culture, a view which is often extrapolated from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, is...at odds with the historical evidence.” Regardless of whether or not

many which were of key importance to the Haight-Ashbury scene and were mirrored in its pageantry. At its root, the use of carnival was an explicit declaration of non-conformity, “celebrat[ing] temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and established order; ...mark[ing] the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions.”⁵⁵ This sort of philosophy was certainly present in the Haight-Ashbury, where notions of hierarchy and leadership were shunned, social norms were subverted, and prohibited activities such as imbibing in drugs and free sex were encouraged.

Bakhtin characterized the carnival in terms of intentional non-conformity, a temporary liberation from the dominant order through the reversal or rejection of dominant cultural and political forms.⁵⁶ This rejection and reversal of old forms was present in the Love Pageant Rally, an event organized as a protest against the criminalization of LSD, which was to go into effect on October 6, 1966.⁵⁷ Rather than hold the typical political protest (as characterized by Berkeley’s anti-war or free-speech marches, for example), the Rally was envisioned as a new form of protest, one that would challenge the “Establishment” but would not fall victim to the “fascist reaction” that

Bakhtin’s analysis fits with medieval evidence, his analysis of the functions of carnivalesque are nonetheless informative in terms of the Haight-Ashbury scene, whose participants were not interested in following a medieval form, but were instead creating a folk culture which manifested itself in the community’s own (arguably unconscious) notions of carnivalesque. Chris Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival: Festive Misrule in Medieval England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (trans. By Helene Iswolsky). Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1968, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Bakhtin, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁷ The date, 10.6.66, seemed symbolic to the members of the counterculture who believed, much as Timothy Leary did, that LSD was a religious sacrament. To criminalize this substance that made it easier to commune with God and the Cosmos was an act of the devil, and the very date (which contained the number of the ascension of the beast), was clear evidence of the evil nature of the American establishment. “A Prophecy of a Declaration of Independence.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.1 (Sept. 1966), p. 14; Perry, p. 92. For an excellent description of Leary’s attitude towards the use of psychedelics (an attitude that was shared by many prominent figures on the Haight-Ashbury scene, including the editors of the *Oracle*, the owners of the Psychedelic Shop, and those associated with the North Beach Beat scene), and an early history of his involvement with narcotics, see: Timothy Leary, “Turning On The World.” *Esquire*, July 1968. Reprinted in Ann Charters (ed.), *The Portable Sixties Reader*, New York: Penguin Books, 2003, pp. 331-343.

inevitably met “old forms” of protest and which rendered such action impotent.⁵⁸ In a 1965 piece titled “How to Make a March / Spectacle”, Allen Ginsberg had argued that new forms of protest were necessary because traditional protest strategies were ineffective. Ginsberg proposed that flowers, musical instruments, toys, religious symbols, white flags, and little paper halos to be handed out to aggressors.⁵⁹ Accordingly, the Love Pageant Rally was to be a psychedelic event, much like the Family Dog and Mime Troupe dances had been, featuring loud rock and roll, outrageous costumes, and generally freaky activity.⁶⁰

The Love Pageant Rally’s use of alternative protest forms and spectacle was typical of the Haight-Ashbury scene, where non-traditional forms of protest and spectacle were “sharply distinct from the serious official...and political cult forms and ceremonials”⁶¹ typical of mainstream culture. And yet, despite this attempt to escape from dominant social and political conventions, the underground publicity for the Rally referenced a sacred text of American history: The Declaration of Independence. Published in the very first edition of the new underground psychedelic newspaper the *Oracle*, this new Declaration clearly linked the idea of a protest rally to the American revolutionary tradition:

When in the flow of human events it becomes necessary for the people to cease to recognize the obsolete social patterns which have isolated man from his consciousness and to create with the youthful energies of the world revolutionary communities of harmonious relations to which the two billion year old life process entitles them, a decent

⁵⁸ “Affirming Humanness.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.1 (Sept. 1966) p. 2; “Lovin’ Haight.” *Berkeley Barb* Oct. 14 1966 p. 3

⁵⁹ Allen Ginsberg, “Demonstration or Spectacle as Example, As Communication, or How to Make a March / Spectacle.” Originally published in the *Berkeley Barb*, Nov. 19, 1965; copied in part also in “Anarchy 66 Provo!” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.1 (Sept. 1966), p. 2; and reprinted in *Charters*, pp. 208-212.

⁶⁰ Perry, p. 92.

⁶¹ Bakhtin, pp. 5-6.

respect to the opinions of mankind should declare the causes which impel them to this creation... We hold these experiences to be self evident, that all is equal, that the creation endows us with certain inalienable rights, that among them are: the freedom of body, the pursuit of joy, and the expansion of consciousness... And that to secure these rights, we, the citizens of the Earth declare our love and compassion for all conflicting hate carrying men and women of the world, we declare the identity of flesh and consciousness, all reason must respect and protect this holy identity.⁶²

The Love Pageant Rally was the first salvo in this war for independence and would “affirm [their] identity, community and innocence from influence of the fear addiction of the general public as symbolized in this law.”⁶³ Participants were encouraged to bring photos of “personal saints and gurus of the underground”, children, flowers, flutes, drums, feathers, bands, beads, banners, flags, incense, chimes, gongs, cymbals, and symbols.⁶⁴ Big Brother, the Grateful Dead, and Wild Flower performed rock music, the Prankster bus was there, as were several thousand participants.⁶⁵ Like the psychedelic dances of the previous few months, the Love Pageant Rally used spectacle and carnival to reinforce notions of identity and community.

But the event was doubly important because it tied the countercultural experience directly to the Haight-Ashbury district. Held in the Panhandle extension of Golden Gate Park, the Rally was the first widely publicized countercultural event to take place in the

⁶² “A Prophecy of a Declaration of Independence.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.1 (Sept. 1966), p. 14. Of course, this referencing of a classic text of American history could also represent another form of carnivalesque as identified by Bakhtin: that of the parody (which is again another kind of rejection of official norms). However, I hesitate to categorize the “Declaration” as a parody, as it was intended in all earnestness, a serious attempt to update a cornerstone of American freedom, and not one held in mockery of the original.

⁶³ “A Prophecy of a Declaration of Independence.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.1 (Sept. 1966), p. 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ “Lovin’ Haight.” *Berkeley Barb*, Oct. 14 1966, p. 3.

district,⁶⁶ despite the fact that the area's transformation into a non-conformist enclave had been rapidly developing since January 1966, when Ron and Jay Thelin opened the Psychedelic Shop.⁶⁷ Before the Love Pageant Rally took place, the growing non-conformist community of San Francisco had not made explicit their connection to the Haight-Ashbury district. Despite the fact that many of the organizers or participants in these events lived in the Haight or its environs, the Family Dog dances, the Mime Troupe Benefits, and the Trips Festival had been held at venues outside of the district.⁶⁸

After the success of the Trips Festival and the opening of the Psychedelic Shop there was a growing recognition that the Haight-Ashbury was *the* hip centre of the city, an association aided by the *Chronicle's* frequent coverage of the city's "new bohemia,"⁶⁹ and reinforced by the district's growing population of "freaks" and "heads." Throughout the summer and fall of 1966 this population continued to grow, as did the presence of "hip" businesses and services.⁷⁰ As the new non-conformist residents were settling into

⁶⁶ The Rally was covered by the usual press outlets, but also present were reporters from local radio stations, as well as five television cameras. "Lovin' Haight"; "Mixed Emotions: The Scene at City Hall." *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 7 1966 pp.1, 14; Perry, pp. 93-4.

⁶⁷ Although several "countercultural" businesses had existed in the Haight before the opening of the Psychedelic Shop, the Shop became a focal point of the new community. Three "countercultural" businesses were already operating before the "hip" takeover of the Haight: The House of Richard, which sold Mexican ponchos and sandals; Mnasidika, which sold mod clothing; and the famous Blue Unicorn, a bohemian coffee and book shop located north of the Panhandle. Perry, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Venues used frequently by the hip population of San Francisco included Longshoreman's Hall (located at Fisherman's Wharf), the Fillmore Auditorium (located on the fringes of the black district), and later the Avalon and Winterland ballrooms. It was not until the August 1967 opening of the Straight Theatre that the Haight would have a similar venue located within its own borders. Ralph J. Gleason, "A Not So Straight Theater." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 7, 1967, p. 39.

⁶⁹ See, for example: "Trouble In the City's New Bohemia." *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 15 1966 p.1; "Party Pad Raid - 24 Hauled Off." *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 15 1966 p.1.

⁷⁰ The population of the Haight spiked towards the end of July and throughout August 1966. This influx of non-conformists helped to support a growing number of new countercultural businesses: Quasar's Ice Cream, Peg 'n' Awl Leathers, Silverthings Jewellery, a head shop called The Phoenix, Wild Flowers: A Creative Outlet, Annex 13 Books, and Chickie P. Garbanza's Bead and Storm Door Co. Ltd. all opened up during the summer and fall of 1966. Also around this time many of the district's free community services appeared, such as the Diggers' free feeds in the Panhandle, their first Digger Free Store (The Free Frame of Reference) and the establishment of the *Oracle* underground newspaper. Perry, p. 77, 92, 94-5, 106.

the Haight, they began to create an identity for what was rapidly becoming “their” neighbourhood, changing the commercial landscape as they did so. By the summer of 1966 a cluster of new shops along Haight Street were catering to the psychedelic crowd: Far Fetched Foods, In Gear, the Blushing Peony boutique, and the I/Thou coffee shop.⁷¹ As such, several groups united during the dying days of 1966 for a public declaration of what was already a *de facto* hip take-over of the Haight-Ashbury.

The Death of Money / Re-Birth of the Haight Parade was designed explicitly as a carnival⁷² and modelled after the parades and spectacles of medieval Europe. Staged by the Diggers and members of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, the parade was in keeping with the Diggers’ and the Mime Troupe’s theory of guerrilla theatre, meshing nicely with Bakhtin’s characterization of the carnival as “belong[ing] to the borderline between art and life...but shaped according to a certain pattern of play.”⁷³ The Diggers’ notions of guerrilla theatre involved a technique which they termed “life acting” – a combination of “the direct action of anarchism with theatrical role playing” attempting to “remove all boundaries between art and life, between spectator and performer, and between public and private.”⁷⁴ The Digger program was therefore nothing short of an attempt to “act” their utopian community into existence through the participation of all community members in civil rites such as the Death of Money / Re-Birth of the Haight Parade. As

⁷¹ Perry, p. 77.

⁷² In a leaflet issued shortly after the funeral it was compared to the Mexican Day of the Dead and explained as a “ritual of release” and “reclaiming of territory...through spirit. Possession. Public NewSense.” The Diggers, “Street Event – Birth of Haight / Funeral for \$ Now.” *The Digger Papers*. (Fall 1966). Reprinted in *The Realist*, August 1968, and available at *The Digger Archives Online*, (n.d.) <http://www.diggers.org>. (July 27 2006).

⁷³ Bakhtin, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Michael William Doyle, “Staging the Revolution: Guerrilla Theatre as a Countercultural Practice, 1965-1968” in Peter Braunstein & Michael William Doyle (eds.) *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*. New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 80.

they explained in a leaflet distributed during the autumn of 1966: “Not street-theater, the street *is* theater. [...] A crowd is an audience for an event. Release of crowd spirit can accomplish social facts.”⁷⁵

Inherent in the Diggers’ unique approach to non-conformity and their dedication to the creation of a new community was their philosophy of anti-materialism, a challenge to the assumptions about economy and property at the heart of America’s advanced consumer-capitalism. As they explained in “A Trip Without A Ticket,” one of the many *Digger Papers* distributed throughout the Haight-Ashbury district in late 1966:

Guerrilla theatre intends to bring audiences to liberated territory to create life-actors. [...] It creates a cast of freed beings. It will become an issue itself. This is theatre of an underground that wants out. Its aim is to liberate ground held by consumer wardens and establish territory without walls. Its plays are glass cutters for empire windows.⁷⁶

As such, the Re-Birth of the Haight Parade was also staged as a Death of Money event, where three hooded figures carried silver dollar signs held aloft on sticks. A black-draped coffin was borne by six pallbearers each wearing masks referencing characters from ancient Egyptian mythology. A group called The Gargoyle Singers were dressed up as dwarves and cripples, and walked down either side of the street chanting “ooh”, “aah,” “sssh” or “be cool” as others played pennywhistles and burned candles or incense.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ The Diggers, “Street Event – Birth of Haight / Funeral for \$ Now.”

⁷⁶ The Diggers, “Trip Without a Ticket.” *The Digger Papers*. (Winter 1966). Reprinted in *The Realist*, August 1968, and available at *The Digger Archives Online* (n.d.) <http://www.diggers.org> (July 27 2006).

⁷⁷ Silenus, “A Dirge for the Dollar: New Haight Happens to Sound of Angels.” *Berkeley Barb*, Dec. 23 1966 p.1; Perry, p. 110.



Figure 4: Death of Money / Re-Birth of the Haight, Dec. 17 1966

Source: Gene Anthony "Diggers: Now!" *The Gene Anthony Vault*. July 26 2006.
<http://www.geneanthonyvault.com/> (July 26, 2006)

The Death of Money / Re-Birth of the Haight Parade used notions of spectacle and carnival to draw over 2000 participants and spectators, many from districts all over the city, in a powerful affirmation of community and identity.⁷⁸ As a spectacle it used the exotic and bizarre to draw a line between the participants and the "straight" society it wished to challenge, essentially serving as a statement and affirmation of power and freedom. Like the Love Pageant Rally, the exoticism of this event was designed to assert power in much the same way that military parades serve the symbolic interests of the state. Such reversals of traditional demonstrations of power were key elements of the carnivalesque, whose forms and functions were present in the Re-Birth of the Haight Parade. The parade signalled that the district had, in effect, been taken over by the "fool", its boundaries liberated from the social and cultural conventions of the mainstream.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Silenus, "A Dirge for the Dollar."

⁷⁹ There has been much discussion on the role of carnival in reinforcing the dominant order, as carnival is traditionally an officially sanctioned period of time where pent-up frustrations and dissent are permitted

This liberation allowed for the ascension of new rulers, the countercultural non-conformists who by now called the district home and who dictated alternative social and cultural norms based on their own sense of identity and community.

The years 1965 and 1966 saw the rapid creation and consolidation of a countercultural community identity in San Francisco. Conceived during the early days of the Family Dog and Mime Troupe dances and affirmed through the initiation rite of the Trips Festival, this identity was given a home with the Re-Birth of the Haight Parade. Manifested as a spectacular subculture whose rites and rituals evoked a sense of the carnivalesque, the community identity of the Haight-Ashbury was based around notions of self-expression, individuality, and valued human relations. But it was also created through the active participation of the dynamic elements that made up the new “hip” community. It was essentially an identity based on authenticity: authenticity of dress, speech, action, lifestyle, and personal relationships.⁸⁰ It was an expression of a new consciousness, based on exploring the limits of personal experience and breaking free from the established norms of conventional society. The key was that the non-conformist countercultural identity was a rather fluid and open thing, based on a loose notion of

airing in order for the dominant culture to rule more effectively during the rest of the year. However, the role of carnival in the Haight conforms more clearly with Bakhtin’s view of the libertarian nature of the experience. For one, the Haight’s carnival atmosphere was most certainly not officially sanctioned – indeed, city officials made ongoing attempts to shut down the community and curb its excesses. The spectacular culture of the Haight was a humanistic creation of its own participants, aimed at creating “new, purely human relations.” (Bakhtin, p. 10) Also, the carnival atmosphere in the Haight was not confined temporally, but, rather, geographically, conforming with Umberto Eco’s observation that “...the ancient, religious carnival was limited in time, [while] the modern mass-carnival is limited in space: it is reserved for certain places, certain streets, or framed by the television screen.” Umberto Eco, quoted in Humphrey, p. 33.

⁸⁰ Here Bakhtin’s characterization of the carnivalesque is again relevant: “...free, familiar contacts were deeply felt and formed an essential element of the carnival spirit. People were, so to speak, reborn for new, purely human relations. These truly human relations were not only a fruit of imagination or abstract thought; they were experienced. The utopian ideal and realistic merged in this carnival experience, unique of its kind.” Bakhtin, p. 7.

“doing your own thing” rather than following some vaguely defined notion of what you were expected to do. “Everybody is going to be what they are,” said Ken Kesey shortly before venturing east in his psychedelic school bus, “and whatever they are, there’s not going to be anything to apologize about. What we are, we’re going to wail with on this whole trip.”⁸¹

This idea of “doing your own thing,” of self-expression and individuality, was a key component in the active and participatory nature of the early Haight-Ashbury scene. But the meanings of these concepts would change dramatically with the intrusion of mainstream media forces during the early months of 1967. The early ritual events of 1965 and 1966, culminating in the Re-Birth of the Haight Parade, had all been explicitly participatory events. Best expressed in the Digger notion of “life acting,” the participatory nature of these events was designed to remove the boundaries between spectator and performer, turning all members of the community into “life actors” who would “act” their collective identity into existence.⁸² As Bakhtin argued:

carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. [...] Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. [...] During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world’s revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants.⁸³

These carnivalesque qualities were also present in the dancehall scene, where the audience was invited to participate actively by dancing, wearing exotic costumes, or even joining the band on stage for a free-form jam session. The active and participatory nature

⁸¹ Ken Kesey, quoted in Wolfe, p. 65.

⁸² Doyle, pp. 71-97.

⁸³ Bakhtin, p. 7.

of the early counterculture was a key element in the maintenance of power and control within the community: the community itself acted out and participated in cultural forms, thereby maintaining control over the form and functions of these events. It was an expressly anti-establishment form of culture that was designed to function in a way that television, movies, and teeny-bopper music did not, because audiences were expected to participate actively in the creative process rather than sitting passively as casual consumers of culture. But this situation was not destined to last: beginning with the Human Be-In celebration of January 1967, mainstream forces of media exploitation and commodification soon conspired against the active and participatory nature of the community's culture, turning it into a passive, powerless parody of itself.

Chapter 2: “A Safari Through Psychedelphia”

Publicity and the Exoticization of the Haight

“It was really beautiful there for a year or two and then *Time* magazine came out and they were interviewing me. I told the guy, “This is great that you’re publicizing this scene out here.” He said, “Fastest way to kill it.” He was right.”

- Marty Balin, of the Jefferson Airplane¹

By January 1967 San Francisco’s underground was ready to go public, national, and even cosmic. Having consolidated its identity in the form of the Family Dog dances, the Mime Troupe Benefits, the Trips Festival, the Love Pageant Rally, and finally the Death of Money / Re-Birth of the Haight Parade, the nonconformist community of Haight-Ashbury felt the time was ripe for a public demonstration of the possibilities of their alternative culture. Throughout the underground the message went out that a “Gathering of the Tribes” was being planned for January 14 1967, in which the gurus, rock bands, poets, seekers, and politicians of the movement would all be united. The *Oracle* declared:

A union of love and activism previously separated by categorical dogma and label-mongering will finally occur ecstatically when Berkeley political activists and hip community and San Francisco’s spiritual generation and contingents from the emerging revolutionary generation all over California meet for a Gathering of the Tribes... Now in the evolving generation of America’s young the humanization of the American man and woman can begin in joy and embrace without fear, dogma, suspicion, or dialectical righteousness. A new concert of human relations being developed within the youthful underground must emerge, become conscious, and be shared so that a revolution in form can be filled with a Renaissance of compassion, awareness, and love in the Revelation of the unity of all mankind. The Human Be-In is the joyful, face-to-face beginning of the new epoch.²

¹ Marty Balin quoted in Jeff Tamarkin, *Got A Revolution! The Turbulent Flight of Jefferson Airplane*. New York: Atria Books, 2003, p. 138.

² “A Gathering of the Tribes.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol. 1 No. 5, January 1967, pp. 1-2.

Not to be outdone, the *Berkeley Barb* made a similar list of its predictions about the

Be-In:

When the Berkeley political activists and the love generation of the Haight Ashbury and thousands of young men and woman from every state in the nation embrace the Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In at the Polo field in Golden Gate Park the spiritual revolution will be manifest and proven. In unity we shall shower the country with waves of ecstasy and purification. Fear will be washed away; ignorance will be exposed to sunlight; profits and empire will lie dying on deserted beaches; violence will be submerged and transmitted in rhythm and dancing; racism will be purified with the salt of forgiveness. Spiritual revolution to transform the materialistic bruted body and mind of America is now here with the young budding.³

Implicit in the underground publicity for the Human Be-In were several cornerstones of the movement's philosophy: emancipation from social and political conventions, including conformity to mainstream culture; humanization through close personal relationships; consciousness expansion and spiritualism as an antidote to materialism; and participatory community. The Be-In was a public declaration of this philosophy, an attempt to demonstrate to a national audience that the countercultural philosophy was a viable social and cultural alternative. The event's creators intended the Be-In to share the possibilities of the movement with a new audience in order to bring about a revolution of consciousness. However, while the spectacle of the event drew national and international attention, the ultimate result was a steady erosion of the underground's coherence and sense of self-identity at the hands of the dominant culture's media industries. The media was far less interested in the philosophical underpinnings of the Haight-Ashbury than in its stylistic manifestations as carnival. As the media transmitted its reports on the Haight-Ashbury community across the United States it created a standardized and distorted

³ "Statement by the Inspirers of the Gathering of the Tribes." *Berkeley Barb*, January 13 1967, p. 1.

image of “the hippie” which focused primarily on drugs, rock music, and sex, rather than upon the community’s attempts to create working social and cultural alternatives. This alternate and artificial identity became the one predominantly associated with the hip underground and eventually eclipsed the active and participatory nature of the Haight-Ashbury community.

Held on a beautiful, sunny January day in the polo field of Golden Gate Park, the Human Be-In was the ultimate statement of the underground’s power. Widely recognized for its carnival atmosphere,⁴ the event featured speeches from Timothy Leary, Michael McClure, Dick Alpert, Jack Weinberg, Dick Gregory, and Jerry Rubin; poetry readings by Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Lenore Kandel; musical performances by the Grateful Dead, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and many others. A Buddhist monk meditated on the stage throughout the entire event, a parachutist descended from the sky during the Grateful Dead’s performance, and in the evening the crowd, decked out in their usual spectacular costumes, bowed to the setting sun and cleaned up their litter before departing.⁵

Widely recognized as the national coming out of the counterculture, the Human Be-In’s organizers had planned it as a media event designed “to focus world attention on the Haight-Ashbury as the spiritual center of the new consciousness.”⁶ In terms of drawing media attention to the community, their efforts were successful: television cameras were

⁴ The *Chronicle* mentioned that the Be-In had a “carnival atmosphere,” while Ed Denson of the *Berkeley Barb* reported that “the whole day felt like a carnival.” “They Came... Saw... Stared.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 15 1967, p. 3; Ed Denson, “What Happened at the Hippening.” *Berkeley Barb*, January 20 1967, pp. 1, 4.

⁵ “A Gathering of the Tribes”; Ralph J. Gleason, “The Tribes Gather for a Yea-Saying.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 16 1967, p. 41.

⁶ Eugene Alonzo Smith III, “Within the Counterculture: The Creation, Transmission, and Commercialization of Cultural Alternatives During the 1960s.” PhD Diss. Carnegie Mellon University, 2000, p. 130.

present to film the spectacle, “while photographers took pictures of photographers taking pictures of other photographers taking pictures.”⁷ In the days and weeks after the event its myth continued to grow: at first the *Chronicle* reported that attendance had been somewhere around 10,000 people, but with each consecutive report the numbers increased, first to 15,000, then 20,000.⁸ *Newsweek* reported that the event had been “a love feast, a psychedelic picnic, a hippie happening” that had “affirmed one fact: San Francisco has arrived as the hub of the hippie world.”⁹ However, the organizers’ plan to have attention focused on their community as “the spiritual center of the new consciousness” proved misguided, as the local and national news media quickly developed their own interpretations of the Haight-Ashbury’s importance.

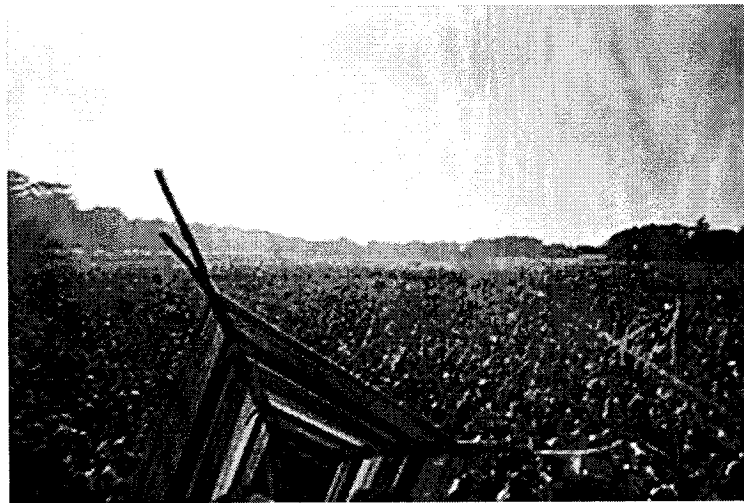


Figure 5: Crowd at the Human Be-In, Golden Gate Park, Jan. 1967

Source: Gene Anthony, “Human Be-In: Crowd” *The Gene Anthony Vault*. July 26 2006
<http://www.geneanthony.com> (July 27 2006).

⁷ Gleason, “The Tribes Gather for a Yea-Saying.”

⁸ “They Came... Saw... Stared.”; “Human Be-In’s Aftermath.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 16 1967, p. 3; Gleason, “The Tribes Gather for a Yea-Saying.”

⁹ “Dropouts With A Mission.” *Newsweek*, Feb. 6 1967, p. 92.

The different inflections given the Human Be-In during the days after its occurrence reflect the biases of the media sources that reported it. The *Berkeley Barb*, still sceptical of the explicitly anti-political nature of the counterculture (and perhaps a little jealous of its growing popularity), reported that the event really was not as wonderful as everyone claimed, with only the politicians having said anything of import, and the crowd seeming bored. Ted Denson reported that although the Be-In had been “an event with national importance,” it had been an opportunity wasted because it did not make any demands or achieve any express aims.¹⁰ Here Denson was clearly expressing the views of the Berkeley political crowd, and it can be argued that he (and others who voiced similar criticisms of the event)¹¹ had missed the point: it was not staged as a political rally or protest – people had been invited to participate in a celebration of alternative culture, simply to *be* there. It was, after all, a *Be-In*.

Similarly, the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s coverage of the Be-In revealed its particular biases – in particular, Ralph Gleason's affection for the movement as opposed to his editors' mocking derision. Gleason's coverage of the Be-In followed much the same formula as his coverage of previous “hippie happenings”: grand descriptions of the spectacular appearance of the attendees, and at the end of the column, a short editorial on the affirmative value of the event:

No fights. No drunks. No troubles. Two policemen on horseback and 20,000 people. The perfect sunshine, the beautiful birds in the air, the parachutist descending as the Grateful Dead ended a song. Saturday's gathering was an affirmation, not a protest. A statement of life, not of death, and a promise of good, not of evil. [...] This is truly something new and

¹⁰ Ed Denson, “What Happened at the Hipening.”

¹¹ See, for example: “Our Readers Rap: On Bein' at the Be-In.” *Berkeley Barb*, January 20 1967, p.7.

not the least of it is that it is an asking for a new dimension to peace, not just an end to shooting, for the reality of love and a great Nest for all humans.¹²

Gleason's coverage was typically rosy and ecstatic, and ignored any negative aspects of the event¹³ – aspects which the editorial staff at the *Chronicle* were quick to exploit in their usual sensationalist style. On the day after the Human Be-In, the *Chronicle* printed a front-page story entitled “Hippies Run Wild – Jailed” which insinuated that the event had been a riot complete with arrests. If one read further into the article it was revealed that these arrests occurred long after the event (around 9 p.m.), and that people had been arrested in Haight-Ashbury (not Golden Gate Park) for blocking traffic.¹⁴ This story was followed up the next day with a brief explanation of the arrests (32 in total), but whose title again suggested that the event was less than peaceful: “Human Be-In's Aftermath.”¹⁵

This kind of exploitation of the Haight's colourful residents was nothing new and was typical of the media's negative construction of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. The *Chronicle's* reports of trouble after the Be-In fit with their characterization of the “beatnik” scene in the Haight-Ashbury as dangerous, deprived, and diseased. Stories about teen runaways, drug abuse, drug-induced psychosis, malnutrition, lice, and venereal disease were staples of the *Chronicle's* coverage of the scene.¹⁶ Much of this coverage was extremely gendered, constructing the district as a corrupting space that exerted a profoundly negative influence over naïve young teenagers, girls, or unwed mothers. Usually these articles contained references to children under the age of fourteen

¹² Gleason, “The Tribes Gather for a Yea-Saying.”

¹³ Although most press coverage of the Be-In focused on its peaceful nature, at least one newspaper reported that the Hell's Angels, assigned with protecting the sound equipment, had beaten someone bloody. “Our Readers Rap: On Bein' at the Be-In.”

¹⁴ “Hippies Run Wild – Jailed.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 15 1967, p. 1.

¹⁵ “Human Be-In's Aftermath.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 16 1967, p. 3.

¹⁶ Of course, such coverage was not exclusive to the *Chronicle*. See, for example, Loudon Wainwright, “The Strange New Love Land of the Hippies.” *Life*, March 31 1967, pp. 15-16.

being arrested for the sale or possession of LSD or marijuana that had been obtained illicitly in the Haight-Ashbury. Another common theme focused on young girls or women running away from their families only to be found living in squalid and unsanitary communal residences in the district; or unwed single mothers living in similar conditions and consuming drugs openly around their small children.¹⁷ Many of these stories were presented as front-page items under sensational headlines that read: “Beat Underground: The Teen Runaways,” “Runaway Girls: Life With the Hippies,” and “A Girl Tries to Explain: the Runaway Hippies.”¹⁸

These headlines suggest another way in which the media constructed a standardized identity for the residents of Haight-Ashbury by encouraging the gradual shift from “beatnik” to “hippie.” Early coverage of the Haight-Ashbury scene characterized its history as an evolution of the beatnik culture at North Beach.¹⁹ However, the colourful and spectacular nature of the underground was not quite the same as the visually drab and cynical beatnik movement, and the media latched on to “hippies” to describe the new subculture. Although the exact origins of the term “hippie” are unknown, there is some evidence to suggest that in its original incarnation the term was one of derision, “used by

¹⁷ For examples of such typically gendered coverage, see, the *San Francisco Chronicle*: George Gilbert “Of Dirty Feet, Hookers, & LSD.” Oct. 7 1966, pp. 1, 14; “Berkeley Seeks LSD Indictments.” Oct. 5 1966, pp. 1, 9; “LSD Sold at High School.” Oct. 28 1966, p. 3; “Pre-Teens Smoking Marijuana.” Dec. 21 1966, p. 3; “Teen Dope Users a Worry Here.” Jan. 1 1967, p. 1; “Her Son’s Tragic Trip.” April 7 1967, p. 1; “Discouraging Word For Hippies.” May 9 1967, pp. 1, 8; “A Hippies’ Day: The Flower Children’s Society.” May 17 1967, pp. 1, 14; “New Way of Parenthood in the Haight.” May 18 1967, pp. 1, 19; “Pot Use Spreads in High School.” Aug. 7 1967, p. 3; “Hippies Have Wild Diseases Too.” Aug. 20 1967, p. 18; etc. See also footnote below.

¹⁸ “Beat Underground: The Teen Runaways.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 3 1967, pp. 1, 10-11; “Runaway Girls: Life with the Hippies.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 3 1967, headline; “A Girl Tries to Explain: The Runaway Hippies.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 17 1967, headline.

¹⁹ See, for example: “The New Beatnik Life: Trouble in the City’s New Bohemia.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 15 1966, headline, p. 1.

veteran beatniks to put down young wannabes, the junior hipsters.”²⁰ Indeed, many veterans of the Haight-Ashbury scene resented the word, preferring instead to align themselves with the beatniks from whose cultural space they had constructed their own early notions of non-conformity. Jerry Garcia claimed that the Grateful Dead’s background “was sort of that deeply cynical beatnik space which evolved into something nicer with the advent of psychedelics,” and that “the media portrait of the innocent flower child was a joke.”²¹ Peter Berg of the Diggers pointed out that the Diggers’ view of hippies was “white kids who weren’t that hip,” while Dave Getz, drummer for Big Brother and the Holding Company, said, “I never called myself a hippie, ever. I hated it.” As Haight photographer Bob Seidemann pointed out, “We called ourselves freaks, never hippies.”²² The act of naming is very much an act of power. The ability to subsume a group of individuals or an entire community under a single label demonstrates an uneven power dynamic where the named becomes “othered” by the namer. The insistence of the Haight-Ashbury community on self-identifying as “freaks” or “heads” thus represents an attempt to reclaim their identity from its stereotypical construction by the media.

Regardless of the non-conformists’ opinion of the term, the “hippie” label stuck. First used in its new context by the *San Francisco Examiner* in September 1965, the word “hippie” was soon being used to describe the colourful characters popping up in bohemian enclaves all across America. The term first appeared nationally in a 1966 story

²⁰ Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The Sixties & Its Aftershocks*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 19. See also: Ralph J. Gleason, “A Brief History of Those New Words.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 9 1967, p. 41.

²¹ Jerry Garcia, quoted in Bill Graham with Robert Greenfield, *Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock and Out*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, p. 195.

²² Berg, Getz, and Seidemann all quoted in Echols, p. 29. Another popular term used by the non-conformists was “head”, as in a user of psychedelics (pot-head or acid-head). This term was later appropriated by avid fans of the Grateful Dead, who became known as Dead-heads.

in the *Saturday Evening Post*,²³ and soon the identifier was being bandied about by the likes of *Newsweek*²⁴ and the *New York Times*.²⁵ Newsmagazines, drawn to the spectacular nature of the visual subculture, began to pump out various exposés and social histories of the colourful community, and by the summer of 1967 “hippie” had become a household term. Having created a catchall label for the non-conformists, the media then proceeded to construct an identity around the label – one that diverged widely from the Haight-Ashbury community’s sense of self by exploiting and sensationalizing certain elements of the countercultural lifestyle over others.

The cultural “exposés” published in *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek* and other such periodicals followed much the same approach as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, focusing mainly upon the spectacular nature of the Haight-Ashbury lifestyle rather than on its philosophical underpinnings or historical background. In this respect the mainstream press coverage of the scene helped to create and perpetuate the clichéd triad of “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll” by choosing to emphasize hippies’ use of psychedelic drugs, their free sexual mores, and their penchant for loud rock music.²⁶ Early coverage of the San Francisco underground was characterized by its focus on the emerging “acid-rock” scene, and the fascination with rock music – especially the Jefferson Airplane – remained a staple of the

²³ Richard Lemon, “Daddy is a Hippie.” *Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 239, No. 14 (July 2 1966), p. 22.

²⁴ “The Nitty-Gritty Sound.” *Newsweek*, Dec. 19 1966, p. 102.

²⁵ “Village Cleanup Called Failure.” *New York Times*, May 30 1966, p. 24; Peter Bart, “Bohemian Newspapers Spread Across Country.” *New York Times*, Aug. 1 1966, p. 30.

²⁶ See, for example: “Turned on and Super Sincere in California.” *Harpers*, January 1967, pp. 42-7; “Dropouts with a Mission.”; Warren Hinckle, “A Social History of the Hippies.” *Ramparts*, March 1967, pp. 5-26; Wainwright; Hunter S. Thompson, “The ‘Hashbury’ is the Capital of the Hippies.” *New York Times Magazine*, May 14 1967; “The Hippies Are Coming.” *Newsweek*, June 12 1967, pp. 28-9; “The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture.” *Time*, July 7, 1967, cover story, pp. 18-22; “Inside the Hippie Revolution.” *Look*, Aug. 22 1967, pp. 58-61.

media's coverage of the counterculture.²⁷ Discussions of the new culture's approach to sexuality were also commonplace and often sweeping in their claims, such as in *Newsweek's* assertion that "There are no hippies who believe in chastity, or look askance at marital infidelity or see even marriage as a virtue. Physical love is a delight – to be chewed upon as often and as freely as a handful of sesame seeds."²⁸

The most common approach to these "exposés" of hippie culture focused upon the use of psychedelic drugs, often undermining more central aspects of the non-conformist identity under this heading. The mainstream media's fascination with the drug culture was insatiable. *Time* magazine's "The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture" contained no less than seventy-eight references to LSD, marijuana, STP, DZ, peyote, mescaline, psilocybin, amphetamines, heroin, and hashish.²⁹ *Newsweek* extended the "psychedelic smorgasbord" to include such household items as betelnut, nutmeg, banana peels, morning glory seeds, cloves, glue, and cleaning fluid in its characterization of the hippie as an insatiable "kick" fiend.³⁰ Likewise, *Life's* analysis of the hippies focused almost entirely on psychedelics, criticising the culture as "a most disruptive sort of escapism" and "a headlong flight from reality."³¹ While few of these articles were expressly critical of the movement, many did characterize the hippies as naïve, if earnest, participants in a

²⁷ See, for example: "The Nitty-Gritty Sound"; "Jefferson Airplane Loves You!" *Look*, May 30 1967, pp. 58-62; "Open Up, Tune In, Turn On." *Time*, June 23 1967, p. 53.

²⁸ "Dropouts With A Mission," p. 92.

²⁹ "The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture," pp. 18-22.

³⁰ "Turned-on Way of Life." *Newsweek*, Nov. 28 1966, pp. 72, 74. The mention of banana peels is especially relevant, as a banana craze struck the Haight during the spring of 1967. Partly fuelled by the Donovan song "Mellow Yellow," it was rumoured that a high could be obtained by smoking the dried resin from the inside of the peel, usually rolled into "banana joints". During the height of the craze grocery stores in both the Haight-Ashbury and Berkeley reportedly sold out of bananas. See, for example: "Been Blowing Up Banana Joints Lately?" *Berkeley Barb*, March 10 1967, p. 1; "Mass Banana Turn On at UC." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 2 1967, p.2; Donovan, "Mellow Yellow." *Mellow Yellow*, Epic 26239, 1967.

³¹ Wainwright, p. 15.

passing craze. *Newsweek* described the Haight's costumed residents as "clownish" and "anti-intellectual," while *Time* characterized them as "almost childish." Loudon Wainwright expressed his sadness that the hippie movement "cannot last," while *Newsweek* predicted that its members would soon "grow disillusioned, clip their hair, and rejoin the squares."³²

As early as May 1967 there was recognition within the Haight-Ashbury community that its attempts at mass-media publicity had gone awry. Criticism was levelled at "TimeLifeNewspeak and all those other idiots" for hyping the scene and creating a media portrait of "the hippie" that did not conform to the reality of their utopian social project.³³ In an ironic twist, the one article that did provide some insightful commentary on the scene, Warren Hinckle's *Ramparts* article, "A Social History of the Hippies," was widely ridiculed within the underground. The primary criticisms levelled against the article were justified: Hinckle had opened his piece with a fictitious meeting between Kesey's Pranksters and the Diggers, presenting it as fact. Hinckle had also listed the names of dozens of "hippie" contributors, insinuating that he had received the information in his article first hand from members of the underground – people with whom he had never actually spoken. One of these "contributors" was Ralph J. Gleason, who, in protest against Hinckle's shoddy journalism, resigned from *Ramparts*' editorial board.³⁴

³² "Dropouts With A Mission," 92-3; "The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture," p. 18; Wainwright, p. 16.

³³ Jeff Jassen, "The Year of the Shuck, Part 2: Plague or Fashion?" *Berkeley Barb*, May 12 1967, p. 4.

³⁴ Hinckle, pp. 5-26; "Ramparts' 'Hippie' Article Raises Row." *Berkeley Barb*, June 9 1967, p. 7; "Inside Story on the 'Hippie' Tale." *Berkeley Barb*, June 16 1967, p. 4 (an open letter from Chester Anderson, a prominent member of the Haight-Ashbury community who had worked at *Ramparts* and suggested the idea of the article to Hinckle); the same issue of the *Barb* contained an untitled article featuring the previously unpublished letter of resignation sent to Warren Hinckle by Ralph Gleason, *Berkeley Barb*, June 16 1967, p. 10.

However, despite Hinckle's obvious lack of judgement, his article did contain some valuable insights into the "hippie" subculture – insights that were overlooked by most of the mainstream media coverage of the Haight-Ashbury. For starters, Hinckle accurately summed up the underground's philosophy in one neat paragraph near the beginning of his article:

The utopian sentiments of these hippies [are] not to be put down lightly. Hippies have a clear vision of the ideal community – a psychedelic community to be sure – where everyone is turned on and beautiful and loving and happy and floating free. But it is a vision that...necessarily embodies a radical political philosophy; communal life, drastic restriction of private property, rejection of violence, creativity before consumption, freedom before authority, de-emphasis of government and traditional forms of leadership.³⁵

The *Ramparts* article also clearly delineated many of the more difficult concepts inherent in the underground's philosophy. One of these was an explanation of the notions of game playing that were central to both Kesey's Merry Pranksters and the Diggers. Although Hinckle misunderstood the Diggers' primary role in the Haight-Ashbury community, his description of Kesey's "intellectual rebellion" nonetheless fits with the Diggers' notions of "life acting":

[Kesey] has long ago rejected the structured nature of society – the foolscap rings of success, conformity and acceptance "normal" people must regularly jump through. To the liberated intellect, no doubt, these requirements constitute the most sordid type of game. But, once rejecting all the norms of society, the artist is free to create his own structures – and along with any new set of rules, however personal, there is necessarily, the shell to the tortoise, a new set of games. [...] Since the world forces you into a game that is both mad and unfair, you are better off inventing your own game. Then, at least, you have a chance of winning.³⁶

³⁵ Hinckle, p. 9.

³⁶ Hinckle, pp. 10-11.

Hinckle's other key insight was that while the hippies "profess[ed] a distaste for competitive society, [they were], contradictorily, frantic consumers."³⁷ Here Hinckle had made a key observation that the remainder of the mainstream media had overlooked: despite their rhetoric of anti-materialism and their claims to be rejecting mainstream American values, members of the Haight-Ashbury community were nonetheless perpetuating middle-class patterns of consumption.

Whatever insights or mistakes were present in the *Ramparts* article, Hinckle's analysis of the "hippie" subculture was consistent with the standard analysis present in the mass media in its emphasis on rock music and the use of psychedelic drugs. As we have seen, these two elements were central features of "the hippie" identity from the start, and are indicative of the mass media's power to create and control the meanings and identities of those groups it chose to cover. Through the creation of a fictional character named "hippie," the press helped to standardize an image of the non-conformist underground that was developing in San Francisco. But the media's power to dictate the identity of the Haight's residents also extended to the district itself, and was present in the nicknames given the area during the peak of the media's interest in the Haight-Ashbury phenomenon.

As suggested earlier, naming is an act of power. Those with the authority to name can privilege certain elements of an identity over others, thus creating a hierarchy of meaning in which previously marginalized aspects of an identity can come to define an object, place, or person. Amongst the residents of the Haight-Ashbury, the dominant discourse surrounding the district's identity was its function as a countercultural social experiment

³⁷ Hinckle, p. 20.

– an alternative to the norms of American culture. In choosing certain nicknames for the district, the mainstream press undermined this dominant aspect of the Haight’s identity in favour of an alternative, and ultimately artificial, construction of the Haight-Ashbury experience. By labelling the district as a burgeoning musical Mecca and a locality that encouraged participation in a drug culture, the media privileged the scene’s stylistic manifestations, effectively erasing its original identity.

One of the key figures in the creation and perpetuation of the Haight-Ashbury stereotype was Ralph Gleason. Despite recognizing the wider importance of the newly developing counterculture, Gleason almost overwhelmingly associated the movement with its musical manifestations – an association that is not surprising given his profession as a music critic. Gleason’s coverage of the Haight-Ashbury scene was extensive, and it was in an interview with Family Dog promoter Luria Castell that he stumbled upon what was to become a staple of his reporting: San Francisco as “the American Liverpool.”³⁸ By comparing San Francisco to Liverpool, Gleason and Castell were insinuating that a musical revolution as profound as that sparked by The Beatles was forming in the Bay Area. Gleason would return again and again to the metaphor of San Francisco as a “Liverpool of the West” to explain the significance of what was happening in his city – so much so that the national media began to pick up on the reference, thus perpetuating a narrowly defined vision of what was in fact a much wider phenomenon.³⁹ Indeed, San Francisco became so closely associated with the new style of rock that the music itself

³⁸ Ralph J. Gleason, “The Family Dog, Liverpool in S.F.” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 22 1965, p. 51. Liverpool was, of course, the birthplace of The Beatles, the seminal rock band whose music was heavily influential within countercultural circles.

³⁹ Ralph J. Gleason, “Hippies and the Rock Revolution.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 3 1967, p. 47; Gleason, “The Big Sound of the Bay Area Bands.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 7 1967, This World section, p. 35; Gleason, “A Brief History of Those New Words.”; “The Nitty-Gritty Sound.”

came to be known as “the San Fran Sound”.⁴⁰ However, while “acid rock” was a central feature of the counterculture – indeed it was, in many ways, an aural manifestation of the movement’s ideological values⁴¹ – it was by no means its defining aspect. The new musical styles being practiced and perfected in and around the Haight-Ashbury district, while important to the counterculture, were just one manifestation of the movement’s ideology, and were arguably just as important as strides being made in other artistic areas.⁴²

Aside from the characterization of San Francisco as a musical Mecca, the other major aspect of the Haight-Ashbury’s identity that became a central feature of mainstream discourse was, of course, the psychedelic experience. Drug references abounded in the various nicknames that the press used to describe the area: the *New York Times* picked up on “Hashbury” after reporter Hunter S. Thompson did an exclusive piece early in 1967.⁴³ *Time* magazine called the district an “LSDisneyland”,⁴⁴ while the *San Francisco Chronicle*, not to be outdone, coined the even more ridiculous-sounding

⁴⁰ Ed Denson, “The Holy Rockers.” *Berkeley Barb*, Oct. 21 1966, p. 6; “Ear Splitting Sound of S.F.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 1 1967, pp. 1, 26; “The Nitty-Gritty Sound.”; “Open Up, Tune In, Turn On.”

⁴¹ See, for example, Craig Morrison, *Psychedelic Music in San Francisco: Style, Context, and Evolution*. PhD Diss. Concordia University, 2000.

⁴² Indeed, another of the profoundly influential artistic movements to come out of the Haight was the striking artwork of local designers such as Mouse & Kelley, Wes Wilson, Rick Griffin or Victor Moscoso. The pioneering psychedelic style of these artists was soon being emulated by poster artists around the nation, and it was not long before Madison Avenue also borrowed heavily from the style’s more prominent features. See, for example, Ralph J. Gleason, “The Influence of Hippie Art.” *San Francisco Examiner*, June 4 1967, Datebook p. 27; “An Artful Confrontation: Poster People Meet Press.” *San Francisco Chronicle* July 12 1967, p. 48; Thomas Albright, “A Psychedelic Flowering.” *San Francisco Examiner*, July 16 1967, Sunday Supplement pp. 26-7. For examples of the various psychedelic styles emanating from San Francisco’s artistic underground, see Gastaut and Criqui’s beautiful collection of posters: Amélie Gastaut & Jean-Pierre Criqui, *Off the Wall: Psychedelic Rock Posters From San Francisco*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2005, p. 16. For an examination of how the psychedelic style was used by advertising agencies, see Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

⁴³ Thompson.

⁴⁴ “Open Up, Tune In, Turn On,” p. 53.

“Psychedelphia.”⁴⁵ While this aspect of the Haight’s identity was certainly important, it was not the dominant one. Within the community drugs were used as a tool, the psychedelic experience interpreted as a way to break down internalized conceptions of previously unquestioned social norms – what Aldous Huxley referred to as “the opening of the doors of perception.”⁴⁶ Psychedelics were used to prepare the consciousness for the possibilities of alternative community, helping the “tripper” become aware of the artificial norms and conventions inherent in everyday life. This was essentially the meaning behind Kesey’s characterization of American society as little more than a series of “games” whose rules were dictated by those in power. Drugs were therefore not *the* defining element of the community’s identity. The distinction may seem minor, but the media’s perpetuation of the Haight as a drug centre rather than a utopian social experiment tended to draw hard drug addicts who were interested in little more than easy and cheap access to narcotics, rather than creative individuals who wanted to explore alternative social forms. As Ron Thelin argued, “lots of us in the Haight Ashbury have made big steps in the direction of groping for new forms ... I often think we are writing history. We are dealing with new forms, of social organization, of economic organization, architectural organization – the entire spectrum of life and its relationship to the tribe. We are dealing with it and this is a big task.”⁴⁷ Indeed, I would suggest that had the psychedelic experience been the predominant feature of the Haight’s identity, there would have been no need for the vast network of social services that developed; instead,

⁴⁵ “The Haight-Ashbury Scene.” *San Francisco Chronicle*. Jan. 1 1967, California Living section, pp.10-13.

⁴⁶ Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell*. London: Flamingo Books, 1994.

⁴⁷ Ron Thelin quoted in an untitled interview with *Haight-Ashbury Maverick*, Vol.1 No.5 (1967), pp. 6-7, 10-11, 13.

the emphasis would have been on the individual drug experience rather than on communal attempts to set up an alternative society.

By choosing to emphasize certain elements of the Haight-Ashbury's identity over other, equally important realities – such as alternative social forms, a revival of humanism, or anti-materialism – the mainstream media created and perpetuated a shallow and stereotypical view of both the Haight and its colourful residents. However, Haightians were not powerless in the face of these attempts to define the predominant meaning of their district. Underground newspapers, while not having the national reach of *Time* or *Newsweek*, nonetheless had a great deal of influence within the counterculture.⁴⁸ These papers perpetuated a much more nuanced conception of what the Haight was all about, choosing to emphasise the area's overall cultural importance rather than select elements of the countercultural philosophy. For example, while referring to the Haight's efforts to bring about a working alternative to dominant cultural norms, the *Oracle* suggested that the Haight was “the purest reflection of what is happening in consciousness, at the leading edge of society,”⁴⁹ and that it was a “small part of a world-wide spiritual awakening.”⁵⁰

In many ways, comments such as these referenced a much larger community than that which existed within the borders of the Haight. There was an explicit understanding that Haight-Ashbury was simply the first and largest manifestation of a growing national (and international) movement. Timothy Leary, in the *Oracle*, referred to the Haight as “a way station”: a place where those who wanted to “completely detach” themselves from “the

⁴⁸ See Chapter 1 for circulation and distribution details of *Berkeley Barb* and *San Francisco Oracle*.

⁴⁹ “Ees Setisoppo With Dick Alpert.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.5 (Jan. 1967); p. 3.

⁵⁰ “It All Depends On...” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No. (May 1967), p. 33.

plastic, robot Establishment” could find the resources to do so.⁵¹ Ron Thelin, speaking to the *Haight-Ashbury Maverick*, argued that in the United States there was “a budding spiritual consciousness, spiritual state, spiritual awakening that...seems very much at this time in history to be focused in Haight-Ashbury.”⁵² This was the message intended by the organizers of the Human Be-In, and had been the purpose of that event’s publicity. This publicity had contained few, if any, references to drugs or rock music, and yet these were the two notions of countercultural identity transmitted by the mass media in the months after January 1967.

The underground’s characterization of the Haight as the centre of a new spiritual awakening created another identity for the district, one that was to have profound consequences. Soon after the Human Be-In of January 1967, thousands of young “pilgrims” began flocking to the area. As the world-centre for a newly emerging spirituality, the Haight had developed a powerful reputation as a mystical, spiritual or religious place. Soon young people were making a “holy pilgrimage” to San Francisco, a city that was “alive, human, and divine.”⁵³ The Council For the Summer of Love (formed in early April 1967) shared this increasingly popular view of the scene and predicted that “pilgrims” would make the holy trek to San Francisco “to affirm and celebrate a new spiritual dawn.”⁵⁴ Allen Ginsberg, speaking with *The Chronicle* in the wake of the

⁵¹ “Changes.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.7 (March 1967) pp.2-3, 6-17, 29-31.

⁵² “Untitled Interview with Ron Thelin.”

⁵³ “It All Depends On...” p. 33.

⁵⁴ Council for the Summer of Love press release, April 1967, quoted in Thiemann, p. 138 and Perry, p. 185. The Council was comprised of members from the Family Dog, the Diggers, those involved with renovating the Straight Theatre, the *Oracle*, and others. Its purpose was “to serve as a clearinghouse and liaison to the straight world, and to organize art shows and celebratory events.” Perry, p. 165.

Human Be-In, argued that these youngsters were “seekers” rather than “hippies”,⁵⁵ an opinion shared by Swami Chinmayananda, an Indian guru who visited the Haight in June 1967.⁵⁶ There were frequent comparisons of the community’s non-conformists to religious figures such as Moses, Jesus, Gautama Buddha or St. Francis,⁵⁷ while *Time* magazine characterized the hippies as “spiritually motivated crusaders.”⁵⁸

All this rhetoric suggesting that young “seekers” should make the “pilgrimage” to the Bay Area was heeded by thousands of young people across the United States, as was the media’s promise of sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll. As early as March 1967 the Haight-Ashbury community began to worry about the “pilgrim legions” that would soon be flocking to their district.⁵⁹ Estimates of how many people would be streaming through the area grew daily: the Diggers predicted 50,000 newcomers, while the *Chronicle* estimated that the “hippie invasion” would crest at around 100,000. *Life* magazine doubled the figure again, to 200,000.⁶⁰ Whatever the number, everyone was in agreement that the summer of 1967 would see a dramatic increase in the Haight’s population, and residents began to worry about the impact the “tides of summer” would have on their small community.⁶¹

⁵⁵ George Dusheck, “They’re Young Seekers, Not Hippies, Says Poet Ginsberg.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 22 1967, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Bob Graham, “The Swami’s Invitation to Hippieland.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 27 1967; p. 5.

⁵⁷ “Our Readers Rap: On Bein’ at the Be-In.”; Arnold J. Toynbee, “Toynbee Tours Hippieland.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 17 1967, pp. 1, 13.

⁵⁸ “The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture.”

⁵⁹ Ed Denson, “And A Thousand Shops Shall Bloom.” *Berkeley Barb*, March 17 1967; pp. 6, 8; “The Gossiping Guru: Will Success Spoil the Haight?” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.7 (March 1967) pp. 24, 39.

⁶⁰ Perry, p. 132; George Gilbert, “Diggers Preparing For The Invasion.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 20 1967, pp. 1, 11; Wainwright.

⁶¹ “The Gossiping Guru: Will Success Spoil the Haight?”



Figure 6: Pilgrims to the Haight

Source: Herb Greene, "The Haight" *Herb Greene Photography | Gallery* (n.d.)
<http://www.herbgreenefoto.com/index/> (July 27 2006)

The answer, of course, was that the Summer of Love was the beginning of the end for the original incarnation of the community's identity. Once again, the nicknames created for the Haight are indicative of a shift in this identity: although references to "Hashbury" still abounded (especially in the underground press), the most common shorthand for the area became "Hippieland."⁶² Meant to conjure images of the neighbourhood's colourful residents, "Hippieland" could also be interpreted as an evocation of Disneyland and signalled the Haight's emergence as a tourist destination. This newest incarnation of Haight-Ashbury's identity proved rather pernicious, constructing the district and its inhabitants as curious and exotic "others".

⁶² "Toynbee Tours Hippieland."; Graham, "The Swami's Invitation to Hippieland."; "Trouble in Hippieland." It is significant that the term "Hippieland" was not used by the underground press (while "Hashbury" was), as many "freaks" resented being labelled "hippies" and feared the touristization of the Haight-Ashbury landscape.

The exoticization of the Haight-Ashbury community is not surprising given the media's constant focus on the spectacular nature of its culture. Gleason's descriptions of dancers' costumes, *Ramparts*' ten pages of colour photographs, and Hollywood hippie exploitation films such as *The Love-Ins*, *Psych-Out* and *The Trip*⁶³ each contributed to the widespread transmission of spectacular images of "hippie" culture. Along with the community's own sense of having created a liberated zone of carnival, the media industries and underground news sources helped to create interest in the Haight-Ashbury through their dissemination of spectacular images associated with the burgeoning "hippie" culture. Inevitably, the district soon became a popular tourist destination, resulting in an "othering" or exoticization of its inhabitants as exciting curios.

The most obvious manifestation of this form of othering in Haight was the Grey Line "Hippie-Hop" tour, which was advertised as "the only foreign tour within the continental limits of the United States" and described as "a safari through Psychedelphia."⁶⁴ This tour exoticized the Haight-Ashbury by constructing it as a spectacular, curious Other to be consumed in much the same way one would read an issue of *National Geographic*.⁶⁵ As the tour's token hippie-figure explained: "When someone creates a thing of beauty – an Eiffel Tower, a great painting, the public comes to it. We hippies have created something beautiful – it's natural that the public should come to see."⁶⁶ Upon approaching the Haight, the tour-bus drivers (who were apparently trained in "the sociological

⁶³ *The Love-Ins*, Dir. Arthur Dreifuss, Columbia Pictures, 1967; *Psych Out*, Dir. Richard Rush, American International, 1968; *The Trip*, Dir. Roger Corman, American International, 1967.

⁶⁴ Dominick Cavallo, *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, p. 116; J. Campbell Bruce, "Hippies At My Window." *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 6 1967, p. 3.

⁶⁵ The Gossiping Guru of the *Oracle* had predicted, in a piece published a month before the tour was initiated, that Grey Line would indeed take advantage of the community by creating a tour of "tribes of urban gypsies in their natural state". "Gossiping Guru: Will Success Spoil the Haight-Ashbury?"

⁶⁶ Bruce, "Hippies at my Window."

significance” of the area⁶⁷) would point out that the bus was entering “the largest hippie colony in the world,” where the “natives” passed their time parading, taking drugs, and “banging on bongos.”⁶⁸

The non-conformist residents of the Haight resented this stereotypical image, which constructed the district as a “zoo” where the tourists could gawk at the residents “like animals, not individuals.”⁶⁹ Many residents resisted the shallow characterization of their culture, as well as the tourists’ disinclination to actually step out of the bus to learn anything about their philosophy. They protested the tour by holding mirrors up to the bus windows to reflect what they believed was the real spectacle; commandeering the bus and declaring its passengers “free”; or else pelting it with rotten tomatoes.⁷⁰ After only two months in business, Grey Line was forced to cancel the tour, although it cited traffic congestion, rather than public pressure, as the main factor behind the decision.⁷¹

The success of the Grey Line “Hippie Hop” tour, while brief, demonstrates the powerful sense of spectacular identity that had been constructed around the district and its residents. Tourists, inspired by mass-media images of exotic and colourful characters with strange rituals, were drawn to the Haight-Ashbury to consume the countercultural

⁶⁷ It is no coincidence that Grey Line chose the term “sociological significance” to describe the importance of the Haight, as the district was also drawing hundreds of sociologists and anthropologists, eager to study the strange habits and customs of the Haight’s residents. See, for example, Delbert L. Earisman’s *Hippies In Our Midst: The Rebellion Beyond Rebellion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968; Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip*, New York: Pegasus, 1968; Leonard Wolf, *Voices From the Love Generation*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1968; Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press 1995 (1969); or Arnold Toynbee’s insightful series from the *London Observer*, reprinted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 16, 17, 18, 1967.

⁶⁸ Alonzo Smith, p. 269; George William Thiemann, “Haight-Ashbury: Birth of the Counterculture of the 1960s.” PhD Diss. Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. 1998, p. 133; Horace Sutton, “A Hippie Place to Blow the Mind.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 2 1967, p. 3.

⁶⁹ This is a quote from a Haight resident known only as “Ted,” quoted in Thiemann, p. 133; Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (25th Anniversary edition) New York: Vintage, 2003.

⁷⁰ Perry, pp. 164, 169, 172; Thiemann, p. 133.

⁷¹ “Buslines Halt Haight Tours.” *Berkeley Barb*, May 26 1967, p. 4.

identity in terms of snapshots and souvenirs. But it was not only tourists who were invading the district in droves by the spring of 1967: tens of thousands of young people from all across the United States were flocking to the district in search of the hedonistic abandon promised by the media. Most of these newcomers had little, if any, understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the community's sense of identity and would not participate actively in its creation or perpetuation. Indeed, these newcomers came as passive consumers of the hippie identity in much the same way as did the passengers on the "Hippie Hop" tour. In doing so they were mimicking middle-class patterns of consumption that had been deeply internalized by most of their generation.

Chapter 3: "Here Come the Creep"

Consumption and Commodification of the Countercultural Identity

The national publicity given to the Haight-Ashbury community throughout the winter and spring of 1967 ensured that come summer San Francisco would "become a hippie Fort Lauderdale of the West."¹ Tens of thousands of visitors descended upon the Haight to consume the "hippie" identity they had read about in the press or seen on television. While some of these tourists stayed locked inside their cars or tour buses, many more hit the street seeking an "authentic" experience of the new alternative culture. Estimates about the size of the summer invasion ranged everywhere from 10,000 to a million visitors,² with the *San Francisco Chronicle* consistently quoting the figure of 100,000.³ By June of 1967 the City Health Director announced that there were already 10,000 "hard core hippies" in the district who were costing the city \$35,000 a month for drug abuse treatment.⁴ Meanwhile the police captain at Haight-Ashbury's Park Station estimated that his district was hosting over 300 new hippie arrivals each day.⁵

To many established residents of the Haight, these newcomers were what *Newsweek* called "imitation or "plastic" hippies,"⁶ "spoilers looking for free sex, free food, free dope and free housing."⁷ Indeed, most of these visitors lacked any real understanding of the

¹ George Gilbert, "Diggers Preparing For The 'Invasion'." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 20 1967, pp. 1, 11.

² *Ibid.*

³ "Love Community's Plea to 'Straights'." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 27 1967, p. 2; Gilbert, "Diggers Preparing For the 'Invasion'."

⁴ "The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture." *Time*, July 7 1967, cover story, pp. 18-22.

⁵ "The Ebb & Flow of the Hippie Tide." *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 23 1967 p.1, 18. That autumn *Newsweek* estimated that the total number of visitors to the Haight during the Summer of Love had been 50,000. "Where Are They Now? The Haight-Ashbury Scene." *Newsweek*, December 2 1968, p. 20.

⁶ "Trouble in Hippieland." *Newsweek*, Oct. 30 1967, pp. 84, 87-90.

⁷ "The Hippies Are Coming." *Newsweek*, June 12 1967, pp. 28-9.

original intent and purpose of the Haight-Ashbury community. Instead they had come to the district to partake in the “hippie” identity that had been constructed and filtered through the mass media. These “plastic hippies” were largely interested in achieving a vicarious experience of the Haight-Ashbury; however, this involved the passive consumption of symbolic commodities rather than the active production of cultural forms and values that had characterized the original incarnation of the community. Because of the media’s focus on the counterculture as lifestyle, rather than upon the movement’s philosophical foundations, visitors to the Haight arrived with the intention of sampling those activities of “hippie” culture that were most widely sensationalized in the press. Paradoxically, far from immersing themselves in an authentic, truly alternative countercultural experience, the quest to indulge in sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll mimicked the reification of lifestyle and appetite for consumption embedded in American culture.

American society after the Second World War was largely characterized by a steady prioritization of consumption and leisure over the more traditional middle-class emphasis on family, the Protestant work ethic, and moderation. The rapid expansion of the post-war economy accelerated and intensified these trends, as the delayed gratification of the Depression and war years were eclipsed by a new sense of affluence. Thus the acquisition of consumer commodities came to dominate American middle-class culture, as Chryslers and shiny new appliances were snapped up as markers of cultural affiliation and status. By the late 1960s this consumer-based ethos had been deeply ingrained in the white middle-classes, and the younger generation (including their countercultural cohorts) had internalized it to such an extent that consumption was extended beyond material consumer items to the realm of sexual relations as well. As Bill Osgerby explained in his

perceptive analysis of the “playboy” culture of the late 1950s and ‘60s, this new ethic explicitly linked maleness to commodity consumption; for example, the *Playboy* reader was identified as “a young man of action and acquisition.”⁸ This notion of consumption, as exemplified by the playboy figure, was also extended to women: sexuality was “reduced to a packageable [*sic*] consumption item which the playboy [could] handle because it demand[ed] no responsibility. The woman, in the process, [was] reduced to a playboy accessory.”⁹ The idea of the female as a cultural accessory was mimicked within the counterculture, despite the fading popularity of the playboy image as “the ‘swinging bachelor’s’ claims to effortless cool were increasingly outflanked and undercut by the libertine excesses of the ‘beautiful people’ who were ‘letting it all hang out.’”

In the linkage of sexual prowess to countercultural affiliation, women continued to be commodified as sexual objects. This process was perpetuated by the mainstream press, who emphasized “free love” as one of the defining characteristics of the Haight-Ashbury identity. *Ramparts* described the Haight as a place where hippies enjoyed “sleeping nine to a room and three to a bed, seem to have free sex and guiltless minds” and where “women don’t seem, from the outside, to belong to any particular man”.¹⁰ *Time* went even further, claiming that hippies made love “however and with whomever they can find (including “group grope”).”¹¹

⁸ Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth & Leisure-Style in Modern America*. New York: Berg, 2001, p. 5.

⁹ Jack O. Balswick & Charles W. Peek, “The Inexpressive Male: A Tragedy of American Society.” *The Family Coordinator*, Vol. 20 No.4 (Oct. 1971), p. 365.

¹⁰ Warren Hinckle, “A Social History of the Hippies.” *Ramparts*, March 1967, pp. 9-10, 11.

¹¹ “The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture,” p. 19. Although this quote would seem to imply less than strictly heterosexual mores within the counterculture, *Time* was likely assuming that this “anything goes” attitude still meant only male/female pairings. Although the counterculture was generally accepting of alternative sexualities (Allen Ginsberg being a case in point), it nonetheless remained largely dominated by its continued emphasis on heterosexuality.

This process was part of an alternative, although still strictly heterosexual, masculinity constructed by countercultural males. As the “urbane playboy began to look hopelessly tired and ‘square’,”¹² countercultural males grew their hair long as a symbol of their sexual potency and rejection of the sterility and conformity of mainstream gender norms.¹³ Yet while this alternative masculinity was, on the surface, a challenge to mainstream notions of male sexuality, in truth countercultural males continued the perpetuation of traditional gender relations. Although they chose to symbolize their sexuality differently from the virile icon of the suave and sophisticated playboy, countercultural males still bought into dominant notions of male sexual prowess. Despite the movement’s rhetoric regarding the divinity inherent in human relationships,¹⁴ women in the counterculture continued to be perceived as sexual commodities.

This sexual subordination made it all the easier to perpetuate traditional gender norms as well, as women in the counterculture continued to act out traditional household roles such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, and childrearing. The Grateful Dead present a typical example. While the band and its entourage were deeply involved in the Haight-Ashbury community and embodied many of the characteristics of the new alternative morality

¹² Osgerby, p. 181.

¹³ Raymond Frith, “Hair as Private Asset and Public Symbol” in *Symbols, Public and Private*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1973. It has also been suggested that the alternative masculinity as practiced by countercultural males was evidence of an “androgynous drift”, as some males “repudiated established masculine forms and experimented with more passive and benign forms of male identity.” This included long hair, jewellery, flowery and flowing clothing, as well as the non-violent and passive resistance of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. Osgerby, p. 190.

¹⁴ A typical example of the way in which sexual intercourse was considered spiritual is present in the work of Lenore Kandel, a poetess and author of *The Love Book* who lived in the Haight-Ashbury. Of the nature of sex, Kandel wrote that “making love” was “the transference of ecstatic energy from one body to another. The invocation, recognition, and acceptance of the divinity in man through the medium of physical love.” Lenore Kandel, “Enlightenment Poem.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No. 4 (December 1966), p. 5.

there,¹⁵ the Dead's attitude towards women remained stiflingly traditional. The wives and girlfriends of band members were solely responsible for minding their infants, did laundry duty for the group, and had to fight to get supplies for their children. During the band's brief residency in Los Angeles the women fled with their children back to the Bay Area because they could not function in the male-chauvinist atmosphere surrounding the band.¹⁶

The Grateful Dead's attitude towards women was not an isolated example. The Diggers also perpetuated traditional gender divisions, even though, on other matters, the collective took a radical approach to institutionalized assumptions surrounding property rights, the capitalist economy, and social conditioning. In the basement of the group's headquarters, known as the Free Frame of Reference, Digger women were put to work at sewing machines making clothing,¹⁷ and developed the famous tie-dying method of textile design (an innovation for which they are seldom credited).¹⁸ The Digger women also did most of the work in organizing the group's free meals, but once again received little credit. As Emmett Grogan confessed years later:

[I]f it hadn't been for those women there wouldn't have been 4 p.m. Free Food in the park everyday or any day. They were the real strength in the Haight-Ashbury community,

¹⁵ The Grateful Dead embodied many of the values inherent in the countercultural movement. Their sense of community responsibility was especially strong: the band lived communally, and used their home as a community centre, hosting meetings of community activists and establishing the Haight-Ashbury Legal Organization. The band also believed in the anti-commercial nature of the "scene," playing more free concerts in Golden Gate Park than any of the other San Francisco bands, as well as benefits for myriad organizations and causes. The band donated funds to the perpetually under-funded *Oracle*, while maintaining a reputation as "the most liberal band" regarding their guest lists for free admission to the Avalon and Fillmore ballrooms. Eugene Alonzo Smith III, "Within the Counterculture: The Creation, Transmission, and Commercialization of Cultural Alternatives During the 1960s." PhD Diss. Carnegie Mellon University, 2001, pp. 243-4.

¹⁶ Dennis McNally, *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead*. New York: Broadway Books, 2002, p. 133.

¹⁷ Ralph J. Gleason, "A Free Frame of Reference." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 23 1967, p. 37.

¹⁸ Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The Sixties & Its Aftershocks*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 21.

the real Diggers. Cooking two or three twenty-gallon milk cans full of stew for two hundred people can be a goof, if you do it once a year, but try doing it for two or three days in a row, for two or three weeks, for two or three months. And not get paid – not make any money from it at all. It's a bitch!¹⁹

Despite these innovative contributions, women played a subordinate role in the organization. It was the Digger men who took the leadership role in organizing community events and who stole (or “liberated”) the food for the Feeds. The Digger women were clearly supporting actors, enacting traditional roles such as food preparation and sewing. To illustrate the extent to which the Diggers failed to question the gendered division of labour one has only to turn to Peter Coyote. An intelligent and fluent individual, Coyote demonstrated knowledge of critical thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse, Theodore Adorno and Karl Marx,²⁰ and claimed that the Diggers were defining themselves “by how far from the majority culture we could run.”²¹ Yet when asked about the role of women and children in the Digger movement, he replied: “I don't know. What happens to wives and children is probably what's always happened to wives and children.”²²

The trivialization of women's agency in the counterculture meant that the movement remained largely male-dominated. It is no surprise then that female members' contributions to the “scene” continue to be overlooked. Another typical example involved the famous “LSD Millionaire” Augustus Owsley Stanley III. Owsley acid was legendary, the standard against which all LSD was measured. *Time* called him the “Henry Ford of

¹⁹ Emmett Grogan, *Ringolevio: A Life Played For Keeps*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., p. 264.

²⁰ Leonard Wolf, *Voices From the Love Generation*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1968, p. 120.

²¹ Peter Coyote quoted in Bill Graham with Robert Greenfield, *Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock and Out*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, p. 187.

²² Peter Coyote quoted in Wolf, p. 120.

psychedelia”²³ for his innovations in manufacturing and distributing the drug. But Owsley was not solely responsible for his success. Although the point is seldom acknowledged in the literature about the counterculture, it was his girlfriend Melissa, a former graduate student in chemistry at Berkeley, who taught him how to process the chemicals and manufacture the drug.²⁴

The subordination of women as agents within the counterculture ensured that their commodification as sex objects would largely go unchallenged. Both the major news outlets and underground media perpetuated this pattern by constructing stereotypical images of the female non-conformist as an innocent “Flower Child” who “gives and takes love at the drop of a petal,”²⁵ or an exotic hippie girl who “loung[e] in the buffalo grass...clad in nothing but beads, bells and feather headdresses.”²⁶ If anything, the underground press was often more vulgar in their descriptions of countercultural women, such as the *Oracle* journalist who described the girls at one event as “sweet pretty pussy.”²⁷ Perhaps because of the media’s emphasis on the counterculture as an orgy of

²³ “The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture.”

²⁴ Echols, p. 23; McNally, p. 118. The absence of Melissa’s last name from the historical record is yet another example of the continued neglect of women’s agency in the counterculture.

²⁵ George Gilbert, “A Hippie’s Day: The Flower Children’s Society.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 17 1967, pp. 1, 14.

²⁶ “The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture.” This kind of description is very reminiscent of the representation of courtesans in *fin-de-siècle* Europe and is just one example in a long history of sexualizing women through an association with exotic iconography (such as the Native American imagery used here). See, for example, Sander Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature.” *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 12 No.1 (Autumn 1985), pp. 204-242.

²⁷ Barbara LaMorticella, “New Year’s Day Wail – Visualities.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.5 (January 1967) p. 5. The fact that this is a quotation of a female author describing other women points to the extent to which women did not question their identification as sexual objects. It is also evidence of the license exercised by the underground media in its use of offensive language – license that often (and ironically) pushed such sexual stereotypes further than the mainstream media. Indeed, the “indiscriminate employment of sexual materials and overindulgence in tasteless language” was widely characteristic of the underground press during this period. Robert J. Glessing, *The Underground Press in America*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1970, p. xiv.

“free love”, most of the newcomers to the Haight during the summer of 1967 were male, many seeking guilt- and consequence-free sexual encounters.²⁸

The reality that women in the Haight were greatly outnumbered by the men also contributed to their commodification as suppliers of the male population’s increasing demands for sex.²⁹ The social consequences of this situation were obvious: by late 1967 the Haight-Ashbury community was witnessing a dramatic increase in rape and other forms of sexual assault against women, as men ventured to the district in search of vulnerable or otherwise “available” women.³⁰ Dr. David Smith of the Free Medical Clinic estimated that the incidence of venereal disease was up 300%.³¹ The Diggers, eager to blame the local H.I.P. Merchants and editors of the *Oracle* for the media hype which had drawn these people to the Haight, published a leaflet through Com/Co making clear the depths to which their community had fallen:

Pretty little sixteen-year-old middle-class chick comes to the Haight to see what its all about & gets picked up by a 17-year-old street dealer who spends all day shooting her full of speed again & again, then feeds her 300 mikes [micrograms of acid] and raffles off her temporarily unemployed body for the biggest gang bang since the night before last. The politics and ethics of ecstasy. Rape is as common as bullshit on Haight Street.³²

While the media’s distortion of the Haight-Ashbury identity lured many sexual predators to the district in search of carnal pleasures, many more visitors were lured by the promise of psychedelic pleasures and the prospect of sampling the “psychedelic

²⁸ “The Ebb & Flow of the Hippie Tide.”

²⁹ Thiemann, p. 103.

³⁰ Grogan, p. 446; David E. Smith & John Luce, *Love Needs Care: A History of San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic and its Pioneer Role in Treating Drug Abuse Problems*. Boston: Little Brown, 1971, pp. 154-157.

³¹ “Hepatitis Hits Haight.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 18 1967, p. 14.

³² The Diggers, “Uncle Tim’s Children.” *Communications Company Broadside*, circa early summer 1967. Available at *The Digger Archives Online*, (n.d.) <http://www.diggers.org> (July 27 2006).

smorgasbord”³³ purportedly available in the Haight. As the neighbourhood increasingly became identified as a drug centre during the spring and summer of 1967, the street market shifted away from the traditional staples of marijuana and LSD towards harder drugs such as STP and speed. These new drugs reflected the community’s drift towards an emphasis on “kicks” or physical intoxication, and away from the spiritually motivated psychedelic seeking that had characterized the early history of the community’s drug use. Amongst the original residents of the Haight psychedelics were largely viewed as a tool for breaking down internalized social norms, for “opening the doors of perception.” As Ron Thelin of the Psychedelic Shop explained:

Psychedelic experiences at first are a kind of jar, that kind of wakening, that kind of transcendence, in order to understand all the programming that has gone on. There has been a lot of programming, that programs a child as soon as he is old enough to walk around, to look at things, then puts him in a tunnel. When he is fresh and free he is programmed to get an education, get a job, get a home, get a car, buy a grave plot, die. And that tunnel blocks out every thing. Let us understand this; Learning is a chemical process. Psychedelic chemicals are tools of learning, it is a matter of learning how to use the tools, everything you put in your body affects your brain.³⁴

Marijuana and LSD were also seen as spiritual aids which, if taken in the proper set and setting – in conjunction with meditation and self-examination for example – could assist in personal discovery. Timothy Leary believed that psychedelic drugs were “sacraments” and urged that they “be treated...and used as such.” As part of his proselytising, Leary rejected suggestions that drugs should be used for “kicks” and insisted instead that the best use of psychedelics was in a quest for God: “We’re saying the same thing that Luther said to Rome: take the Bible and stand naked in your

³³ “Turned On Way of Life.” *Newsweek*, Nov. 28 1966, pp. 72, 74.

³⁴ “Untitled Interview with Ron Thelin.”

communication with God. Now the particular method we use is artificial. The Bible was artificial. It shocked Rome when Luther said he could take this man-made thing and find God through it. [...] It shocks Americans today when we say anyone in a state of grace can take this chemical and stand naked before this Divine Process.”³⁵

Despite Leary’s provocative position, the media’s characterization of the Haight as a drug centre coincided with the appearance of newer and “harder” drugs. First to hit the street were synthetic compounds, such as STP, that were widely believed to be more potent and powerful than LSD, even though they were less likely to produce the euphoria associated with acid.³⁶ By early July “hard” drugs like speed were also becoming common. As these newer drugs became more commonly available there was a discernible shift away from the idea that drug use enhanced personal or spiritual discovery and toward the less philosophical satisfaction of “getting your kicks” or “cheap thrills.”³⁷ The use of LSD and marijuana began to decline as narcotics such as speed (and to a lesser extent, heroin) began to rival the psychedelics’ popularity.³⁸ Amphetamine users (or “speed freaks”) had been congregating in the Haight as early as 1963 when, thanks to

³⁵ Timothy Leary, “Press Conference.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.4 (December 1966), pp. 4, 17, 18, 19.

³⁶ David Perlman, “Meth Heads’ Fantastic Drug Jolt.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 29 1967 p. 1, 4; “The STP Leak: A New Drug Mystery.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 3 1967, headline; “A New Mind Drug.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug.12 1967, headline. According to David Smith, STP hit the streets in early June of 1967, allegedly promising “three days of Serenity, Tranquillity and Peace,” yet more likely to produce panic attacks, heart palpitations, and freak-outs. David Smith, pp.173-174.

³⁷ This form of drug consumption was not altogether new to the Haight-Ashbury community, as Kesey and the Prankster’s use of LSD was explicitly in opposition to the “set and setting” method preached by Leary and his followers. The Pranksters believed that the user should dive right in to the psychedelic experience, stimulate all of their senses at once to immerse themselves in the anarchy of the moment. This was certainly a form of drug use for pure pleasures’ sake, yet there was an ulterior motive behind Kesey’s Acid Tests – what Tom Wolfe called the attainment of the NOW consciousness. It was not all fun and games. Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. New York: Bantam Books, 1968, pp. 207-8.

³⁸ Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History*. New York: Wenner Books, 2005, p. 189.

Neal Cassady and other members of the Beat generation,³⁹ San Francisco had first developed a reputation as a “national center of the speed scene.”⁴⁰ Yet it was not until the summer of 1967 that a separate and visible sub-culture of “speed-freaks” began to rival the original psychedelic “seekers” in the district.⁴¹ Heroin, too, was present in the Haight, although its use was initially frowned upon and not widespread. Emmett Grogan of the Diggers became addicted to the opiate when a returning soldier offered him a gift of fine Vietnamese heroin in 1967.⁴²

As the Haight-Ashbury’s population swelled throughout the spring and summer of 1967, so too did the number of arrests for narcotics possession. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, there were 191 juvenile drug arrests in the first six months of 1967, compared with 167 for the entire twelve months of 1966. The rise in adult narcotics arrests was no less dramatic: 2042 people were arrested in 1966, while during the first six months of 1967 alone there were 1666 narcotics charges.⁴³ This number is even more significant given that the statistics represent arrests *before* the Summer of Love, when the Haight’s population reached its highest point. As thrill seekers swarmed through the district seeking cheap and easy kicks, longtime residents noticed changes in the kinds of people hanging out in the area.⁴⁴ Soon there were rumours that the drug trade in the Haight-Ashbury had become so lucrative that the Mafia was muscling in on the scene.⁴⁵

³⁹ Cassady was well known for his frequent ingestion of amphetamines. McNally, pp. 107, 109; Perry, p. 13.

⁴⁰ David Smith, p. 17.

⁴¹ David Smith, pp.176-178.

⁴² Grogan, p. 446. Grogan died of an overdose several years later, and his body was found in a New York subway car. McNally, p. 507; Perry p. 284.

⁴³ Ernest Lenn, “Explosion of Drug Arrests.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 2 1967 p. 11.

⁴⁴ Jeff Jassen, “Violence Flares on Street of Love.” *Berkeley Barb*, June 2 1967 pp. 1, 5.

⁴⁵ “Hippie Drug Murders: Syndicate ‘Moves In’.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 8 1967, headline.

Central to the new population's approach to drug use was the money economy, as drugs became popular commodities to be bought and sold on the open market. By contrast, during the early months of the Haight-Ashbury scene the distribution and use of drugs had been part and parcel of the community's notions of anti-materialism. LSD and marijuana were often passed out free to dancehall audiences, at Acid Tests, or even at events such as the Human Be-In. Many people in the founding community were "turned-on" to drugs by friends who expected no monetary compensation for their generosity.⁴⁶ Yet as curiosity seekers flooded into the Haight from elsewhere, notions of commodification and consumption became more dominant, and the nature of the drug trade shifted from one of "share and share alike" to an attitude based on what the *Oracle* called the "Mafia mentality":

MAFIA IS A STATE OF MIND. Whenever we attach value or worth or wealth to any external object whether gold or dope or property or country, that object in the pursuit of happiness becomes an object of contention more important than the human mind that is the original source of all wealth or value. The diamond mind is the unending source and measure and experiencer [*sic*] and creator of value... Dope has no effect at all – it is valueless – an illusion – a glittering game of buying and selling... [...] We must all disengage ourselves from the Mafia state of mind – Which originates with consciousness attaching itself to the external object – DOPE – as the source of ultimate value – Let go of this attachment and there will be no Mafia no control no murder no profiteering. Do not buy or sell dope anymore! Let's tell our friends not to buy or sell dope any more – Let's detach ourselves from that material value – Plant dope and give away all you can reap... [...] CONSCIOUSNESS – GOD-HEAD – LOVE ARE THE GOALS. Let's

⁴⁶ Alonzo Smith, p. 121; Perry pp. 45, 78. See also Wolf, regarding the Acid Tests. LSD was distributed free at the Human Be-In by the Diggers, who dosed turkey sandwiches that were handed out to hungry passers-by. Others wandered through the crowd distributing tablets of Owsley's latest batch of LSD, while a Santa-Claus figure handed out free marijuana. Perry, p. 121; Thiemann, p. 82. People who dealt in drugs such as marijuana often only made enough money to "underwrite their own stash of grass." Perry, p. 76. Perry also reports that during Country Joe & The Fish's album release party, the band distributed five kilograms worth of marijuana for free. Perry, p. 191.

disengage ourselves from the commercialization and the bottomless desire for more dope.⁴⁷

A similar process to the commodification of the Haight-Ashbury's drug culture occurred within the city's musical scene. Aside from sex and drugs, the third element of countercultural identity sought by newcomers to the Haight was rock music. The "San Fran Sound" had become a recognizable marketing tool as early as 1966 and by 1967 there was widespread belief that the Bay Area was witnessing a musical revolution. The "musical environment" of the city was soon driving "the second immigration to the West"⁴⁸ and as Ralph Gleason acknowledged, "it [was] becom[ing] more and more obvious that the music of San Francisco...[was] going to attract thousands of young people...from all over the country."⁴⁹ Ed Denson of the *Berkeley Barb* also recognized the role that San Francisco played in the new musical revolution, stating "Frisco [is] the symbol of the new scene."⁵⁰

Much of the attention given the "San Fran Scene" was due to groups such as the Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother and the Holding Company, the Grateful Dead, and Berkeley's Country Joe and the Fish, all of whom performed at the Monterey International Pop Festival in June of 1967, and released albums that same year.⁵¹ By the Summer of Love, three of these albums had reached the top ten in San Francisco and were beginning to chart nationally: the Airplane's *Surrealistic Pillow*, the Grateful Dead's self titled debut, and Country Joe and the Fish's *Electric Music For the Mind and*

⁴⁷ "In Memoriam for Superspade and John Carter." *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol.1 No.9 (August 1967) p. 4.

⁴⁸ Ralph J. Gleason, "Hippies and the Rock Revolution." *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 3 1967, p. 47.

⁴⁹ Ralph J. Gleason, "The City That Means Love to Everybody." *San Francisco Examiner*, May 14 1967, Datebook p. 27.

⁵⁰ Ed Denson, "The Folk Scene." *Berkeley Barb*, June 30 1967.

⁵¹ While the Airplane already had national distribution through their contract with RCA, the Grateful Dead, Big Brother, and Country Joe were not picked up by large record labels until after their performances at Monterey Pop.

Body.⁵² The national success of these albums ensured that the San Fran Sound reached thousands of listeners, potentially recruiting legions more fans to the Haight for a glimpse of their new musical idols.

With their national success atop the music charts, the Haight's musicians quickly became celebrity objects to be consumed on vinyl, posters, or in person at concerts. As their success grew, so too did the distance between the groups and their audiences. During the original incarnation of the Haight-Ashbury scene, members of the Airplane, the Dead and other groups were active members of the community who considered themselves no different from the people in the audience. For the Dead, in particular, "the root basis of their relationship [with the audience] was that of a partnership of equals, of companions in an odyssey."⁵³ Yet the commodification of these groups and their members' elevation to celebrity status resulted in their alienation and eventual separation from the community. As their fans came to consume their images and music, a passive audience was created, one that was no longer participating in the creation and reinforcement of the Haight's sense of community.

San Francisco's growing identification as a musical Mecca completely changed its burgeoning live music scene. Early psychedelic dances such as the Trips Festival or those promoted by the Family Dog had been important cultural events in the lifespan of the

⁵² Ralph J. Gleason, "The Triumph of the New S.F. Music." *San Francisco Examiner*, July 2 1967, Sunday Supplement p. 32; Jefferson Airplane, *Surrealistic Pillow*. RCA, 3766, 1967 (released Feb. 1967); Grateful Dead, *Grateful Dead*. Warner Brothers, WS-1689, 1967 (released March 1967); Country Joe & The Fish, *Electric Music For the Mind and Body*, Vanguard, 79244, 1967 (released Jan. 1967). The Airplane's second album, *Surrealistic Pillow* did very well nationally, peaking at number 3 on the Billboard charts largely on the success of its two singles, "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit". Country Joe & The Fish peaked at 39, while the Dead, struggling to replicate the passion of their live performance in the studio, failed to chart any higher than number 73. Chart details courtesy of Billboard.com, available online at AMG All Music Guide, <http://www.allmusic.com> (July 24, 2006).

⁵³ McNally, p. 119.

Haight-Ashbury. The unique use of liquid light projections, as well as the wild costumes and free-form jam sessions had become staples of the dancehall scene. As early as February 1966 Bill Graham began promoting dances by advertising “the Sights and Sounds of the Trips Festival,” and he soon acquired his own dancehall, The Fillmore.⁵⁴ Graham had a keen business sense and it was not long before he was hosting packed audiences six nights a week. Around the same time the Family Dog acquired the Avalon Ballroom, and began putting on dances to rival those at the Fillmore. Yet despite the success of both venues, the popularization of the dancehall scene resulted in a standard playbill with three bands each performing two sets, all complemented by an obligatory light show.⁵⁵ Light shows had evolved considerably since the early days at the Red Dog Saloon, to the point that they were increasingly popular outside the countercultural community. During the spring of 1967 the Hilton Inn at San Francisco’s airport applied for a permit to build a light show, perhaps under the impression that they could draw travellers heading towards the Haight or compete with the Avalon and Fillmore.⁵⁶ By 1969 *Popular Science* magazine was offering instructions for home construction of several different models.⁵⁷

Initially begun as a conscious attempt to recreate the feeling of *communitas* invoked by the Trips Festival, many of the follow-on events after the opening of the Fillmore and the Avalon lacked the power and spontaneity of the happenings in 1966. As Eugene Alonzo Smith III has acknowledged, “in the space of only a few months” from the Trips

⁵⁴ Alonzo Smith, p. 116.

⁵⁵ Alonzo Smith, p. 117.

⁵⁶ Perry, p. 169.

⁵⁷ W. Stevenson Bacon & Sam Shatavsky. “Tune In With Psychedelic Light-Show Systems You Can Build.” *Popular Science*. Vol.194 No. 5, May 1969, pp. 158-61.

Festival to the opening of the Fillmore in April 1966, the San Francisco rock experience had been utterly transformed: “a new cultural form had been created, publicized, repeated, and standardized. What had started as an attempt to create spontaneous gatherings of like-minded individuals had become a ritual with predictable and set forms.”⁵⁸ In addition to the formulaic playbills, the behaviour of audiences became more predictable as well. During the spring of 1967 it was observed that the dancehall scene had undergone several changes: people were no longer dancing or participating in the kind of call and response exchanges with the musicians that gave the prototype events their feeling of spontaneity and participation.⁵⁹ Drawn to the scene by the media’s promise of loud music and stroboscopic light shows, the new audiences were passive: they sat quietly on the floor or in their chairs and few stood up to dance. As Owsley described it:

As soon as it started being as much money as a movie, the whole character of the thing changed. Instead of people just having a good time and dancing and everything, they stood around mesmerized, staring at the stage as if they were going to miss a stroke of the guitar player’s pick or something. It became like watching a movie. Eventually they even started sitting down and staring at ‘em. Before, it was just this incredible crazy wonderful experience. It was the money that bugged it up.⁶⁰

Increasingly, the Haight’s musical commodities were also available to audiences in their own homes, through the power of radio and recording technologies. By 1967 several

⁵⁸ Alonzo Smith, p. 117.

⁵⁹ Thompson.

⁶⁰ Owsley quoted in Graham & Greenfield, p. 202. Part of the problem may have been that Graham was an outsider to the scene, a businessman marketing a countercultural commodity to the very community that had created it. Indeed, there were even complaints that as the prices for his dances rose, the true non-conformists of Haight-Ashbury could no longer afford admission. (See, for example, Thompson). This was not true of the Avalon, however, which had a superior air of authenticity. Run by Chet Helms in the name of the Family Dog, the Avalon was known for its “spiritual overtones” and as such the Avalon became the “real church” to Bill Graham’s “commercial church.” Ed Denson, “The Folk Scene.” *Berkeley Barb*, Aug. 4 1967, p. 10; Graham & Greenfield, p. 149.

of the new countercultural groups had released albums. The success of these records meant that audiences were able to hear the new music via the radio, especially the community's new underground radio station KMPX.⁶¹ And yet, however important these industries were for the dissemination of countercultural music and its attendant philosophies, these forms of cultural transmission encouraged passive consumption rather than active participation, and reinforced the standardization of the Haight-Ashbury scene.

By the summer of 1967 the countercultural audience had spread beyond the boundaries of San Francisco. It had become a national phenomenon rather than a community based upon local, face-to-face relationships and shared experience. The majority of the new participants, who were drawn to the neighbourhood after watching the spectacle on television, reading about it in the press, or listening to it on the radio, were no longer an active part of the community. The new countercultural cohort was, rather, a docile body *upon which* the spectacle of the Haight was played rather than *through which* the spectacle was played out. The difference is that when the spectacle is played *through* (rather than on) individuals, they are part of a system that recycles and reinforces the values associated with the signs, symbols, and codes of the spectacle. This was the philosophy behind the Diggers' street theatre events, where "life acting" and audience participation were meant to strengthen and perpetuate the values of the new community. However, once the system of countercultural dissemination became fragmented through the lenses of the mass media, the experience became individualized and the communal function of the spectacle was lost. The symbols were imposed upon

⁶¹ Ralph J. Gleason, "Something New on Pop Music Scene." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 16 1967, p. 41; Richard Barrett, "No Hex on KMPX." *Berkeley Barb*, July 28 1967, p. 6. For a detailed history of the station and its innovative approach to broadcasting, see Susan Krieger, *Hip Capitalism*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979.

docile bodies, which received them but did not *participate* in their re-integration into the community.⁶²

The early Haight-Ashbury scene had been characterized by its members' active production of cultural forms such as dance, fashion, language, music and art. However, once created, these forms became cultural commodities, passively consumed by the new national audience rather than actively created through participation in their production. By the time the Summer of Love took place, the commodification of the movement had moved well beyond the trinity of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll to encompass material "lifestyle" items such as posters, clothing, drug paraphernalia, record albums, and love beads. As the Haight-Ashbury scene was commercialized, the values of the counterculture became embodied in objects rather than in individuals. Thus, to participate in the movement one only needed to acquire the correct objects and symbols of the counterculture rather than attempting to work out these values through human contact and personal relationships. Thus commodities became the *mediators* of experience rather than experience itself. Just as Karl Marx explained in his theory of commodity fetishism, relationships were increasingly mediated by objects and products instead of through human contact.⁶³ It was this "genuine" relationship between human beings that the true non-conformists in the Haight sought, not one based on objects. Thus the counterculture became, after 1967, a community based on the acquisition of symbolic commodities, rather than an *actual* community.

⁶² For a discussion of the nature of "docile bodies," See Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (2nd ed., trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1995.

⁶³ Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret" in Martyn J. Lee (ed.) *The Consumer Society Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000; pp. 10-18.

As the tourist tide engulfed the Haight-Ashbury during the Summer of Love, the commercialization of the district became impossible to ignore. Between February and May 1967, fifteen storefronts in the Haight were either renovated or changed ownership, while both commercial and residential property values jumped.⁶⁴ Many of the new businesses catered specifically to tourists and “plastic hippies” rather than the original community: the Golden Cask targeted “super-jet-setters”; Trader Cliffs, formerly a second-hand junk shop, began offering the typical San Francisco tourist fare; while Lee Sam & Dick’s Pizza lured tourists with a sign which made blatantly obvious the significance of the first letters of their names. Even the Print Mint, the iconic poster shop where the *Oracle* was printed, hurriedly remodelled its back room as a coffeehouse, and began selling the “Love Guide,” a street map which highlighted the Haight’s “hipper” businesses.⁶⁵ The *Berkeley Barb* warned that the Haight was turning into “a Coney Island tourist trap,”⁶⁶ while a reporter for the *Chronicle* pointed out that the former “hippie haven” was fast becoming “a sort of honkey-tonk Ghirardelli Square, catering to squares in search of hippies.”⁶⁷ It was clear that the moneyed middle-class hippie-wannabees who came to the Haight to purchase a countercultural experience cared and understood little about how their patterns of consumption were influencing the district.

Some members of the Haight-Ashbury scene were aware of the alienating effects of this countercultural fetishism, as Marx’s theory fit with their more general critique of America’s consumer-capitalist economy. As Peter Coyote made clear, “Commodities are tools. They have no intrinsic value except in what they can do for you, but in this culture

⁶⁴ Jeff Jassen “The Year of the Shuck: What Price Love?” *Berkeley Barb*, May 5 1967, p. 5; Perry, p. 133.

⁶⁵ Jassen, “The Year of the Shuck: What Price Love?”

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Gilbert, “Diggers Preparing for the Invasion.”

they are invested with all sorts of magical properties”.⁶⁸ The Diggers, who believed that “property, credit, interest, insurance, instalments, [and] profit are stupid concepts”⁶⁹ rejected the power of material objects. Instead they claimed to be “hip to property. Everything is free, do your own thing. Human beings are the means of exchange. Food, machines, clothing, materials, shelter and props are simply there. Stuff. [...] Where does the stuff come from? People, persons, beings. Isn’t it obvious that objects are only transitory subjects of human value?”⁷⁰ It was not only the Diggers who displayed an understanding of the complex relationship between people and property. The *Oracle*’s critique of the “Mafia mentality” also made similar observations regarding the commodity fetishism of drugs: “Whenever we attach value or worth or wealth to any external object whether gold or dope or property or country, that object in the pursuit for happiness becomes an object of contention more important than the human mind that is the original source of all wealth or value.”⁷¹

Of course, despite all this rhetoric about the preference for personal relationships over materialism, monetary exchange and the consumer capitalist mentality had always been part of the Haight-Ashbury community. In January 1966, at precisely the same time that the Trips Festival was shaping the Haight’s identity, Ron and Jay Thelin opened the Psychedelic Shop, a business dedicated to the sale of such countercultural commodities as pipes, books, incense, rolling papers, posters, and “everything an acid head might be

⁶⁸ Peter Coyote, quoted in Wolf, p. 118.

⁶⁹ The Diggers, “Who Paid For Your Trip?” *The Digger Papers* (circa Fall 1966), Reprinted in *The Realist*, August 1968, and available at *The Digger Archives Online* (n.d.) <http://www.diggers.org> (July 27 2006).

⁷⁰ The Diggers, “Free Store / Property of the Possessed.” *The Diggers Papers* (circa Fall 1966). Reprinted in *The Realist*, August 1968, and available at *The Digger Archives Online* (n.d.) <http://www.diggers.org> (July 27 2006).

⁷¹ “In Memoriam for Superspade and John Carter.”

interested in.”⁷² Although the Psych Shop soon became a landmark in Haight-Ashbury, not everyone in the community believed in the owners’ “hip” capitalism.⁷³ On the day the Shop opened someone slipped a piece of paper under the door accusing the merchants of “selling out the psychedelic revolution.”⁷⁴ “Even the cops on the beat know the Love Shuck is just a promotion,” said one Digger. “Love for sale: buy it at our shop.”⁷⁵ The Diggers believed that the only way for the Haight scene to become a meaningful community was for the H.I.P. merchants to incorporate themselves as non-profit enterprises, lower their prices, and share the profits. As Com/Co explained: “Money just is sickness. It kills perception. Everyone is entitled to make a living, a good living, but everything more than a living is dying.”⁷⁶ In response to the pressure, the Psychedelic Shop announced its intention to go cooperative.⁷⁷

The debate over the Psychedelic Shop was essentially about degrees of authenticity. The Diggers believed that they embodied the real meaning of Haight-Ashbury because their notions of anti-materialism were the most radical. Yet the H.I.P. merchants were also vital members of the community, and while they operated within the capitalist economy they also truly believed that their approach to business was a radical and acceptable alternative to the mainstream. The Thelin brothers typified the moderate anti-materialist approach that characterized the majority of the Haight’s population. Despite having been “thoroughly indoctrinated in the U.S. business ethic as children, trained from birth to have the proper U.S. reverence for money and to be good businessmen when they

⁷² Perry, p. 73.

⁷³ “Untitled interview with Ron Thelin.”

⁷⁴ Perry, p. 73.

⁷⁵ Silenus, “Frisco Tabasco: Love Shuck.” *Berkeley Barb*, February 3 1967, p. 1, 4.

⁷⁶ Com/Co printout quoted by George Gilbert, “Hippie Land – Face by Face: Moon Maid, Wolf Man And the Rest.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 19 1967, pp. 1, 18.

⁷⁷ “Psych Shop Co-Op After the Books.” *Berkeley Barb*, May 5 1967, p. 5.

grew up,” the Thelins believed that people were more important than money and ran their business accordingly.⁷⁸ For them, mainstream America was characterized by its obsessive relationship with money, but it was that *obsession* with money, rather than money itself, that had to be transcended. As Ron Thelin explained,

The money people, the people who think thru the eyes of money, cannot see any activity or human involvement unless they surround it with some kind of relationship with money. This is the most difficult thing to transcend. Doing things for free instead of for money. What my experience has been is that it is a difficult thing to work out, but as soon as you can start to do it and figure it out the more you do things because they turn you on, because it is the right thing to do... [I]t’s hard to figure out the economic mechanism that makes sense to the community. The best thing that I can come up with yet is non-profit incorporation. When you have this then you are not dealing with profit, you are doing it because it turns you on and what money you do make goes back into the community. It seems to be an important distinction.⁷⁹

Another member of the H.I.P. merchants association, Tsvi Strauch, who was the owner of a mod clothing shop called In Gear, took the Diggers to task for their radical Marxist approach to capitalism:

See, they believe in purity, which doesn’t exist in the world. But dogmatic ideologies always claim to have that kind of purity like Catholics and the Communists and logical positivists. [...] They interpret the Haight-Ashbury according to their economic doctrines, without any real knowledge of what’s going on... So they claim that we’re selling love, that we’re dressing like hippies to sell our thing. [...] [We’re] not straight people who saw something good, grew a quick beard, opened a store, and are trying to capitalize on that. [...] ... You’re not forced to buy anywhere. That’s just Marxist bullshit.⁸⁰

As the self-appointed radical anarchist conscience of the Haight community, the Diggers dedicated much of their activity to questioning the consumer capitalist tendencies in their midst. One of the most visible manifestations of this questioning was

⁷⁸ Gilbert, “Hippie Land – Face by Face.”

⁷⁹ “Untitled interview with Ron Thelin.”

⁸⁰ Tsvi Strauch (H.I.P. merchant, owner of In Gear) quoted in Wolf, pp. 186-7.

the Digger-organized boycott and picketing of The Love Circus dance, held in March 1967. The First Annual Love Circus was organized by a commune known as the Love Conspiracy and featured performances by the Grateful Dead, Love, Moby Grape, and others. Modelled after the Trips Festival and Fillmore events, the Love Circus drew fire from the Diggers both for attempting to capitalize on the word “love” and for the “excessive” ticket price of \$3.50. “If it’s really love it would be free,” admonished a Digger. In a handbill passed around the picket line the Diggers outlined their moral objections to the Dance: “They’re selling us love. The Diggers will not pay for this trip. Suckers buy what lovers get for free!”⁸¹ Warning of the creeping commercialism that was pervading the Haight scene, a Com/Co handbill released afterwards declared that “Revolution for \$3.50 is an impossibility.” “Revolution is free because it is yours,” the handbill reminded readers, adding ominously: “Watch out. Here come the creep.”⁸²

The organizers of the Love Circus took offence at the Digger picket, but agreed to “actively support the pickets whether or not we agree with you.”⁸³ In a rebuttal published in the *Berkeley Barb* the Circus’ events director reacted strongly to the Diggers’ accusations: “They say that the event should have been free to all since it was a ‘love circus.’ That we were in a love for profit business. Bullshit! We are in the entertainment business; our message is love; our secondary motivation is the survival of our communes through creativity and hard work”. He then outlined the event’s finances, which totalled a

⁸¹ Jeff Jassen, “Love Community, Conspiracy Clash.” *Berkeley Barb*, March 10 1967, pp. 1, 7.

⁸² The Communications Company (Com/Co), “Remember the Love Circus?” May 17, 1967.

⁸³ Jassen, “Love Community, Conspiracy Clash.”

net loss of over three thousand dollars. "How about that for making a profit from 'Love'!" he chided.⁸⁴

Nonetheless, the Diggers' protests against the Love Circus were a revealing response to the commercialism creeping into the Haight-Ashbury community. Bill Graham and Chet Helms had proved that psychedelic dances could be money-makers,⁸⁵ and it was inevitable that imitations, such as the Magic Mountain Festival held on Mount Tamalpais in June 1967, soon began popping up all around the Bay Area. Sponsored by a local radio station, the Festival was an obvious attempt to cash in on the success of the Haight-Ashbury scene without a real understanding of what the community was about. The only Haight band to perform was the Jefferson Airplane.⁸⁶ All the other groups were either Los Angeles-based, or early arrivals for the Monterey Pop Festival, a gala event that was due to take place the following weekend.

With a shopping concourse featuring dozens of "hip" booths selling countercultural wares, including "acid shakes" for 50¢, the Magic Mountain Festival was an obvious attempt to market the trappings of the Haight-Ashbury scene.⁸⁷ However, as the *Barb* reported, the event failed to draw the countercultural crowd at which it was aimed, attracting instead an audience that was "very straight" and "had trouble grooving."⁸⁸ By

⁸⁴ "Love Conspiracy Levels With Haight." *Berkeley Barb*, March 19 1967, p. 7.

⁸⁵ Graham reportedly made over \$25,000 a weekend from the Fillmore dances. John Glatt, *Rage & Roll: Bill Graham and the Selling of Rock*. New York: Birch Lane, 1993, p. 48.

⁸⁶ This in itself was telling, as the Airplane had always been the most commercial of the Haight-Ashbury bands. An early promotional tool had been the sale of "Jefferson Airplane Loves You" bumper stickers, while the band had also recorded a series of controversial Levis commercials. By the middle of 1967 they had also made appearances on the Bell Telephone Hour, the Smothers Brothers, and American Bandstand. Jeff Tamarkin, *Got A Revolution! The Turbulent Flight of Jefferson Airplane*. New York: Astria, 2003, pp. 128-157; "A Letter: The Lovin' Levis." *Berkeley Barb*, May 12 1967, p. 6.

⁸⁷ Maitland Zane, "Bash on Mt. Tam." *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 12 1967, p. 3; Robert Hurwitt, "Magic Mountain Fervor." *Berkeley Barb*, June 16 1967, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Hurwitt.

contrast, the Monterey Pop Festival (held June 16-18) was an overwhelming success. Monterey Pop was a showcase of the new “acid” rock scene. It featured performances by the Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother and the Holding Company, the Grateful Dead, the Quicksilver Messenger Service, Moby Grape, Jimi Hendrix, the Who, the Mamas and the Papas, Ravi Shankar, and others.

Conceived and organized by Los Angeles based promoters and musicians, notably John Phillips of the Mamas and Papas, the Festival was largely promoted as an extension of the San Francisco scene, even though the L.A. scenesters had only a tenuous connection with their Haight-Ashbury counterparts. The Los Angeles scene recognized the “grassroots authenticity” of the Haight-Ashbury, especially the communal function of the Fillmore and Avalon ballrooms that contrasted so dramatically with the caged “go-go girls” of L.A.’s Sunset Strip. This desire to capitalize on the aura of San Francisco was the basis behind John Phillips and Scott McKenzie’s recording of “San Francisco (Be Sure To Wear Some Flowers in Your Hair).” Conceived by Phillips as a way to “put the word out to the kids”,⁸⁹ the song was released as advance publicity for the festival and made clear the extent to which the organizers were depending on the participation of the San Francisco contingent for success. As the Los Angeles historian Barney Hoskins made clear, “the key to the whole event lay with the San Francisco fraternity.”⁹⁰

However, as Phillips acknowledged, “There was definite rivalry and antagonism between the Los Angeles and the San Francisco camps. We had trouble even getting

⁸⁹ John Phillips, quoted in Elaine Mayes (ed.), *It Happened In Monterey*. California: Britannia Press, 2002, p. 27.

⁹⁰ Barney Hoskins, *Waiting for the Sun: Strange Days, Weird Scenes & The Sound of Los Angeles*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996, p. 143.

them to talk to us.”⁹¹ Phillips did not exaggerate the conflict between the two camps. The San Francisco contingent was highly sceptical of the “commercialism” of the Los Angeles scene, which, they believed, was trying to co-opt and commodify the Haight-Ashbury to their own advantage. As Chet Helms, member of the Family Dog and operator of the Avalon Ballroom, explained: “Basically, we all resisted Monterey Pop because we felt it was kind of slicko L.A. hype. We felt that they were coat-tailing a bunch of L.A. acts on the success of what was happening in San Francisco.”⁹²

A cursory glance at the acts presented at the festival demonstrates the validity of Helms’ statement. While Monterey boasted the cream of the San Francisco scene (the Airplane, the Dead, Quicksilver, Moby Grape, Big Brother with Janis Joplin, Country Joe and the Fish, as well as Steve Miller), the Los Angeles contingent was comprised of more “pop” oriented acts, many of whom had little or no countercultural status: the Mamas and Papas, the Association, Johnny Rivers, and Lou Rawls. The Byrds were a notable exception to the rule, but David Crosby, the group’s lead singer, had been commuting between the scenes and clearly felt more at home with the non-conformists of San Francisco than in the “uptight” atmosphere of the City of Angels.⁹³

The Monterey International Pop Festival was a huge success and represented a turning point in both the histories of the counterculture and of popular music. It was at Monterey that the recording industry finally awoke to what was happening in the underground, and rushed to cash in on the opportunity. Many of the Bay Area bands were

⁹¹ John Phillips, quoted in Glatt, p. 68.

⁹² Chet Helms, quoted in Mayes, p. 57.

⁹³ Hoskyns, p. 142. Another notable exception is the Buffalo Springfield, who had David Crosby sit in for Neil Young. While Los Angeles did have more “countercultural” acts than the slick commercial groups presented at the Festival, somehow groups such as Love and the satirical and often hilarious Mothers of Invention, featuring Frank Zappa, were excluded. Richie Unterberger, *Eight Miles High: Folk-Rock’s Flight From Haight-Ashbury to Woodstock*. San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2003.

pressed with recording offers and by the end of the weekend various deals had been struck. Columbia struck big with Janis Joplin and Big Brother. Capitol records signed the Steve Miller Band and reportedly offered an advance of \$40,000 to Quicksilver.⁹⁴ After Monterey, Warner Brothers established an office in San Francisco and bankrolled it with \$250,000 to find and produce new acts.⁹⁵ Soon “psychedelic” groups were being gobbled up across the country, and industries of various kinds awoke with psychedelic dollar signs in their eyes. Businesses specializing in fashion, advertising, recording, and publishing began to co-opt “psychedelic” styles and rhetoric to sell their products and services.⁹⁶ The suggestion was that through the consumption of a symbolically “countercultural” good, the consumer could experience the freedom, rebellion, and authenticity inherent in the countercultural philosophy. However, by the time the Haight-Ashbury style came to be marketed in this way, there was very little freedom or authenticity left.

⁹⁴ Hoskyns, p. 147; Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin' Out: Popular Music in the U.S.A.* 2nd ed. Boston: Prentice Hall, 2002, p. 186.

⁹⁵ Hoskyns, p. 147.

⁹⁶ See Thomas Frank.

Conclusion: “Playing Indian” and the Death of Hip

From 1965 through the early months of 1967, the spectacular nature of the Haight-Ashbury scene had served to tie non-conformist individuals together in a show of strength and power and purpose. As Victor Turner acknowledged, hippie “happenings” such as the Trips Festival expressed a kind of existential or spontaneous *communitas*. Yet he also made clear that “the spontaneity and immediacy of *communitas*...can seldom be maintained for very long. *Communitas* itself soon develops a structure, in which *free relationships between individuals* become converted into *norm-governed relationships between social personae*.”¹ With the intrusion of mass media industries and commercial businesses, the freedom and individuality that typified the original incarnation of the Haight-Ashbury community was replaced by a standardized set of norms surrounding the social personae of “the hippie.” The “plastic hippies” drawn to the Haight during the Summer of Love were not individuals “doing their own thing” but were instead appropriating a pre-fabricated “hippie” identity. As Bill Graham explained, “The Haight was still hanging on. But the kids there now were extras in a bigger movie. They were acting out roles. They had a bigger brother who had put on a headband or they had seen pictures of how it was *supposed* to be done. There were fewer originals but the cast was getting larger all the time.”²

There was a certain amount of resentment in the Haight-Ashbury community about “teenyboppers” and “plastic hippies” who were only “putting on” or “playing” at being

¹ Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Adeline Publishing Co., 1969, p. 132. (Emphasis mine, S.J.)

² Bill Graham, quoted in Bill Graham with Robert Greenfield, *Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock and Out*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, p. 241.

dropouts, rather than being true non-conformists. Yet, despite the recognition that outsiders were consuming their culture in order to experience its attendant aura of authenticity, there was little recognition within the counterculture that the movement's own members were perpetuating many of the same patterns through their similar appropriation of Asian, East-Indian and, most especially, Native American culture. The Haight-Ashbury community used the authenticity of "exotic" cultures to gain its own vicarious sense of identity, often with little understanding of the true meaning and philosophies behind their symbols. Essentially, the non-conformists of the Haight were "playing Indian" just as the newcomers to their district were "playing hippie."

Native American culture provided a plethora of symbols ripe for appropriation by the counterculture. Perceived as natural, humanistic, and even rebellious, the Native American lifestyle provided an easily identifiable and home-grown alternative to the technocratic culture of Cold War America. For one thing, the tribal nature of the Native American family presented an alternative model to the nuclear family. This was especially evident in the Haight-Ashbury community's self-identification as a group of "tribes". The Human Be-In of January 1967 had been advertised as a "Pow Wow" and "A Gathering of the Tribes," while posters promoting the event featured a mounted Indian with an electric guitar.³ In a similar merging of cultural styles, the Family Dog's logo featured an Indian wearing a top hat.

Hippies were often quick to point to aboriginal use of "natural" narcotics such as peyote, magic mushrooms, and marijuana, while Native American costume was also popular. Headbands, fringes, feathers, and moccasins were assumed to be more "natural"

³ Rick Griffin, "Pow Wow" in Amélie Gastaut and Jean-Pierre Criqui, *Off the Wall: Psychedelic Rock Posters From San Francisco*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2005, p. 109. See also Figure 7.

than commercial fashions. Yet, while many countercultural participants used aboriginal culture in a genuine attempt to establish an alternative lifestyle, their knowledge was often superficial. Some communalists on the Pacific coast built tepees because they were easily identifiable as Indian, even though these Plains Indian structures were not suitable for the wet, West Coast weather. Others attempted to subsist on an “Indian” diet that wasn’t truly aboriginal, often suffering from malnutrition in the process.⁴



Figure 7: “Pow-Wow: A Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In”

Source: Rick Griffin, “Pow Wow” in Gastaut & Criqui, p. 109.

⁴ Phillip Deloria, “Counterculture Indians and the New Age” in Peter Braunstein & Michael William Doyle (eds.), *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*. New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 164.

“Playing Indian” in this way allowed counterculturalists to not only escape their identities as white, middle-class Americans, but provided them with the vicarious experience of being an “outsider” and a rebel, a victim of the American system rather than its product. As Philip Deloria explains:

The notion of an oppositional political culture linked to Indianness attracted young Americans, many of whom had been schooled on the iconic nationalism of the Boston Tea Party. Those original rebels had used Indianness to shift the location of their identities from Britain to America. Since the early twentieth century, people had put on Indian clothes in search for authenticity in a modern America more alienating than welcoming.

Obviously this appropriation of “authenticity” was nothing new: since the eighteenth century the image of the “Noble Savage” had been invoked as “a captivating emblem of artistic and spiritual freedom.” The Beats, too, had perpetuated this pattern in their appropriation of the “free-wheeling” black hipster.⁵

Given this rebellious, authentic, and even “sacred” image of Native American culture, it is not surprising that Native symbolism, philosophy, and art were staples in the pages of the *San Francisco Oracle*. During the spring of 1967 the *Oracle* published its “American Indian Issue” which featured stories, art, poems and discussions of all things “Indian.” The issue attempted to bring to light the affiliations between the two cultures through its discussion of treaties, Native use of sacred herbs, living with the land, and the tribal way of life.⁶ Yet, whatever the cultural affiliation the hippies felt with Native heritage, there was little understanding of the philosophical underpinnings and cultural background to many Aboriginal rites, rituals, and symbols. Many hippies consumed the

⁵ Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth & Leisure-Style in Modern America*. New York: Berg, 2001, p. 187.

⁶ “The American Indian Issue.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol. 8 (Spring 1967).

Native identity indiscriminately, often insulting and angering Native communities in the process. A typical example of this surfaced in the *San Francisco Chronicle* during the Summer of Love. In an effort to appeal to the city's rapidly expanding "hip" population, the *Chronicle* had started a weekly column titled "Astronauts of Inner Space." Written in the countercultural vernacular, the column professed to explore countercultural issues from within the movement, and imitated the example of the *Oracle* in its examination of Native American culture. By contrast to the *Oracle's* respectful treatment of native culture, however, the *Chronicle* article declared hippies to be the reincarnated children of "all those Redskins who were murdered" by American imperialism. The article also pointed to such stereotypical "native" practices as communal living, caring for each others' children, and sitting cross-legged in a circle passing the peace pipe – presumably filled with marijuana rather than tobacco – as evidence of the "tribal spirit" which had arisen in the Haight Ashbury. In a particularly distasteful ending, the article asked readers: "Do you say 'Ugh! How! Pow! Or Wow!?'"⁷ Not surprisingly, a rebuttal from the American Indian Historical Society was published the next week, attacking both the article and the "hippie" appropriation of Native American identity:

The contents of this column represent the sheerest stupidity, an abysmal lack of knowledge of Indian history and Indian culture. [...] Indian life, even in aboriginal times, was highly ordered. Everyone worked. To beg is the greatest sin a man can be guilty of. To use drugs in order to induce hallucinatory experiences for their own sake is a crime against God, and foreign to our religions. [...] The way of the hippie is completely at variance to that of the Indian. It is disgusting. It is demeaning. It is the Way of the Bum. [...] We Indians have borne massacre, destruction, genocide, exploitation. But in the last years there has been a certain insidious and subtle exploitation of the Indian which is the

⁷ Jeff Berner, "Astronauts of Inner Space: Hippies Are American Indians." *San Francisco Examiner*, June 18 1967, Datebook p. 30.

worst of all. We are for real. We believe in and love innovation. We are far from being square. But we despise fraud and hypocrisy. The Hippies exemplify both.⁸

Unfortunately, the *Chronicle* article was not an isolated example. Many hippies angered and insulted Native Americans through their hopelessly naïve and arrogant attempts to “understand” Indian culture. Some hippies visited Native reservations in a misguided attempt to demonstrate their “hipness,” only to be rejected by their supposed spiritual brethren. In April 1967 a group of H.I.P. people and editors from the *Oracle* committed several sacrileges while visiting a Hopi reservation in order to ask for help in organizing an event: sacred tribal masks were removed from their places and displayed to uninitiated children, who were also given “gifts” of marijuana and LSD. The Hopi elders reacted by kicking the hippies off the reservation and asking them never to return. Several of the masks were later discovered to be missing.⁹

Once again it was the Diggers who recognized the vanity and arrogance of the countercultural cooptation of the Native American identity. In response to the incident at the Hopi reservation, the Diggers published the following paper:

“Who the fuck are you anyway! Sitting there in lotus and desperately suffering Anglo Entertainment Syndrome. Hungry for rituals and tribal touch. Lack of elders to initiate you into the magic of yourselves. You are starving! [...] Dig the lack of sensitivity to the Indian thing, obvious on its face; murder all over again. First: the physically meat bodies of Indians gunned down all over the place. Second: the treatment of Indians as property by the Haight Independent Proprietors’ attempted wipe-out of the Indian soul simply by camping on it. You’re all romantically Indian struck! Witness the horror of HIP Oracle newspaper staff sitting on Third Mesa in Hopiland, chanting Anglo, Super-Culture Prostitution of Hari Krishna to uninitiated children. Nervous status manoeuvres! The time-worn, white-man arrogance of a million questions with backup answers. The Indian

⁸ Rupert Costo, “Hippies Are NOT American Indians.” *San Francisco Examiner*, June 25 1967, Datebook p. 26.

⁹ Emmett Grogan, *Ringolevio: A Life Played For Keeps*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1973, p. 381; Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History*. New York: Wenner Books, 2005, p. 179.

message to mankind is simply, “*Go with silence and closed eyes.*” Stop looking into another man’s world! Turn onto yourself! Don’t consume someone else! Eat yourself and kiss the now with full-blown lips! *Courage is implicit!*”¹⁰

Because Native American culture and lifestyles were easily interpreted as authentic, humanistic and “natural”, they provided a convenient point of contrast to the highly structured, technocratic and conformist image of mainstream American culture against which the counterculture protested. Paradoxically, in their quest to embody the Native lifestyle the counterculturalists were much the same as the “teenyboppers” and “plastic hippies” they so despised. In a substitution of form for content, both groups consumed or “put on” an “exotic” identity in order to achieve the authenticity and humanism they felt was lacking in American society. As newcomers came to the district merely to “play hippie” by acting out an identity rather than questing for that identity as the original non-conformists had, the Haight-Ashbury lost much of its real authenticity.

By the end of the Summer of Love the Haight-Ashbury was a radically different place than it had been a mere twenty months earlier. Commercial storefronts catering to tourists had replaced many of the small neighbourhood merchants, while runaways huddled in doorways panhandling for spare change. Hoodlums prowled the streets at night, seeking free sex or drugs, some looking to stage confrontations with police who patrolled the area with increasing frequency.¹¹ Hepatitis had reached “epidemic proportions”.¹² Murder, rape, and theft now competed with peace and love, and many of the gentler residents

¹⁰ Grogan, p. 384. Italics in original.

¹¹ William Chapin, “A Day on the Hippiland Scene.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 9 1967, pp. 14-15; “Daylight Raid on Haight.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 10 1967, p. 1; Charles Howe, “Hippies Say They Need Protection From Police.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 11 1967, p. 3.

¹² “Hepatitis Hits Haight.” *Berkeley Barb*, Aug. 18 1967, p. 14; George Dusheck, “Hippies Have Wild Diseases, Too.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 20 1967, p. 18;

lived in fear, arming themselves with knives or guns.¹³ Most of the original non-conformists had abandoned the Haight,¹⁴ seeking refuge from the tourist invasions and creeping commercialism as their community was overrun by “plastic hippies,” “teenyboppers,” and “hoods,” all searching to consume some aspect of the non-conformist identity. For all intents and purposes the Haight had died, and the press was there to write its epitaph: “The Haight-Ashbury Scene is Finished!” declared the *Chronicle*, while the *Barb* asked, “So Who Mutha’d the ‘Hippies’?”¹⁵

There was widespread recognition amongst the non-conformists that the scene was dead. Their community’s identity had been coopted and corrupted by the media, their culture was bought and sold to them by profit-driven merchants, and the neighbourhood itself was overrun by youngsters acting out the “hippie” identity instead of creating one of their own. “The Haight scene is a sewer,” claimed Jeff Berner of the *Chronicle*. “Drug busts are increasing. Fashionable shops are springing up everywhere. Tourism (and not tripping) is becoming big business. I expect the merchants to have a contest to see just who’s The Richest Hippie West of the Mississippi.”¹⁶ “It all goes to prove what every veteran Haightie knew all along,” said the *Barb*. “Most of the summer lovers were out for

¹³ “Frightened Hippies Are Arming.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 10 1967, p. 1; Howe.

¹⁴ Throughout the Summer of Love many of the Haight’s original members escaped the crowded street scene for rural communes like Morning Star Ranch or Drop City. Many such communes were popping up throughout the Pacific coast, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. Some, such as Emmett Grogan, moved back east to the Greenwich Village scene. “Hippie Exodus Forecast.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 13 1967, p. 3; “Trouble in Hippieland.” *Newsweek*, Oct. 30 1967, pp. 84, 87-90; “Hippies Afield.” *Berkeley Barb*, July 14 1967, p. 1; “A Wake For Hip, A Cheer For Free.” *Berkeley Barb*, Oct. 6 1967, p. 3; Bill Dodd, “Drop City.” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol. 1 No. 12 (Feb. 1968), pp. 4-5.

¹⁵ Jeff Berner, “Astronauts of Inner Space: The Haight-Ashbury Scene is Finished!” *San Francisco Examiner*, Aug. 20 1967, Datebook p. 22; “So Who Mutha’d the ‘Hippies’?” *Berkeley Barb*, Oct. 6 1967, p. 1.

¹⁶ Berner, “Astronauts of Inner Space: The Haight-Ashbury Scene is Finished!”

their vacation thrill. They were tourists, plastic hippies, pseudohip middle and upper class straights who came down to play the game.”¹⁷



Figure 8: Teenyboppers

“The kids in this photograph were locals who boarded the bus to the Haight and then changed into their "hippie" clothes on the way. They are hiding from my camera, thinking this photograph might appear in the local paper and be seen by their parents. They were funny and sad at the same time. At least one of the guitars was a toy.” – Larry Keenan

Source: Larry Keenan, “Teenyboppers.” *Larry Keenan 1960s & 70s Counterculture Gallery*. (n.d.)
<http://www.emptymirrorbooks.com/keenanc1968-3.htm> (July 27 2006).

In a final act of street theatre designed to draw attention to the community’s disgust at the media’s artificial construction of the Haight-Ashbury identity, the Diggers and other members of the community staged a three day celebration in October 1967, culminating in the Death of Hip / Birth of Free parade. The Death of Hip parade was a deeply symbolic bookend to 1966’s Re-Birth of the Haight parade. With the Re-Birth of the Haight parade the community had constructed the district as a liberated zone of carnival

¹⁷ “Haightians Thrill to Spacious Street.” *Berkeley Barb*, Sept. 15 1967, p. 5.

within whose boundaries people were invited to create identities for themselves, actively participating in the “play” of their own lives rather than following the roles and rules of the “game” as outlined by the dominant culture. A year later the Haight had become an area where people *acted out an identity already created for them*, passively consuming an identity rather than actively creating their own meaningful notions of self. “The media cast nets, create bags for the identity-hungry to climb in,” stated the Digger press release for the Death of Hip parade. “Your face on TV, your style immortalized without soul in the captions of the *Chronicle*. NBC says you exist, ergo I am.”¹⁸

Just as the Birth of Hip parade confirmed the Haight as a liberated zone of carnival, the Death of Hip was designed to liberate its boundaries. The parade was an explicit acknowledgement that the counterculture had grown beyond the borders of the Haight, and as such the Haight no longer functioned as a community. The Haight, Thelin argued, had been “portioned to us by the Media-Police and the tourists who came to the Zoo to see the captive animals ... we growled fiercely behind the bars we accepted and now we are no longer hippies and never were.”¹⁹ Thelin readily acknowledged the role that he and other members of the community had played in perpetuating the media image of the Haight-Ashbury. With their own “hungry consent” the community had played up to the media hype, trying to give the newcomers what they wanted instead of insisting that they do their own thing.²⁰ Too late, they had realized the consequences of all the media

¹⁸ Digger press release, quoted in Perry p. 242; “A Wake For Hip, A Cheer For Free.” *Berkeley Barb*, Oct. 6 1967, p. 3; Michael Grieg, “The Decline and Fall of Hippieland.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 5 1967, pp. 1, 8.

¹⁹ Ron Thelin, quoted in Grieg, “The Decline and Fall of Hippieland.”

²⁰ *Ibid*; “Death of Hip Birth of Free.”

attention and commercialization, and were powerless against the legions of imitation hippies who panhandled for change or tripped for the 6 o'clock news.²¹



Figures 9 & 10: Tripping for the Six O'Clock News

Source: Larry Keenan, "Faking the News" & "Tripping for the 6 O'Clock News."
Larry Keenan 1960s & 70s Counterculture Gallery. (n.d.)
<http://www.emptymirrorbooks.com/keenan/1968c-3.htm> (July 27 2006).

The Death of Hip parade was the Haight-Ashbury community's final attempt to escape the media's stereotypical construction of their culture. Reconciling their political and philosophical differences, the Diggers, Com/Co, H.I.P. merchants, the editors of the *Oracle*, members of the Grateful Dead, as well as representatives from the Switchboard, Free Medical Clinic and other community groups all united one last time in an attempt to regain control of their community's identity.²² In a "titanic effort to save the dream from its publicity," the Death of Hip celebration took place over several days in October 1967.

²¹ See figures 9 and 10. Photographer Larry Keenan claims that he saw this happen "several times when the news crews came to the Haight looking for a story. The rumor of a 'happening' would bring the reporters out in force. When the story did not materialize, they would stage an event for the 6:00 pm news. The TV crew came prepared with incense, finger cymbals, flowers and flutes. They would pass around the props to the small group they managed to put together for the show. The news media kept perpetuating the myth." The hippie in Figure 10 was "putting on a show for the news anchor man. The television crew was looking for something to report about Haight-Ashbury's Panhandle and the hippies would sometimes oblige." Larry Keenan, "1960s and 70s Counterculture." *Empty Mirror Books: Larry Keenan Gallery* (n.d.) <http://www.emptymirrorbooks.com/keenan/c1968-3.html> (July 22, 2006).

²² Grieg, "Decline and Fall of Hippieland."; Charles Raudebaugh, "Grateful Dead Hold Lively Wake." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 6 1967 p. 2; "Death of Hip Birth of Free." *Berkeley Barb*, Sept. 29 1967, p. 3; "A Wake For Hip, A Cheer For Free." *Berkeley Barb*, Oct. 6 1967, p. 3.

After a Wake For Hippie held at All Saints Church on Thursday, the funeral proper began at sunrise the next day atop Buena Vista Hill. "Taps" was played and candles were held aloft. Beads, long hair, marijuana and other trappings of "hippie" life were burnt in a pyre and the ashes were thrown into a coffin labeled "Hippie, devoted son of Mass Media." The coffin was then borne through the streets of the Haight by pallbearers dressed in black. After a brief but symbolic "kneel-in" at the intersection of Haight Street and Ashbury, the coffin came to a rest outside of the Psychedelic Shop.²³ The Shop was closed, Ron Thelin having announced his intention to give away its inventory before leaving the community for greener pastures.

The Death of Hip ceremony was not only an acknowledgement and rejection of the mainstream media's construction of the "hippie" persona. The event was also an attempt to liberate the boundaries of the district, to re-establish it as a "Free City" rather than "Hippieland".²⁴ The original non-conformists of the Haight had constructed the district as a liberated zone of carnival, a symbolic representation of their rejection of dominant norms and social conventions, and a powerful statement of emancipation and freedom from the mainstream "American" identity. They had, in effect, shifted the location of their identities to the Haight, a community where "free also meant identity was free."²⁵ Non-conformists were to be just that. As Braunstein and Doyle argued, the original counterculturalists "defined themselves first by what they were not, and then, only after having cleared that essential ground of identity, began to conceive anew what they

²³ Michael Grieg, "Death of the Hippies: A Sad, Solemn Ceremony." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 7 1967, p. 2; "A Wake For Hip, A Cheer For Free"; "Death of Hip, Mixed Emotions." *Berkeley Barb*, Oct. 13 1967, p. 5; Perry, p. 235.

²⁴ "A Wake For Hip, A Cheer For Free."

²⁵ Peter Coyote, quoted in Graham & Greenfield, p. 194.

were.”²⁶ The early days of the Haight-Ashbury were characterized by this freedom, a seeking for identity without knowing the limits to which their journey would take them. Through participation in events such as the Trips Festival and the Death of Money / Re-Birth of the Haight parade, the community had actively created an identity for both themselves and their district, claiming it for their own and declaring it a liberated zone of carnival.

The original members and creators of the scene had been motivated by their dissatisfaction with dominant notions of the “American” identity, establishing the Haight as a locality that encouraged experience of alternate identities. In so constructing their district they encouraged others to shift the location of their identities to the Haight, as it became an icon of non-conformity and hedonistic consumption. However, these later participants, drawn to the “Hashbury” by media hype and the promise of exotic lifestyle alternatives, were motivated not so much by a dissatisfaction with the “American” identity as they were by the appeal of the artificially constructed “hippie” identity. Many of these people, therefore, had not made a conscious decision to reject the values of the mainstream nor were they committed to creating a viable alternative. They were, instead, temporarily adopting “an ideological charade,”²⁷ “hippies” who were simply *playing* rather than *being*.

For these later participants in the Haight-Ashbury scene, the “hippie” identity, like the mainstream “American” identity with which they had been raised, was defined in terms of consumption. Women were consumed as evidence of sexual liberation. Drugs became valuable lifestyle accessories as well, used for kicks rather than as tools for introspection.

²⁶ Braunstein & Doyle, p. 10.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 11.

Musicians became celebrities rather than equal partners in the communal ritual, commanding higher and higher performance fees. Meanwhile their audiences sat passively on the dance floor or at home in front of the stereo, consuming them with their eyes and ears but not participating in the creation of *communitas*.

The twenty-month period from January 1966 to October 1967 witnessed the mutation of the Haight-Ashbury identity from a close-knit tribal community into to a nation-wide subculture. Founded upon the divinity of human relationships, pushing the boundaries of personal experience, and a quest for individualism, the Haight-Ashbury later came to be defined in terms of its lifestyle accessories. The alienating nature of this commodity fetishism destroyed much of the genuine authenticity that had characterized the original community, as youth snapped up beads and bellbottoms just as their parents snapped up Chryslers and shiny new appliances. In the process non-conformity became the new conformity, and the Haight-Ashbury became a parody of itself.

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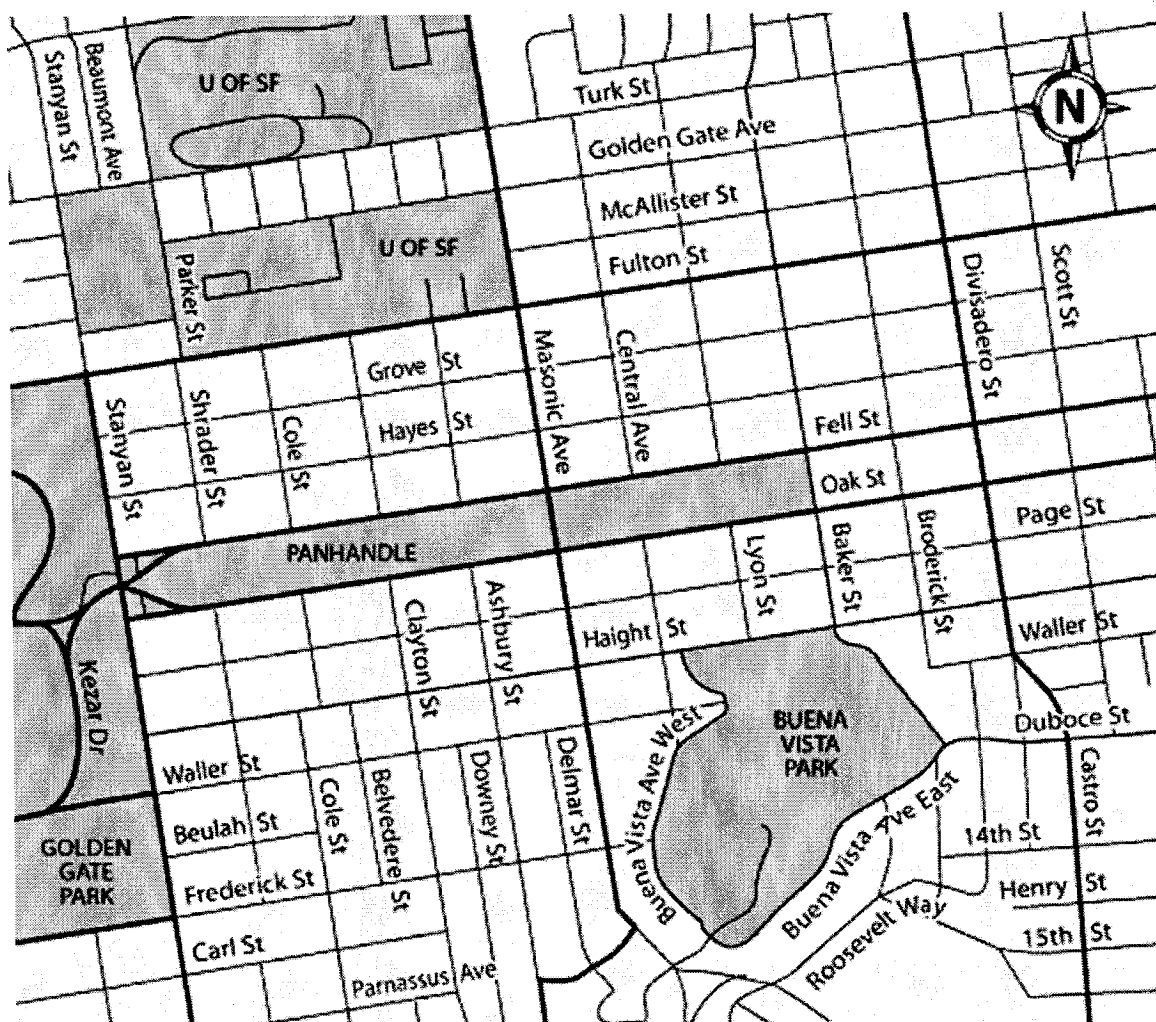
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Appendices



Appendix A: Map of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. Parks and other greenspaces in grey.

Source: *Alaska Air* (n.d.) http://www.alaskaair.com/www2/Destinations/Maps/sfo_maps_haightashbury.asp (April 12, 2006).

