The Influence of Psychedelic Substances on the 1960s Counterculture, Film and Literature

Simić, Monika

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The Influence of Psychedelic Substances on the 1960s Counterculture, Film and Literature

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Kandidat: Monika Simić

Mentor: prof. dr.sc. Jelena Šesnić

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1 Introduction

In the last four years, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant and palpable shift in the world, affecting virtually all aspects of life. In addition to physical, it has taken a toll on mental health, as number of people diagnosed with depression has risen significantly, which consequently led to an increase in number of anti-depressant prescriptions, particularly in Western countries (Gramlich). Some are, however, turning their backs to standardized ways of treatment and opting for hallucinogenic, such as LSD and psilocybin, in what has been described as a "paradigm shift" in psychiatry (Lu). Similarly, in 2022 Netflix released its four-part documentary series *How to Change Your Mind* which also highlights the use of psychedelics for therapeutic purposes. Combined with the growing number of new research in the past couple of years about the medicinal use of psychedelic substances, it could be said that we are witnessing a "psychedelic renaissance" (Lu). Such changes in the way such substances are treated now reflect a different attitude towards them in medicinal and scientific communities, but it was not always so. The aim of this work, however, is not to engage in pro- and contra debates about the use of psychedelics, but to try to examine their influence in popular culture and determine the role these substances played in the US counterculture in the 1960s. This is relevant because the use of psychedelics was perceived as an important part of the countercultural movement both within the mainstream culture and the counterculture itself. Therefore, researching the presence and representation of psychedelics and counterculture in the chosen literary and film artefacts of the decade is a worthwhile endeavor.

The following part of this chapter will give a brief look at how the world's most known psychedelic substance, LSD, was discovered, while the next subchapter will discuss how hallucinogenics were used and perceived in the 1960s United States when they became predominantly connected with the so-called counterculture and associated with the hippie

movement. The terms ‘counterculture’ and ‘hippie movement’ are often used synonymously; however, counterculture is a broader term that encompasses the hippies alongside more politically driven groups, such as the New Left, which was an umbrella term for various kinds of groups whose political attitude was left-leaning; such as SDS (short for Students for a Democratic Society) and The Black Panther Party, although the hippies were the most prominent groups of the counterculture in the media (Braunstein and Doyle 10–12). In the thesis, the two terms are being used interchangeably.

The main part of the work consists of case studies, of one literary work and two films that were all made in the 1960s and were chosen because of the way they portray the use and role of psychedelic substances, together with their portrayal of hippies and the counterculture. Furtherly, the presence of psychedelics in these artefacts serves as a confirmation that these substances have contributed to the countercultural movement and its atmosphere. Some turned to LSD for artistic inspiration and this has resulted in many artifacts in art, film, and literature having psychedelic elements, for example, mesmerizing visuals created by swirling patterns and distortion, bright colors, and long descriptive instances of dream-like occurrences and surreal events. Others, such as the CIA, employed psychedelics as a way to gain an advantage in the Cold War by gathering information. After experimenting with substances such as heroin and cocaine with limited success in the development of a so-called truth serum, researchers found LSD to be more suitable due to its effects and dosage convenience and there is conclusive evidence that the CIA started doing experiments with it already in the early 1950s (Lee and Shlain 16–25). Going a bit further back, LSD was synthesized by a Swiss chemist Albert Hoffmann working for pharmaceutical company Sandoz in 1938, and in 1943, after unintentionally digesting it himself, Hoffman discovered its effect on humans (Hofmann 11). The drug’s initial broader application was in psychiatry, after which it has found its way to several university campuses, where it was offered to students as part of a paid drug testing trial. Some of these trials were for scientific research purposes, while others were part of the so-called CIA’s top-secret program called MKULTRA (Lee and Shlain 27–35).

Among the participants in San Francisco was Ken Kesey, who went on to become a successful novelist with *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) and a prominent advocate of psychedelics in the mid-1960s, when he traveled across the US with his group of friends called the Merry Pranksters, organizing the so-called acid tests, in which LSD would be given for free to those who were interested. The next chapter examines the role of Kesey and his groups, as well as some other figures who were proponents of psychedelic use in the 1960s.

The psychedelic substances played a significant role in the growing countercultural movement, which arose as a reaction to the US's increased involvement in the Vietnam War. Apart from political, social reasons such as a widening generational gap between the youth and their parents, combined with a strict moral code that dictated how one should live in a middle-class suburban society further contributed to the increase in the use of psychedelic drugs. Furthermore, in the 1960s, LSD was widespread in the US suburbs, predominantly among the young, anti-establishment-oriented population as well as in some academic circles. There is a consensus among the 1960s scholars that LSD has played a pivotal role in the hippie movement and the counterculture in general. Some historians and cultural theorists claim that LSD is the key factor that contributed to the movement's decline (Stephenson 45), while others maintain its important and complicated role, but do not perceive it as the sole culprit for the 'failure' of the counterculture. Nevertheless, there is a notion that LSD has contributed to, for some, a false or distorted image of the 1960s in cultural memory. As journalist Mike Wise emphasizes: "Those years left deep marks on our culture, while still leaving us in a perpetual daze about their exact meaning. Meanwhile, the nostalgia bus just keeps rolling on [&] the sensory overload never ends" (*Wise*). The part that follows will discuss the role psychedelics played in the 1960s counterculture and the implications they had for those involved.

1.1 Psychedelics and the 1960s Counterculture - an overview

To further discuss the connection between psychedelics and counterculture, it is necessary to define the term counterculture and its timeline. The term counterculture was first used by Theodore Roszak in his *The Making of a Counterculture*, published in 1969. Roszak defines counterculture as follows: "a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of a barbaric intrusion" (Roszak 42).

Since Roszak's initial definition was inconclusive, contemporary scholars used timeline distinction to approach counterculture. There is a consensus that the counterculture could be divided into two distinct phases; the first one, the so-called utopian phase marked with optimism and perceived as primarily a youth movement, began in approximately 1964 and lasted until 1968. The years 1968-1969 thus mark the end of a youth-oriented, *flower power* period and signal the beginning of a second phase that was fragmented and to an extent, darker (Braunstein and Doyle 12–15). Similarly, in his study *The American Counterculture*, historian Christopher Gair also offers a two-phase division of counterculture, but, according to him, it is a much broader term; as his first phase ranges from 1945 to 1960 and the second phase follows from 1961 to 1971. Even though his timeline of the counterculture is different, he shares with other authors the idea that the youth were at the forefront of the countercultural movement. When discussing the success of the counterculture, Gair points out: "much as anything else that it achieved, the counterculture in these decades brought the limits of national doctrines of 'freedom' to the surface" (Gair 10).

Regardless of how one would define counterculture, few would disagree about psychedelics being almost a staple of the counterculture. LSD, in particular, was widely used and available, since it was only criminalized in California in 1966 (*UPI*). Two figures, albeit with different perspectives on the substance and its significance, were especially prominent as advocates and promotors of the use of psychedelics – an aspiring author Ken Kesey, and a Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary. In

the early 1960s “mass media accounts praised LSD as a cure for psychological problems” (Braunstein and Doyle 20–21) and Leary, through his position as Harvard clinical psychologist was on the forefront as he used it in his clinical test. Leary emphasized the reality-changing aspect of LSD and its supposed spiritual effect, claiming it could transform individuals and make them re-invent themselves. Historian David Farber points out that Leary's academic title and the authority it yielded was key in spreading Leary's attitudes about the drug and its 'benefits' to a wide range of people “he [Leary] was in a socially authorized, credentialed position to make his personal feelings matter both to elite and mass audiences” (qtd. in Braunstein and Doyle 22). As mentioned in the introductory part, Kesey’s first encounter with psychedelics was through participation in a drug trial as part of the CIA’s project MKULTRA, whose goal was to develop substances to use in interrogation practices and brainwashing (Lee and Shlain 27–35). Then, in 1964 he and his followers, who called themselves *Merry Pranksters*, embarked on a road trip across the US in their bus named *Furthur*. They organized gatherings and concerts and would give away free LSD; such gatherings were later called the Acid Tests. They were also fond of marijuana and amphetamines, and to some, Kesey’s road trip led to a significant number of people being introduced to the substances (Helmore). Apart from Kesey, other prominent members were Neal Cassidy, a major figure in the Beat Movement as he was an inspiration for the character of Dean Moriarty in Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, and members of the band *The Grateful Dead*, who later became a staple in San Francisco’s Haight Ashbury district, considered the center of the counterculture in the US. Although the trip was at first intended to be a mere promotion for 1964’s Kesey novel *Sometimes a Great Notion*, it then also served to promote LSD (Helmore). While traveling, they met with friends, as well as other prominent people in the growing psychedelic movement, including Timothy Leary. Leary, however, did not stand for the Pranksters’ notion of ‘spreading the gospel’ about LSD, instead considering it to be used only by the elite (Helmore). Another difference between Kesey and Leary was the reasons for which they advocated and promoted the use of LSD. While Leary advocated that LSD should be taken in a

carefully controlled isolated environment, and to achieve one's spiritual enlightenment, the Pranksters opted for a sensory overload: "…costumes, electronic feedback devices, Day-Glo paint, film loops, and strobe lights were all geared toward maximizing psychic, sensual input, and pushing tripsters toward a vast collective experience that roared toward the unknown" (Braunstein and Doyle 25–27). Therefore, it could be said that Leary saw taking LSD as a primarily solitary act, while Kesey and his followers perceived it as a truly social and group act.

It is important to note that even though psychedelics have dominated the decade, they were not the only substances used, and more importantly, they were not as widely dispersed around the country as prescription drugs were. Scholars describe the 1960s in the US as a state of perpetual haze and the numbers speak for it: "by the early 1960s, Americans accepted an intoxicated state as either medically or recreationally necessary. In 1965, doctors wrote 123 million prescriptions for tranquilizers and 24 million prescriptions for amphetamines" (Braunstein and Doyle 19). It is evident that the general atmosphere of the decade was such that it allowed for the influence of various substances, legal or not, to permeate its worldview and attitudes, and psychedelics were just one aspect of it. As they were predominantly used by the younger population, inclined to oppose the mainstream values and the lifestyle of their parents, or as a way to expand the limit of one's consciousness, they became a symbol of a movement associated with free love, anti-war tendencies, and communal lifestyle. The criminalization of LSD in 1966 has further established its reputation as being anti-mainstream: "by using LSD or even marijuana, an individual was declaring himself or herself an opponent of the status quo willing to go to jail in pursuit of a favorite form of altered consciousness" (Braunstein and Doyle 35).

The main part of this work is concerned with the way psychedelics and most prominently LSD are featured in the selected examples and what implications it has. The fact that all three examples taken from literature and film, respectively, are made during the beginning, mid- and end of the decade, and moreover, that they all deal with psychedelics directly or indirectly, using it just as a

motif or a significant plot device signifies that LSD was a cultural fact of the 1960s *zeitgeist* in its entirety.

1.2 Method and Approach

This paper will discuss the portrayal and influence of psychedelic substances (mostly LSD) on the selected examples of literature and film made in the 1960s - the novel *The Crying of Lot 49*, and the films *Easy Rider* and *The Trip* - by using both qualitative as well as the comparative method to research the topic. It will be using three research questions in which the above-mentioned methods are applied.

Although all case studies were, as mentioned, released during the 1960s, they convey significant diversity in the way they approach both the counterculture and the psychedelic drugs. Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, published in 1966, could be considered a proto-countercultural work, as it captures the movement, though indirectly, in its early stages. Roger Corman's *The Trip*, released in 1967, is in the middle of the three case studies and it paints a colorful picture of the counterculture focusing primarily on hallucinogenic substances, while Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider*, which came out at the very end of the decade in 1969, focuses on the social aspects of the hippie movement and the counterculture, with an air of reflection on its success. The three case studies were chosen in an attempt to understand this topic from a wide angle; from the novel written by an author who was not a member of the counterculture and thus has an 'outside' view on it and grasps it basically at its beginnings, to the films made by people having ties to both the substances and the counterculture, approaching it from an exploitative (but not derogatory!) aspect in *The Trip* and from the more social and comprehensive aspect of the mainstream film which has become synonymous with the counterculture in *Easy Rider*. The two films differ in genre; *Easy Rider* is a road film that was an independent production and its commercial success paved the way for the movement that defined moviemaking in the US during the 1970s, the so-called New Hollywood. This movement was marked by a significant artistic freedom that these

young directors, such as Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese and Michael Cimino, enjoyed (Biskind 16–18). On the other hand, *The Trip* has its roots in the low-budget productions characteristic of exploitation films in general and " really did attempt to show the consequences of taking LSD — for better and for worse" (Bannerman).

So how can these works be considered relevant to the topic? This has to do with the way psychedelics have contributed (or have not) to the hippie movement's and counterculture's decline. Therefore, it is necessary to look closely at what role LSD and other psychedelics have played in the era. As mentioned before, their formative role is deemed pivotal for many researchers, but their role in the decline of the Hippie movement is debated. Traditionally LSD and other drugs were seen as the main contributors to its demise. But in recent decades researchers have increasingly argued that it was not psychedelics, but other factors that played a much more important role (Stephenson 44–45). Therefore, examining the actual role of psychedelics the people involved with it, and how they were being portrayed in representative cultural works is important for clarifying some points about this cultural and historical period. Consequently, the first two research questions focus on the representation of these drugs and their takers and advocates. The first research question; *Which psychedelic substances are present in the film/novel and how are they and their users being portrayed?* examines the occurrence of the substances themselves and the way they (and those who take them) are being portrayed. In connection to this, the second research question asks, *How is the hippie subculture and the counterculture portrayed in the selected examples?* It focuses on the way this group is presented in the selected examples. The selection of the chosen cultural works as case studies comes with different perspectives on the given topic. Thus, the third (and final) research question is, *How do these selected case studies differ in their treatment of the counterculture and psychedelics, and to what extent?* is part of the comparative aspect of this work as it will put case studies side by side to establish the differences and similarities between the novel and the films.

2 Case Studies

2.1 The Crying of Lot 49

The Crying of Lot 49, a novel written by Thomas Pynchon, was published in 1966. The novel follows Californian housewife Oedipa Mass, who, after being named an executor of her ex-boyfriend's Pierce Inverarity will, tries to list all of his estate and find her place in the world that is becoming increasingly complex, paranoid, and almost phantasmal. Throughout the novel, we follow Oedipa as she tries to unravel the intricacies of the Tristero postal conspiracy which seem to follow her at every step, particularly as she spends more and more time in the city of San Narciso, where most of the wealth and assets she has to examine as part of the estate, are located. She encounters a wide palette of characters, ranging from the prim-and-proper lawyers obsessed with detective fiction to the psychiatrists prescribing hallucinogenic drugs as part of a government program. Oedipa Mass, the main protagonist, is often confused and feels out of touch with reality and herself, which is only being enhanced by different kinds of substances that she is (in)advertdently being exposed to. As researchers and cultural scholars have observed, Pynchon places these confused protagonists in complex settings and employs them as "tools with which to examine the deeply concerning political and social anxieties of the California counterculture in the 1960s and 1970s" (McClintock and Miller 114). These anxieties are of course affecting the main character the most, as she becomes aware that in the advanced industrial town of San Narciso, the center of her research into Inverarity's estate, things are not as perfect as they seem. The Tristero system symbolizes a growing distrust of not only the government, but the establishment in general, and it points out that "behind the superficial appearance of a liberated world, driven by sexual revolution and hallucinatory drugs, reside secret power structures and corrupt governing bodies" (McClintock and Miller). It is exactly because of these social and political aspects of psychedelics and the role they play in the space of the novel as well as the way they affect the inhabitants of that space, that this novel was chosen as a case study. Also, psychedelic substances that are implemented in California's

culture are explored in the other two parts of Pynchon's California trilogy, *Vineland* and *Inherent Vice*. The following part offers an analysis of this novel following the two research questions regarding the presence and portrayal of (psychedelic) substances in the novel, alongside the portrayal of the hippie subculture and the counterculture in general.

The novel mentions different kinds of both legal and illegal substances, starting from alcohol, and marijuana to LSD and Benzedrine. Of all, LSD is the most prominent throughout the story, which seems appropriate as it played a pivotal role in the 1960s counterculture that the novel is trying to capture and deconstruct.

At the very beginning, of Chapter 1, we find out that the main protagonist, Oedipa Mass, has been prescribed pills by her therapist, Dr. Hillarius, who told her about "The bridge, *die Brucke*, being his pet name for the experiment he was helping the community hospital run on effects of LSD-25, mescaline, psilocybin, and related drugs on a large sample of suburban housewives. The bridge inward" (Pynchon 78). Oedipa's reason for the refusal of the supposed therapy is "I am having a hallucination now, I don't need drugs for that" (Pynchon 78). At this point, her reality appears twisted and surreal enough without any substances, part of the reason being that a significant number of characters around her are consuming substances of some kind, which only enhances the dominating paranoia that she begins to experience. In the quote above, all three mentioned substances are of psychedelic nature, the first one is man-made and the two others are naturally occurring in the form of cactuses and fungus. LSD in the novel usually appears in pill form, which is explicitly seen toward the end of the novel when Mucho and Oedipa discuss the LSD that Dr. Hillarius gave to Mucho: "He put a little clear plastic bottle on the table between them. She stared at the pills in it, and then understood. 'That's LSD?'" (Pynchon 117).

Another aspect related to substances is addiction and the notion of LSD addiction is perceived as possible and, of course, frightening to Oedipa, who refers to it as one of the arguments against Dr. Hillarius' prescribed LSD- cocktail therapies: "…would be damned if she'd take the

capsules he'd given her. Literally damned. She didn't want to get hooked in any way, she'd told him that" (Pynchon 78); she is not only worried about herself becoming addicted but also her husband, who gets included into the psychedelic experiment of Dr. Hillarius to a much larger extent than Oedipa and slowly loses his personality: "since you left, Wendell hasn't been himself" (Pynchon 114). In this part of the novel, Oedipa realizes that Mucho has completely changed after his experience with LSD; he feels liberated and at ease, he has no nightmares anymore, and his anxiety disappears, in other words, all the predominantly challenging aspects of his but to Oedipa, he is unrecognizable: "She could not quite get it into her head that the day she'd left him for San Narciso was the day she'd seen Mucho for the last time. So much of him has already dissipated." Mucho assures Oedipa about the positive sides of LSD: "you don't get addicted, you take it because it's good. Because you hear and see things, taste like you never could" (Pynchon 118).

LSD cannot cause addiction (Stephenson 44), however, it is highly unpredictable since it can contribute to a permanently changed mental state, which, for some people, could be worse than the one they were in before taking the drug. The experiments of Dr. Hillarius on suburban housewives is Pynchon's satirical way of referring to various covert government agencies, namely the CIA programs, in the 1950s and the 1960s in which they gave different substances, ranging from LSD to uranium, to the subjects without their knowledge and consent, "using them as guinea pigs and calibration devices" ("Human Radiation Experiments - Nuclear Museum").

Unlike Mucho's vehemently positive attitude towards psychedelics, Oedipa's experience is more gradual. She finds her visit to San Narciso to be a profound experience, in which not only are her views broadened by the exciting and electrifying atmosphere of the city, but also the limits of her consciousness are surpassed when she has a drink which is most probably laced with a psychedelic substance. This induces in her an out-of-body experience, which is described as "straight out of Leary's LSD guidebook" (Freer 68).

For the larger part of the story, Oedipa is entirely intertwined with the enormous size of Pierce Inverarity's estate and its links to the Tristero system, of which she can't be sure that they even exist. She started to experience a variety of both mental and physical sensations:

> Old fillings in her teeth began to bother her. … she could sleep for eighteen drugged hours and wake, enervated, hardly able to stand. In conferences with the keen, fast-talking old man who was new counsel for the estate, her attention span could often be measured in seconds, and she laughed nervously more than she spoke. Waves of nausea, lasting five to ten minutes, would strike her at random, cause her deep misery, and then vanish as if they had never been. There were headaches, nightmares, menstrual pains. (Pynchon 137)

This is a more detailed description of what, at the very beginning of the story, were 'just' hallucinations. What could be seen from this quote is that Oedipa's perception of the world and her mental state have significantly changed over the course of gathering and connecting all the information about the estate she needs to execute, which left a mark on her mental and physical state. In other words, the complexity and the surreal nature of the world around her permeate Oedipa's body and mind, thus altering her perception of the self and those who surround her.

The second research question is related to the representation of the counterculture and the hippie subculture in the novel. Although the novel does not mention the hippies directly, it conveys an atmosphere of the state of American society in California by mentioning and employing aspects of both its mainstream culture and counterculture; such as the growing influence and presence of TV in everyday life and the overall rise in consumption as a direct consequence of the booming advertisement industry that serves the growing forces of capitalism. Some of these aspects are more related to the notion of the counterculture, for example, the already mentioned psychedelic drugs, rock music, and the growing dissatisfaction with the government partly fueled by conspiracy theories which may or may not have an ounce of truth in them. All these factors combined contribute to an atmosphere of confusion and paranoia throughout the story.

The first of the countercultural staples in the novel is music and it is introduced by directly referencing one of the decade's most influential acts—*The Beatles*, whose 1967 concept album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* introduced an innovative, psychedelic sound to a variety of other bands of the era and became the main soundtrack of one of the counterculture pivotal events, *the 1967 Summer of Love* (Womack and Cox 13). Two rock bands are present in the story, *The Sick Dick and the Volkswagens* and *The Paranoids*; both bands appear as a dystopian version of their non-fictional counterpart; the first one with their band name and the song titled "I want to kiss your feet" and the second one with members having Beatle haircuts, together with their exaggerated effort to appear English by faking the British accent because they are convinced they will succeed if they do this, as their manager told them so, which shows that, at the time, the British band were popular across the US and that this popularity was something to be exploited for profit. The reason for this popularity is the British Invasion when in the mid-1960s several British rock-and-roll groups first arrived in the US for a series of successful concerts and widespread media attention (*British Invasion | Origins, Groups, & Facts | Britannica*). The second aspect of the counterculture in the novel is embodied in the character of Dr. Hillarius, who, with his psychedelic experiments, is partly modeled on Timothy Leary, a Harvard psychology professor (at the time when *The Crying of Lot 49* was released) and a prominent advocate of the use of psychedelic drugs. In his 1964 book *The Psychedelic Experience,* he claims the sensation of ecstasy as a prerequisite for the expansion of consciousness, suggesting that the way to get into this state is mediated by LSD. Pynchon and cultural scholar Joanna Freer notes that by the time of the novel's publication in 1966, Pynchon's way of approaching and dealing with counterculture was influenced by Leary, mainly due to his visibility and prominence in the early psychedelic movement (Freer 67). In previous paragraphs, we have seen that Oedipa's husband, Wendell 'Mucho' Mass, has acquired an ability to completely subdue the negative aspects of his personality and become more aware of his surroundings, even hyperaware, which is taken straight out of Leary's guide *Psychedelic Experience* (Freer 74–79), marking yet another of his ideas in the novel. It is important to note, however, that "Pynchon has to

date expressed no explicit, final judgment on the value of LSD either in his fiction or journalism" (Freer 70).

The third aspect of the counterculture in the novel is related to the Tristero conspiracy, an ancient underground postal system. Oedipa begins to see the muted bugle symbol, which stands for Tristero, almost everywhere. The perceived ubiquity of the symbol thus furtherly fuels her confusion and sense of paranoia. The Tristero conspiracy has a dual function in the novel. On the one hand, it can be seen as a contemplation of various anti-government conspiracy theories that were circulating during the 1960s and the early 1970s; on the other hand, the Tristero alternative postal system serves as s communication channel for the people in liminal communities living outside of the system in which everything is owned by Pierce Inverarity. At the end of the novel, Oedipa begins the grasp the scope of Inverarity's all-encompassing network of capital, concluding "[his] legacy was America" (Pynchon 147). Together with this revelation, Oedipa also supposes that Tristero might as well be real and that she has stumbled upon it by pure chance, after which she begins to see 'the Other America', outside of the claw of Inverarity's ownership:

> She thought of other, immobilized freight cars, where the kids sat on the floor planking and sang back, happy as fat, whatever came over the mother's pocket radio; of other squatters who stretched canvas for lean-tos behind smiling billboards along all the highways, or slept in junkyards in the stripped shells of wrecked Plymouths, or even, daring, spent the night up some pole in a lineman's tent-like caterpillars, swung among a web of telephone wires, living in the very copper rigging and secular miracle of communication, untroubled by the dumb voltages flickering their miles, the night long, in the thousands of unheard messages. She remembered drifters she had listened to, Americans speaking their language carefully, scholarly, as if they were in exile from somewhere else invisible yet congruent with the cheered land she lived in; and walkers along the roads at night, zooming in and out of your

headlights without looking up, too far from any town to have a real destination. (Pynchon 149)

As such, they are mostly free from participation in the processes that are inherent to the capitalist system, meaning that they represent the 'true' counterculture, one which has managed to distance itself from the mainstream in its totality and establish its own way of living; which was, according to some (Miller 73–74), the ultimate goal which the countercultural movement in 1960 was not able to reach.

Concerning the second research question, the counterculture is not directly referred to in the novel, since *The Crying of Lot 49* portrays a picture of the American society as a whole. However, as this analysis shows, there are elements that can be seen as a portrayal of the counterculture. These are the two rock bands that are presented with a parodic undertone, the psychedelic drugs that are first taken as a part of a pseudo-scientific experiment and later in a more covert and subversive manner. Finally, the conspiracy that transpires throughout most of the novel also opens a space for the communities outside of the mainstream, who are portrayed as mysterious outcasts amidst the rest of society. To sum up, *The Crying of Lot 49* deploys the area of 1960s Southern California to showcase a typical quest narrative into a surreal world, filled with a chronically confused and lost main protagonist haunted by a may-or may- not be real postal conspiracy and an estate of her late boyfriend. She is accompanied by a plethora of unusual characters, whose sanity is, in one way or another, questionable, as it is clouded by drug use. The novel could be considered a proto-countercultural novel as it anticipates many of its features, such as the aforementioned psychedelic substances, rock music, communal living, and an attitude that contrasts that of mainstream culture.

2.2 The Trip

Released in 1967, *The Trip* is a film directed by Roger Corman with a screenplay written by Jack Nicholson; produced and distributed by AIP, a production company under the wing of the

major film studio MGM. Starring Peter Fonda, Bruce Dern, and Dennis Hopper, among others, the film helped to establish Fonda and Hopper as prominent faces of the independent cinema. Two years later, in 1969, the duo made *Easy Rider* in which they further explored the topic of individualism, freedom, substances, and the relationship between the mainstream culture and counterculture of the time. These motifs are also present in *The Trip*, as the film follows a young director of commercials, Paul (played by Peter Fonda) who takes an LSD dose as a way of coping with his ongoing divorce, enters the hippie subculture, and seems to end up changed as a result of it.

The Trip is an exploitation film; and exploitation films are usually low-budget films of bad or questionable quality whose topics centered around controversial subjects such as violence, sex, and nudity, while those aspects were heavily used in the film's promotional materials, such as posters (Mathijs and Sexton 149). Additionally, *The Trip* is a subgenre of exploitation film, a so-called hippie exploitation film, because it deals with the hippie subculture and the use of psychedelics; however, unlike some other hippie exploitation films, it does not portray hippies in an overly negative and stereotypical way (Fisher). Instead, it successfully conveys the atmosphere and the countercultural setting of California in the late 1960s. The exploitation film primarily got its name from the fact that some of its more explicit content was used for the promotion of the film (Mathijs and Sexton 147). The films often dealt with topics considered to be taboo or in bad taste, such as nudity, vice, violence, and so on. Drug exploitation films first gained prominence in the 1930s, when the film *Reefer Madness* (*Tell Your Children*) was released, as a propaganda film against the use of marijuana. (Rhuart 116) The first film that falls under the genre of hippiesplotation is the 1966 film *Hallucination Generation* which serves as a cautionary tale against the use of LSD (116).

The Trip has two known versions, the original and the Blu-Ray edition from 2020. They have two notable differences; the original version opens with a public service announcement being red over the opening credits. The narrator informs the viewer that the following film should be

viewed as an anti-drug film. It is making its exploitation notion and anti-drug implication explicit. This kind of beginning is fairly typical for a drug-exploitation film. In the Blu-Ray re-issue, the narration was omitted. The second difference is related to the very end of the film, where the aforementioned animation of a glass crack, together with the sound of glass breaking, is shown across the main character's face in close-up, symbolizing the permanent change in the mental state of the main protagonist, a crack in his mind, perception, and presumably in his way of life. This "glass-cracking" visual and sound effect is only present in the original version; it has been completely omitted in the 2020 Blu-Ray edition. Therefore, the two versions of the film have an altered beginning and an end, which has different implications as to how the film's anti-drug rhetoric is perceived.

It could be noted that the deletion of the two elements that are important for emphasizing, and to an extent, even establishing the film's intention to serve as a cautionary tale and as a deterrent against psychedelic substances renders the new re-issue certainly more ambiguous in that respect as the film's extensive and colorful sequences, combined with the contemporary rock music of this era, could also be explained as parts of the *zeitgeist* related to the hippie subculture that is in the center of the film. In addition, caution related to the use of LSD is still present in the film, but its impact seems weakened with the changes and omissions at both the beginning and the end of the film, which dilute the intended anti-drug message of the film.

Regarding the first research question about the presence and portrayal of (psychedelic) substances in the film, *The Trip* revolves around the taking of LSD and the process of ingesting the substance, also known as *tripping*. Although other substances, namely marijuana and alcohol are also part of the film, LSD is the most prominently featured, since the narrative structure of the film is dictated by the LSD trip itself, meaning that the beginning of the film shows the events before taking the substance, the middle part of the film is the trip (with some short interruptions), and the end occurs after the effect of the drug has completely decreased.

The film opens *in medias res* with a scene of shooting a commercial which sets the tone for contrasting Paul's (way of life at the beginning of the film and the lifestyle he emerges into as the film progresses. The set of a commercial is a familiar setting for the main protagonist to be in, as he is at a breaking point in his life which prompts him to set out to do something he long wanted to do – take LSD. Next, Paul goes to the address where he had agreed to arrive before, there he meets a young girl who wants to join him in his psychedelic experience, but he declines, insisting that he goes through it on his own. This illustrates the filmmaker's intention to highlight the importance of individuality and individual experience while taking psychedelic substances for the first time, which was also advocated by prominent LSD guru Timothy Leary. Soon after, the main protagonist is accompanied by a guru through his first LSD experience. The guru, played by Bruce Dern, is older than most of the others in the house and is perceived as an authority figure. He explains the process of ingesting the substance to Paul in a clear, precise, and almost medicinal manner; stating the precise amount of the drug Paul will take and he also informs him of the possibility of having a *bad trip* and the medicine to counter the effects of it. Such a scene is unique compared to the two other case studies in its detailedness. The environment in which the substance is taken is a controlled and familiar one to the main protagonist, and he is explicitly seen ingesting LSD by swallowing it with a glass of water. Paul, though excited, still feels a certain uneasiness about the whole process, to which the guru replies with 'tune in, turn in and drop out'(*The Trip,* 00:09:14-00:09:17). This is a direct reference to *The Beatles*' song "Octopus Garden" and to the motto coined by Timothy Leary, and it was often used as a counterculture slogan during the 1960s (Braunstein and Doyle 7). The guru is presented as patient and mild-mannered in his guidance of Paul, encouraging him to relax and surrender himself to the full effect of LSD, clearing out the confusion that Paul feels while under the influence. He tries to help him, when, toward the end of the film, Paul experiences nightmarish hallucinations about his death as part of a bad trip. These two points show an almost medicinal take on LSD, while at the same time also portraying the dangers of a trip gone bad.

The bad trip Paul experiences goes on, as the film shifts between the scenes of his hallucinations that are often characterized by aforementioned colorful lighting, round patterns that are repeating, and spirals combined with shaky, fast camera movements that contribute to the creation of an atmosphere Paul is in. Running along the Sunset Strip, he goes into a crowded bar, blooming with paisley colorful patterns that appear interwoven with a plethora of people in the room. It is exactly here that Paul's hallucinations reach their pinnacle, as the viewer is presented with flashes of color that merge with the distorted images of people who are moving rhythmically to the music in the background. The confusion and disarray are amplified by the fact that some of the female figures first appear naked and then seem to disappear completely, which, combined (or: juxtaposed) with the close-ups of Paul's face as he tries to understand what is actually happening, successfully convey how he must be feeling to the observers. The description of Paul's progressing and deteriorating LSD experience is a rather accurate description of a bad trip and also presents the drug in a more negative light.

The second research question deals with the representation of the hippie subculture and counterculture in the film and the following paragraphs will discuss elements such as clothing, communal lifestyle, role models, and otherness.

The counterculture in this film relies primarily on the aforementioned usage of psychedelic and other illegal substances, but also on the more "external" markers of a hippie subculture, such as the appearance and clothes of its members. The hippies fit into the general descriptions of the movement at the time; they were in their early or mid-twenties, men had longer hair and often wore leather pants and no T-shirt on or just a leather vest, women wore headbands, flowy dresses with colorful paisley prints and in general combine natural, earthy tones with bold and bright colors. Such emphasis on the visual elements of the counterculture, particularly clothes reflects the attitude of some scholars who claim it to be the aspect in which the counterculture was most prominently

influenced by LSD; “reflecting the effects of LSD, the symbols and fashions of the counterculture were brightly colored, intricately patterned, and deliberately strange”(Stephenson 42).

The communal aspect of the hippie lifestyle is also explored at the beginning of the film, when Paul enters a living room where a group of people is sitting in a circle, passing a joint to each other while discussing marijuana and taking pills. They seem to be relaxed and well-acquainted with each other and the group is centered around Max (played by Dennis Hopper), who welcomes Paul into the circle. The whole scene is reminiscent of that of a commune and the aspect of ‘free love’ is present, which is also characteristic of the hippies. This portrayal of hippie fashion is realistic for the time period and the fact that the commune members only talk about their everyday life and drugs portrays them largely as apolitical, neglecting for example the role the hippies had in opposing the Vietnam War. This is in line with other hippie exploitation films, even though the hippies here are not depicted in an extremely negative manner, such as in *Riot on the Sunset Strip*, which shows a young girl under the influence of LSD being raped. Together with the graphic scenes, this latter portrays the hippie subculture in a superficial and vehemently negative way.

Film scholar Britton Stiles Rhuart emphasizes the key difference between the mainstream films dealing with the hippie subculture, such as *Easy Rider*, and hippie exploitation films was their stance toward the treatment and portrayal of hippies and the counterculture and that this attitude was often determined by the director’s view of the countercultural movement. As it is pointed out, “exploitation films were generally unfavorable in their on-screen depictions of Hippies, whereas mainstream films featured generous depictions of Hippies when they had left-leaning directors at the helm” (Rhuart 4). Our case study, *The Trip,* is an exception among hippie exploitation films as it portrays the subculture in a more authentic way and shows the effects of LSD. Although the film is neutral in its attitude to psychedelic substances, “the marketing played up the era's moral panic, similar to anti-drug exploitation films *Reefer Madness* (Gasiner 1936) and *Marihuana* (Esper 1936). *The Trip*’s tagline reads, ‘A **L**ovely **S**ort of **D**eath’” (Rhuart 142–43).

The Trip, apart from musical and historical, also contains a clear literary reference. Shortly after the beginning of the trip Paul begins to hallucinate, then hastily runs out of the room, feeling scared. The camera then shows a copy of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* on the table. *Howl* is considered to be one of the most influential literary works of the Beat Generation and, alongside *On the Road*, has greatly influenced counterculture and the hippie movement with its rejection of traditional values and its promotion of an anti-establishment attitude (Freer 9–20). The showcasing of this work is a reminder of a link between the hippies and the Beatnik, who were (in many aspects) ideological role models for the hippie movement.

In the middle of the film, after Paul runs away from the house, he stumbles around the streets of Los Angeles and arrives at Sunset Strip, where he enters a laundromat. There, he encounters a woman and starts a conversation with her; she finds him friendly at first, but soon he scares her with his erratic behavior and she threatens to call the police, after which Paul runs off. This encounter shows a defining characteristic of the genre and the hippie movement overall: the sense of Otherness between members of the mainstream society and the rebelling counterculture. In this scene the Otherness is not coming from different ideas about politics or ethical beliefs, but from the fact that a stoned and overwhelmed hippie scares away a 'normal' person.

In another scene towards the end of the film, Paul is at a club, under the influence of LSD, where he unsuccessfully tries to order a drink as the effect of the drugs has rendered his speech ability to be incomprehensible. The waitress reacts to this with a reprimanding tone: "You're stoned out of your mind, aren't you? Isn't the real world good enough for you, love- freaks?" (*The Trip*, 00:58:32-00:58:48). The waitress is working in a club where psychedelic music is playing and most of the club-goers are young people, who are dressed in a typical hippie fashion; she is also dressed in a similar manner, so the viewer can consider her to be counterculturally minded in some way. The main difference between Paul and her is that she is critical of the drug use that is common among the hippies. It is evident from this scene that not all counterculture-oriented people are

supporting the extensive use of psychedelics and sheds light on how the psychedelics taking part in the counterculture are portrayed as "stoned out of mind" and the perpetrators as "love freaks". To conclude, *The Trip* is centered around the experience of consuming LSD and, unlike other drug-exploitation films and hippie exploitation films, it gives a nuanced take on both the substances and the hippie movement. The main protagonist, Paul, has a bad trip that brings him to the brink of madness; he has horrifying visions that scare him; also, as we have seen in the analysis, some characters express explicitly negative attitudes toward the usage and influence of psychedelics that furtherly contributes to the graduated portrayal of both LSD and the counterculture.

2.3 Easy Rider

Easy Rider, released in 1969, successfully captured the *zeitgeist* of the decade's counterculture in some of its most significant aspects. It is directed by Dennis Hopper and stars Hopper, Peter Fonda, and Jack Nicholson in a supporting role. The film explores themes such as individual freedom, the American Dream, conformity, and counterculture by showing the two main protagonists, bikers Wyatt and Billy, as they travel through the country going from LA to New Orleans to witness the Mardi Gras festivities. The Mardi Gras scenes were the first ones to be shot as proof to the studio that Hopper could direct a film as he had not done it before; there was also no screenplay and just a relatively vague idea of an acid trip, which subsequently became the basis for the rest of the film (Biskind 56–58). The film became both a critical and commercial success and a significant part of it was its resonance with the younger part of the audience and its portrayal of the US society plagued by the Vietnam War and growing political uncertainty as well as stirred by the Civil Rights movement. As film critic Roger Ebert has noted: " [*Easy Rider*] was a young audience's vision … that everything was hopeless and rigid" (Ebert).

The theme of individuality, together with the idea of the American Dream, is best illustrated through the two main protagonists, Wyatt and Billy, the anti-heroes who bear a resemblance, not only in the names, to the two famous outlaws of the Wild West, Wyatt Earp and Billy the Kid. As

they travel to New Orleans, they make a few stops along the road, mostly to find lodging and food, but often get rejected due to their looks and their standing out from the people in the area they are visiting. The Wyatt Earp reference and the fact that in the film their movement is from the West to the East, away from the Old Frontier, are the reasons some film scholars credit *Easy Rider* with the "reinvention of the Western genre" ("'Easy Rider' as a Reinvention of the Western Genre"). The idea of the American Dream though is still present in the film, as the two protagonists make a significant amount of money through a drug deal and aim to spend it by settling in Florida, which shows that the money they earned has given them a sense of freedom. Toward the end of the film, Wyatt concludes "we blew it" (*Easy Rider*, 01:29:43), as he becomes aware that this freedom is just an illusion as it cannot be reached through material gain, let alone that which was acquired by illegal means. From this, it is clear that even though they, in their own way, fulfill the American Dream, that dream is tainted and broken because they succeeded in an illegal and morally questionable way. Their idea of getting rich is also heavily contrasted with the counterculture, where the communal lifestyle with little profit was preferred and encouraged. Nevertheless, it could be argued that *Easy Rider*'s greatest strength is the successful representation of the hippie subculture and the counterculture. As Peter Biskind in his seminal work on the late 1960s American cinema *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* quotes the film's director Dennis Hopper: "Nobody had ever seen themselves portrayed in a movie. At every love-in across the country people were smoking grass and dropping LSD, while audiences were still watching Doris Day and Rock Hudson!" (Biskind 49). The film brought hippies to the mainstream cinema and thus, at the end of the decade, encapsulated what was going on with dissatisfied youth in the big US cities during the mid- and late sixties.

Here, I will analyze the film according to the research questions as stated in the introduction. The first question is related to the substances and the way they are present(ed) in the film. The very first scene of the film shows the two main characters, Captain America or Wyatt and Billy, purchasing cocaine from a Mexican man; Wyatt tries the drug, concludes it is good and they make a

deal. At a first glance, having a character named Captain America involved in a drug deal seems to present a subversion of a figure of a quintessential American hero, but, on the other hand, other aspects of the US are presented in an almost idyllic way, as we will see in the sentences below. Next, we see them selling that drug at an airport, earning a significant amount of money which they hide inside a gasoline tube in the fuel compartment of Wyatt's American flag-emblemed Harley Davidson chopper. *Easy Rider* is loaded with such national symbols, but it does not treat them in a completely ironic manner. Even though the film is dominated by countercultural attitudes and a point of view, it celebrates the landscape of the American wilderness, such as the Rocky Mountains and the Southwest, which are shown through various long shots while the two are traveling on their motorcycles. While the West is idealized, the South is portrayed as a desolate, backward area with hostile and close-minded inhabitants. The film moves constantly between two opposites; "the Americana in the mass media" (Cohan and Hark 201) on the one side and, on the other, the destructive, violent forces present in the society that is becoming increasingly divided, as the film has shown. This motion between the contrast is also reflected in the way the film handles the topic of nationalism: "it vividly crystallizes the tension between nationalism as a process evolving through time and nationalism as a thing already realized" (Cohan and Hark 200). Film scholar Barbara Klinger points out that even though it may not seem like this at first, the film is not "a counter-nationalistic film" (200). The entire intro scene is musically framed with *Steppenwolf's* 1968 song "The Pusher," which condemns the "damn pusher who don't care if you live or die," thus making a distinction between someone who sells hard drugs such as heroin and a marijuana dealer, who "with the love grass in his hand, he'll sell you lots of sweet dreams." The fact that this song is playing precisely during the opening drug dealing scene where cocaine is being sold, signifies a certain level of ambivalence the film seems to convey about its main protagonists, who see themselves as free-spirited individuals, above the values of society ruled by the market, but they still make a profit by selling illegal drugs.

The next substance mentioned in the film is marijuana, which is prominently featured and especially emphasized in the night scenes where the protagonists discuss all kinds of topics gathered around a campfire, laughing and being stoned. In one such scene, Wyatt offers a joint to George, who mistakenly thinks it is a hand-rolled tobacco cigarette and declines. Wyatt tells him it's 'grass', to which George replies "you mean, marijuana?" (*Easy Rider*, 00:55:35), which proves that the two men's experiences with the aforementioned substances are significantly different and this difference is clearly reflected linguistically as one character uses slang and the other a standard name, which suggest a certain unfamiliarity with the drug. George is at first hesitant to try it, saying that he does not want to become addicted because he's "got enough problems with booze and all" and that "it leads to harder stuff" (*Easy Rider*, 00:56:08-00:56:23). By the latter, he describes a phenomenon known today as "the gateway theory" which claims that "initiation with drug use begins with legal drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco" and "marijuana is the bridge between the licit and other illicit drugs" (Kandel 365). In November 2018, the literature review from the US Department of Justice concluded "that no causal link between cannabis use and the use of other illicit drugs can be claimed at this time" (Nöel and Wang 14). Nevertheless, the theory remains well-known today and "it may be a cultural artifact" (Golub and Johnson).

In the following shot, we see George smoking the joint after all while commenting, "It's got a nice smell to it, though I don't suppose it'll do me much good, I'm so used to the booze" (*Easy Rider*, 00:57:12). The next morning, Wyatt offers George another joint to give him a "whole new way of looking at the day" (*Easy Rider*, 01:01:57), once again highlighting its effects as positive. George is an alcoholic, football-playing young lawyer from the South, not a hippie or in any way related to the counterculture; and his substance of choice also conveys this. As historian David Farber notes: "Whether mellowed out on Valium, hyped up on speed, socially drunk, or gently buzzed on nicotine, Americans in the 1960s had seemingly accepted the intoxicated state as part and parcel of the American way of life" (qtd. in Braunstein and Doyle 28). In other words, during the 1960s there was a variety of ways to induce and maintain the state of intoxication and some of these

ways signaled different social categorizations; for example, Wyatt and Billy, the two main protagonists in *Easy Rider* perceive marijuana as commonplace because they are closely linked to the counterculture, on the other hand, George feels the same way about alcohol; the only difference between the two is that one is illegal and the other is not. As Braunstein and Doyle point out, "The difference between legally medicated, legally intoxicated, and illegally high *did* sometimes signify a new cultural orientation, even a cultural rebellion" (30), which is exactly presented in *Easy Rider* when the two main protagonists are contrasted to the character of George.

The next, and the only psychedelic, substance present in the film is LSD. It appears in a scene where they are about to leave the commune they were led to by a hippie hitchhiker they picked up on the road. He gives Wyatt a dose of LSD in the form of blotter paper, which was a common way to take LSD in the 1960s; and tells him to split it into four pieces when they come to New Orleans (*Easy Rider*, 00:42:41), emphasizing the collective aspect of LSD consumption that played a significant role in establishing and, in a way, strengthening the community aspect of the counterculture (Stephenson 41). Taking LSD through a collective experience was advocated by those who perceived the substance as a tool that can shape and enhance the social setting. After arriving in New Orleans, Wyatt and Billy consume LSD at a graveyard with the two prostitutes they meet in a brothel. The scenes that follow show the characters under the influence of LSD which is conveyed by shifting camera movement, flashes of light onto the characters' faces, rapid close-ups interchanged with zoom-out cuts, and round camera lens combined with frog perspective - all of which contribute to the chaotic and haphazard atmosphere where the characters appear to go through a range of extreme and contrasting emotions, from ecstatic joy to the horrifying fear of dying. These illustrate the ambivalence of the whole experience and "yet the film makes clear that the trip brings users face-to-face with their inner selves, and the experience is portrayed as both enlightening and frightening" (Boyd 69).

To sum up, *Easy Rider* features four substances, alcohol, cocaine, LSD, and marijuana, and it could be said that the film problematizes the use of alcohol while normalizing the use of LSD and marijuana, as film and cultural scholar Susan C. Boyd states: "*Easy Rider* highlights normalized recreational drug-use … [T]he film celebrates altered states of consciousness and recreational illegal drug-use is represented as positive and alcohol as dangerous" (68).

The second research question is related to the representation of the hippie subculture and counterculture in the film. Both main characters, Billy and Wyatt (Captain America) are members of the counterculture, along with the hitchhiker and the members of the commune. This is primarily evident from their looks and the clothes they wear; Wyatt and the hitchhiker have slightly longer hair, while Billy has long hair, they wear leather pants, suede, and leather jackets, colorful or natural-toned shirts, bandanas with paisley prints and so on. Other people in the commune are also dressed in a similar manner. The two main protagonists also use different expressions, such as 'groovy, zonked out, dude' which were commonly used by the countercultural youth concentrated in big cities like San Francisco or Los Angeles, where Billy and Wyatt are from. In a jail cell scene, Wyatt explains the word 'dude' to George, who asks "What's dude? A dude ranch?", to which Wyatt smilingly replies: "Dude is a normal guy. Dude is a regular sort of person" (*Easy Rider*, 00:48:08-00:48:23). This illustrates that the aforementioned expression related to the youth and hippie subculture were not known in more rural areas of the US because the counterculture has not taken hold there.

The next thing that is characteristic of hippies is the notion of living outside of mainstream society, in other words, to follow an alternative way of life favorably away from the city and its amenities. The commune in the film is an example of this desire; they live together and aspire to be self-sustainable regarding food production, even though the weather and natural conditions are unfavorable as the commune is on a remote and desert-like terrain. In one scene, we see a couple of young members of the commune planting crops by throwing seeds on the ground randomly.

Hitchhiker tells Billy and Wyatt that the commune was established last year, but since they arrived when it was too late to plant, they had almost nothing to eat: “here were forty or fifty of them here living in this one-room place down here. Nothing to eat - starvin'. Now there's - there's eighteen or twenty of them left and they're city kids” (*Easy Rider*, 00:32:01-00:32:15). Shortly after, Billy proclaims “they’ll never make it” (*Easy Rider*, 00:33:01), expressing his doubt in the whole commune endeavor. Unlike Wyatt, Billy clearly shows disillusionment with the commune’s way of life, questioning its potential success of living in a self-sustained way. This opens some parallels to the beginning of the film, where Billy and Wyatt stop at a ranch to fix a flat tire and end up sharing a meal with the farmer’s family, showing respect for their way of life and successful management of the ranch with both Billy and Wyatt concluding that not many men can live off the land (*Easy Rider*, 00:16:04). The ranch is one of the rare places that welcomes the two main characters since earlier they were completely ignored in their attempts to find lodging and food because they looked different and therefore seemed out of place in the mostly rural area they were traveling in.

Toward the end of the film, Billy, Wyatt, and George make a stop at a diner in Louisiana, where they are carefully observed by all the people in there, from local teenage girls who are in awe of them to a local sheriff and other locals, predominantly male, both young and old, who make degrading, xenophobic comments which compare them to homosexuals (using derogatory terms) and animals. When they leave the diner without being served, only scrutinized, one of the local men remarks: “I still don’t believe they will make it across the parish line” (*Easy Rider*, 01:08:10), which is an anticipatory comment, as all three, George, Wyatt and Billy are killed by the locals who resent their whole existence, with the film ending with a shot of Wyatt’s motorbike exploding. To sum up, *Easy Rider*, due to its realistic portrayal of the hippies, resonated strongly with the young audience immediately upon its release and became an instant classic (Bannerman). Billy and Wyatt ride on their motorcycles across the country to meet farmers, and young hippies in the commune. They arrive at their final destination and consume psychedelics, under whose influence they unknowingly precipitate their own deaths in a cloud of fire on the side of the road. As for the

portrayal of psychedelics and other substances, it would be amiss to claim that the film glorifies the use of substances because it clearly portrays the perils of psychedelics, as well as an alcoholic in a bad state. Finally, the film's greatest strength lies in successfully capturing the zeitgeist of the mid- and late-1960s in the US, but it also offers a critique of US society and the way it treats those who do not fit in.

2.4 Comparison

There are several similarities and differences in the way the three chosen case studies (*The Crying of Lot 49*, *Easy Rider*, *The Trip*) portray and treat the psychedelic and other substances, as well as the hippie subculture and the counterculture in general. In the novel, the counterculture and several of its aspects are not present as explicitly as in *Easy Rider* and *The Trip*. Pynchon, in contrast to Hopper and Corman, did not have direct experience with psychedelic substances, nor he was considered to be part of the counterculture. Nevertheless, all three case studies show the use of both psychedelic and non-psychedelic substances; of the non-psychedelic ones, alcohol and marijuana are the most featured, while LSD is the main psychedelic drug featured in the novel and the films. In *Easy Rider* and *The Trip*, marijuana is used recreationally, mostly by young people for whom it is a normal part of their social life, and it is usually consumed in a circle of friends or acquaintances. This is also true in *The Crying of Lot 49*, where the use of marijuana is mostly associated with the young rock band *The Paranoids*. *Easy Rider* adds another positive connotation to the use of marijuana, claiming it opens different perspectives and even subtly suggests it as a possible alternative to alcohol. Additionally, the film wants to emphasize that alcohol addiction is tough to beat even when a person is aware that they have a problem, as is the case with George in the film. The other two case studies do not have this critical approach toward the use of alcohol, but contain examples of casual alcohol use; though, at the beginning of *The Crying of Lot 49*, having a couple of drinks during the day seems to be frequent in Oedipa's case.

As for psychedelic substances, *The Crying of Lot 49* explicitly mentions three; mescaline, psilocybin and LSD, while *Easy Rider* and *The Trip* feature LSD exclusively. In *The Crying of Lot 49* and *The Trip*, the characters consume LSD in the form of a pill, in *Easy Rider* they get it as blotter paper. One significant difference to note is that in both of the analyzed films, the characters take LSD completely against their own volition, unlike in Pynchon's novel, where Oedipa has an LSD experience through a spiked drink; meaning she was unaware that the drug had been administered to her. The other character in the novel who is influenced and altered by frequent tripping is Wendell (Mucho) Maas, who does not venture into the world of psychedelics on his own, but he is encouraged and persuaded by Dr. Hillarius to participate in his LSD experiment. After being exposed to the effect of the drug, Mucho ends up with a fragmented sense of self, and even though he himself feels content and fulfilled, he is unrecognizable to those who know him, especially to Oedipa. In contrast, Dr. Hillarius, who is a psychiatrist and whose medical authority has enabled him to conduct his psychedelic study at the city hospital in Kinneret, despite his advocacy for the use of LSD, "…never took the drug, I chose to remain in relative paranoia, where at least I know who I am and who the others are" (Pynchon 111). He settles for the status quo, aware of the both positive and negative aspects of psychedelic drugs, unwilling to risk losing himself in the process. Similar to Dr. Hillarius, in *The Trip* there is an LSD guru named John, who guides Paul through his trip, without taking the drug. Although there is no reflection on his reasons for it, he, nevertheless, highlights the mind-expanding properties of the drug in a positive manner. The reason why John, the guru who guides Paul through his very first LSD experience, does not consume the substance himself, is a way that the film furtherly wants to emphasize that Paul's experience is happening in a controlled environment, under the supervision of a sober person; and even in such an environment, a so-called bad trip with harrowing visions can happen.

The next similarity between the guru-like characters in the novel and the film is that they are both based on Timothy Leary and *The Crying of Lot 49* 'borrows' Leary's academic title (he was a

Doctor of Psychology) with a small variation for Dr. Hillarius, who is a psychiatrist, while *The Trip* takes over the drug guru aspects of Leary's persona.

The Trip and *Easy Rider* feature characters who are members of the counterculture, along with other facets of the counterculture, namely psychedelic drugs, fashion, and music. Pynchon opted for a different route. His novel captures the countercultural notions of the 1960s, without leaning too explicitly on showing the hippies experiencing drug hallucinations. Instead, he included certain aspects of the counterculture, drugs being one of them, as a tool to convey the dominant 'vibe' of the decade, dominated by paranoia combined with substance-induced haze and confusion. Related to this, in both of the representation of the counterculture in *Easy Rider* and *Lot 49*, there is a sense that the American society has undergone a significant change since the 1950s. In *Easy Rider*, toward the end of the film, after they are forced to leave the diner because of the way they looked, George says: "this used to be a helluva good country. I can't understand what's gone wrong with it" (*Easy Rider*, 01:09:59). Oedipa has a similar feeling when she realizes that all of San Narciso and adjacent areas are owned by Pierce Inverarity and that his capital is controlling and running this vastness of space and turning into it a unified system so that she asks herself: "how had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity?" (Pynchon 150). Unlike in *Easy Rider*, where Billy and Wyatt end up killed because they stand out from the environment they are in, in *The Crying of Lot 49* there is still some space (literally!) where diversity is still welcomed.

Even though the case studies differ, especially the two films when compared to the novel, LSD plays an important, if not defining role in them. There is a gradual difference in the portrayal of the counterculture; in *The Trip,* the hippies are shown as apolitical drug seekers, in *Easy Rider* the political anti-establishment undertone is more present, with the hippies establishing a commune in the desert, while in *The Crying of Lot 49*, the Tristero conspirators, who can be seen as the true counterculture, are deeply political due to their subversive way of communication by using the secret alternative postal system.

2.5 Conclusion

LSD and other psychedelic substances came to be synonymous with the 1960s counterculture and have often been featured in various media as a prominent trait of this movement, which has contributed to a distorted image of the counterculture in cultural memory. Nevertheless, it is exactly the psychedelics that are now "making a comeback" in several research and magazine articles and documentaries. The 1960s in the US were a turbulent decade plagued by political and social unrest which combined with other factors and a generational gap between the youth and their parents gave rise to a countercultural movement in the mid-1960s. Closely associated with the counterculture were the hippies, a subculture that strongly opposed the Vietnam War, embraced the sexual revolution, listened to contemporary rock music, and used psychedelic substances. The influence of these substances made a mark on the cultural production of the era and its marks can be found in music, film, and literature.

As previously mentioned, the aim of this paper is to look at three selected cultural artifacts from the 1960s, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *The Trip*, and *Easy Rider*, and see which psychedelic substances are present in them and how are they portrayed, as well as how the hippie movement and the counterculture are presented in order to make a relevant comparison. *The Crying of Lot 49* revolves around the main protagonist's quest for the assets of a will left to her by her ex-boyfriend. At the same time, she is trying to make sense out of the Tristero conspiracy that is related to postal communication and serves as a symbol of the anti-establishment movement. Throughout the novel, Oedipa is in a psychedelic haze and confusion created by almost surreal events and people around her. It is important to emphasize that the novel also contains references to other substances, such as marijuana, alcohol, and prescription drugs, the latter also present in *The Trip* and particularly *Easy Rider*, where it serves a different purpose, as shown in the analysis of the film.

In *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pynchon acknowledges the existence of the emergent countercultural movement through the mysterious Tristero system whose symbols seem to follow

Oedipa at every step. The fact that the novel describes the people who are using this alternative postal system as authentic and therefore manage to exist despite the mainstream culture that is vastly different than theirs can be read as an early subtle nod to counterculture itself, whereas *The Trip* and *Easy Rider* are abundant in hippiesque imagery, symbols, fashion, values, and music as they takes place in an entirely countercultural setting. In the center of *The Trip* is the act of the LSD trip and its effects which are conveyed to the viewer through kaleidoscopic visual imagery and rapid changes of camera movements. *Easy Rider* is also accompanied by a soundtrack containing psychedelic rock and folk music that accompanies the scenes fittingly, as mentioned at the very beginning of the analysis; and, even though this was not a main focus of this work still shows an important aspect of the portrayal of hippie culture in popular media. All three selected works at one point also describe a "bad trip" scene; in the novel when Oedipa loses her sense of self after consuming a spiked drink; the entire second half of *The Trip* depicts Paul experiencing strong hallucinations about his own death and towards the end of *Easy Rider* where they take LSD at a graveyard where their hallucinations mix with religious imagery and flashes of scenes which foreshadow their imminent deaths. It is significant that each of the selected artifacts has dedicated a significant portion of their content to showcase the negative effects of psychedelic substances and approach it in a critical manner, instead of glamorizing the drug and its effects.

To sum up, psychedelics played an important role in the 1960s counterculture and have left a significant mark on how people remember the decade. On top of this, these selected artefacts have a nuanced take on the position of psychedelics within the countercultural movement. Lastly, the selected works employ psychedelics as part of their narrative to fully capture the hazy *zeitgeist* of the hippie and counterculture movements.

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4 Summary

This paper is about 1960s counterculture, the role of psychedelic drugs, and their representations in film and literature of the decade. Psychedelic substances are relevant for this era because they played an important role in the 1960s countercultural movement and were featured in a variety of musical, literary, and film works. The substances sometimes also influenced the authors and the content of the art which is one of the reasons for taking a close look at their representation in the artefacts. This paper analyses three case studies - Thomas Pynchon’s novel *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) and two films, Roger Corman’s *The Trip* (1967) and Dennis Hopper’s *Easy Rider* (1969) - and considers which psychedelic substances are considered and how they are represented as well as how the counterculture and the hippie subculture are portrayed. The case studies were analyzed by utilizing both qualitative and comparative methods. Psychedelic substances, as well as other non-psychedelic ones, are featured in both films and the novel. The references to counterculture are

more explicit in the films, while the novel acknowledges the counterculture in an indirect way through the subversive subplot with an alternative postal system and those who use it. *The Trip*, on the other hand, completely revolves around an LSD trip and its effects and the aftermath while set in a typical countercultural environment of young people dressed in hippie fashion and smoking marijuana. Finally, *Easy Rider* also directly references the counterculture and the hippie movement in various aspects, such as communal lifestyle and values, as shown in this paper. All three selected case studies do not glamorize nor do they promote psychedelic drug use as such, rather, they show that the substance use is deeply connected with the anti-establishment culture it was a part of.

Keywords: psychedelic substances, literature, film, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *The Trip*, *Easy Rider*, hippies, 1960s counterculture