

# Exploration of Counterculture Feminism Through the Novels *The Group*, *The Bell Jar*, and *I'm With the Band*

---

Martinić, Sara

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2023

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:162:313434>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-12-04**



**Sveučilište u Zadru**  
Universitas Studiorum  
Jadertina | 1396 | 2002 |

Repository / Repozitorij:

[University of Zadar Institutional Repository](#)



Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski sveučilišni studij anglistike; nastavnički smjer (dvopredmetni)

**Sara Martinić**

**Exploration of Counterculture Feminism Through  
the Novels *The Group*, *The Bell Jar*, and *I'm With  
the Band***

**Diplomski rad**

Zadar, 2023.



Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski sveučilišni studij anglistike; nastavnički smjer (dvopredmetni)

Exploration of Counterculture Feminism Through the Novels *The Group*, *The Bell Jar*, and *I'm With the Band*

Diplomski rad

Student/ica:

Sara Martinić

Mentor/ica:

Izv.prof.dr.sc. Marko Lukić

Zadar, 2023.



## Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Sara Martinić**, ovime izjavljujem da je moj **diplomski** rad pod naslovom **Exploration of Counterculture Feminism Through the Novels The Group, The Bell Jar, and I'm With the Band** rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

Izjavljujem da ni jedan dio ovoga rada nije iskorišten u kojem drugom radu pri bilo kojoj drugoj visokoškolskoj, znanstvenoj, obrazovnoj ili inoj ustanovi.

Sadržaj mojega rada u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenoga i nakon obrane uređenoga rada.

Zadar, 24. veljače 2023.

## Table of contents:

1. Introduction .....	1
2. The phenomenon of Counterculture and the hippie.....	4
3. How Counterculture came to be.....	7
3.1. Women and African Americans.....	10
4. Hippies and the New Left.....	12
5. Sexual revolution of the 60s.....	14
6. Feminism of the 1960s.....	16
6.1. Sexism and Counterculture.....	18
6.2. Feminism and Counterculture.....	21
7. Analysis of <i>The Group</i> by Mary McCarthy.....	24
8. Analysis of <i>The Bell Jar</i> by Sylvia Plath.....	30
9. Analysis of <i>I'm With the Band</i> by Pamela Des Barres.....	33
10. Conclusion .....	37
11. Works cited .....	38
14. Exploration of Counterculture Feminism Through Novels <i>The Group</i> , <i>The Bell Jar</i> , and <i>I'm With the Band</i> : Summary and key words.....	39
15. Istraživanje feminizma kontrakulture kroz romane <i>The Group</i> , <i>The Bell Jar</i> i <i>I'm With the Band</i> : Sažetak i ključne riječi.....	40

## 1. Introduction

The Counterculture movement is a cultural phenomenon of epic proportions that permanently affected and changed the mainstream society. The transformative era of the Sixties to this day peaks the interests of many, and despite it happening over 60 years ago, there is hardly anyone today that hasn't heard about the hippies and their lifestyle.

Counterculture had shifted, or at least attempted to shift, the paradigms of the mainstream society of its age, and has transformed the lives of their generation and generations to come. Young men and women began breaking the racial, sexual, and sexist shackles their parents and society had imposed on them, they turned from the exterior to the interior, and strived to changing the collective consciousness. To counterculturers, reason had run its course, and it was time to return to the mystical and intuitional.

Though the period saw monumental political changes, especially for marginalized groups, there was also a profound societal change. The hippies of the Counterculture, though usually apolitical, still had a massive effect on the collective thought, and have undoubtedly changed and challenged their conservative surroundings.

One of the major shifts that occurred during Counterculture had to do with sex and the position of women in society. With the invention of the Pill, more studies being made on female pleasure and sexuality, and an overall stepping away from the puritan values, a sexual and feminist revolution was brewing. In the words of Miller:

The hippies were in the vanguard of a revolutionary smashing of sexual taboos. Concern over promiscuity, opposition to masturbation, demanding that sex be strictly marital, and guilt feelings over being sexually active have clearly decreased sharply in American culture as a whole over the last several decades and the hippies were amongst the first to occupy the turf of sexual liberation. (55)

Though this graduate thesis will focus mostly on feminism of the Sixties, Counterculture and hippies will also be explored to an extent. It is important to not only define and analyze the movement itself, but also to define the political and societal state out of which they had emerged.

The aim of this research is to portray how the Counterculture influenced feminism, and vice versa, and to show the importance of feminist work of the era that shone a bright light on women's issues and portrayed women as free sexual beings, contrary to the mainstream role of the woman who is a housewife with a secondary role not only in society, but in her own life. The goal is therefore to display the shift in the paradigm that occurred in the 1960s, with regards to women and how they are represented in society and the mainstream.

There is certainly debate on Counterculture feminism, that is, the debate on whether Counterculture hippies were feminist in the first place. Though the period of the Sixties gave rise to a number of feminist agendas and organizations, they were mostly rooted in the New Left politics of the Sixties. Most hippies of the Counterculture weren't as politically involved, and many would argue hippies somewhat maintained the traditional gender roles of society.

However, I would argue hippies certainly created and contributed to many societal changes when it comes to women's position in society, and they were feminist in their own accord. They were the forerunners of a booming sexual revolution that has permanently altered the sexual role and image of women and were amongst the first to oppose the gender norms of the 1950s society.

This thesis will not only deal with the sexual liberation and feminism, but a special focus will be placed on some of the greatest feminist literary works of the era, including Mary McCarthy's novel *The Group*, as well as Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* that challenge the mainstream societal role of an obedient, sexually repressed woman. Also, the sexual and



gender liberties of the Counterculture will be explored through the memoir of Pamela des Barres, *I'm With the Band*.

Firstly, an overview of the whole movement will be presented, focusing on hippies themselves and their rejection of the mainstream culture. Furthermore, a brief analysis of the mainstream culture of the 1950s will follow, focusing mostly on the family values, and the position of women in said period. The topic will be further expanded through the analysis of key differences between Counterculture and New Left politics. Furthermore, the thesis will touch upon the sexual revolution of the 1960s, and feminist implications of both Counterculture and The New Left will be explored, maintaining the position that Counterculture is inherently feminist, and has in its own way contributed to the feminist agenda. Finally, Mary McCarthy's novel *The Group*, Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* and Pamela des Barres memoir *I'm With the Band* will be analyzed and the feminist implications of said works will be presented in the final chapters of this thesis.

## 1. The phenomenon of Counterculture and the hippie

When talking about the phenomenon that is American Counterculture of the 1960s, a plethora of associations come to mind. The Vietnam war, Civil rights movement, feminism, hippies, as well as the bountiful music and artistic scene of the era all portray various aspects of a revolutionary shift in the society's paradigm.

The Counterculture, or, plainly, The Sixties, have become a socio-historical concept in their own accord. The Sixties invoke acts of protest and rebellion against war and racial injustice, they are a distinctive cultural mood, an all-encompassing atmosphere of profound change, not only in mainstream society and politics, but an atmosphere of profound change in one's own mind and way of life. It seems that in every single sphere of life, a new perspective and thought was brewing, waiting to explode and forever change the course of humanity.

As Bob Dylan says in the song *The Times They Are A-Changin'*:

The battle outside ragin'  
 Will soon shake your windows  
 And rattle your walls  
 For the times they are a-changin'  
 ...Your sons and your daughters  
 Are beyond your command  
 Your old road is rapidly agin'  
 Please get out of the new one  
 If you can't lend your hand  
 For the times they are a-changin'.

(Bob Dylan, *The Times They Are A-changin'*, 1964)

Though The Sixties have become a synonym for Counterculture, and vice-versa, it's important to note that this period of profound societal changes took place both before and

after the decade of the sixties. Most agree that Counterculture began in the early 60s and stretched well into the 70s, but some would say that the sparks that ignited the fire known as Counterculture began as early as the 1940s. Theodore Roszak, for example, places Counterculture in a period that stretches all the way from 1942 to the 1970s. (Roszak) Either way, Counterculture is much more a psychological and cultural phenomenon, than an actual chronological experience we can explore through various important dates and events.

In lieu of this paper, The Counterculture is regarded as a cultural, social, and political phenomenon that impacted all spheres of human existence, and forever altered the world we live in. The messages of unity, peace, love, and acceptance touched every aspect of human creation and have continued to live on ever since.

Underlying the whole Counterculture movement is the notion of the hippie, a sexually liberated individual that rejects war and divide, embraces communal living, preaches and practices love and peace, with the goal of expanding his own mind to live a more authentic and meaningful life. The hippie fundamentally rejects the societal norms that have been looming over him for generations, rejects the divide of gender and race, rebels against the mainstream, and looks for alternate ways of fulfilment based on love and respect.

The hippie is usually associated with psychedelic drugs, especially cannabis and LSD, though other psychoactive substances also come to mind. The underlying message between the seeming propagation of drug usage, is that there is a fundamental difference between the 'dope' of the hippies, and the drugs of America's mainstream society. Hippies generally believed social change comes from a shift in human consciousness, and many thought psychedelic drugs were the gateway to achieve that transformation.

Furthermore, the hippies are often associated with communal living, anti-war protests, and sexual revolution. Though many weren't very involved in politics at first, by the end of the Counterculture they practically became synonymous with radical political changes.

The message of the hippie youth was clear – they will not become their parents. There was a sort of generational opposition, the urge to define oneself outside of parental authority, a rejection of the American Dream, forsaking the upper-middle class job, house and housewife, rejection of the mundane, of the false goals in life. The focus shifted from the exterior to the interior, possessions and status became irrelevant, what mattered was peace and love, personal fulfillment, authenticity in one's life, self-awareness, growth, and mostly, freedom and joy.

## 2. How Counterculture came to be

Counterculture and hippies were a consequence of the political and social situation of the post-war America. As the people returned victorious after World War II, another conflict was brewing between the East and the West, Capitalism and Communism, and it would soon become the central focus of the American Government.

Anyone's perspective on race relations, sex, religion, and foreign policy could potentially elicit concerns and provide reasonable cause for further investigation on whether an individual posed a threat to the country's security. This has, of course, trampled individual and civil liberties, since The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) hunted for Communist in every sphere of public life.

Laws prohibited criticism of the Government, 'Unamerican activities' were a serious charge that could sentence a man to multiple years in prison, and some states could even enforce the death penalty. Universities became fruitful havens for radical indoctrination, which was heavily infringing on academic freedom of both students and professors. (Bach)

The anti-communist propaganda was omnipresent, it was in schools, films, newspapers, novels, and 'Communists' began to be associated with much more than just unwanted political attitudes – being gay, anti-religious, drug users, and unprincipled.

Through the fight against Communism, the American traditional and conservative values were enhanced and glorified, and those who didn't express them were branded as problematic or even as potential enemies. Most people accused of communist inclinations did nothing more than lean Left.

During the 1950s, the traditional American values of family and religion took hold of the nation, and as the Cold War ended, people felt more at ease. This post-war period witnessed a tremendous growth in birth, and this new generation was known as the boomers.

As Bach states, Cold War America would give birth to a counterculture which opposed it in every respect, valuing libertarianism over authoritarianism, liberation over repression, egalitarianism over inequality, cooperation over competition, the bizarre over the conventional, the precarious over the secure, community over isolation, love over hate, peace over war, life over death. (67)

White America was a suburban, middle-class one, concentrated around families where the woman's role was that of a mother and housewife, and the man's was the breadwinner and all-knowing authoritative father figure. The suburban areas were a copy of one another, consumerism and 'fitting the mold' were the 'status quo' and breaking from this mold was more than frowned upon. The basis of living was conformity and complacency.

There was also a fast-growing interest in religion, which only further boosted the conservatism and Puritan values throughout the nation. Families cracked under the weight of maintaining appearances, as many were subjected to domestic violence, abuse, alcoholism, tranquilizer addiction and divorce. (Lemke-Santangelo, 40)

This generation did not guard civil liberties, it supported book and film censorship, held conservative views on sex, was religious, and conformed to traditional behaviors and conventional thought. Most considered select acts and behaviors—masturbation, homosexuality, abortion, nudism, extra-marital affairs, and frank sex talk—deviant. Citizens generally felt that intercourse should be limited between married, heterosexual couples. State laws attempted to enforce sexual "norms," many banning oral and anal sex and homosexual behaviors; a few prohibited sex between unwed heterosexuals. Several banned birth control devices and some imposed laws restricting adult masturbation. A long-standing double standard existed for men and women. It was considered "natural" for a man to act on his carnal desires, while women were expected to check male aggressiveness. (Bach, 37-38)

With the beginning of the 1960s, the Counterculture dissidents began creating various communities around San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, but the number of hippies grew exponentially with the Vietnam war.

Many were simply pacifists, so they opposed war in general, and others believed the war was cruel and unjust, and 'not America's business'. Many also feared being drafted, since military service went against their values and beliefs.

Rock'n'roll became a staple of the era, it represented something opposite the mainstream, it was new, loud, exciting, and sexual, it was a protest against the adult world, and it soon became the biggest medium for spreading the message of the youth. Musicians and bands like The Doors, Bob Dylan, Jefferson Airplane, Jimi Hendrix, and many others, used their platform to spread the message of love, community, and rebellion against the Old.

Artists like Bob Dylan greatly impacted political activists of the era with their lyrics, and so became the spokespeople of the entire era. Lyrics spoke of racism, Vietnam War, and were spreading the message of the Counterculture. Who can forget Jimi Hendrix playing 'Star Spangled Banner' at Woodstock, or the impactful lyrics of 'Vietnam song' by Country Joe and The Fish, both solidifying the anti-war spirit of the hippies.

Come on mothers throughout the land,  
Pack your boys off to Vietnam.  
Come on fathers, and don't hesitate  
To send your sons off before it's too late.  
And you can be the first ones on your block  
To have your boy come home in a box.

(Country Joe and The Fish, Vietnam song, 1967)

## 2.1. Women and African Americans

African Americans in the South lived under segregation and Jim Crow laws which spanned over schools, hospitals, and prisons, as well as public places like restaurants, pools, theaters, and public transportation. They possessed little political power since the white South deprived blacks of being able to vote. The South was abundant with bigots and racists, and many African Americans suffered brutality and violence. The situation for Blacks was hardly any better in the North, and most still lived in poverty whilst the White man was living in the suburbs in a middle to upper-middle class society.

The new youth had egalitarian sensibilities, and they began to feel angered by the racism that was prevalent in the country. Both black and white activists advanced the racial situation of the country through the Civil Rights Movement, which resulted in some monumental laws for African American society. However, violent crimes against the Black community were still constant, as white racists continued to beat and murder activists, and even leaders of the movement, one of which was Martin Luther King Jr.

It is, however, important to note that whilst many African Americans and people of color created massive societal changes, most were never part of the hippie masses. Counterculture women and men were disproportionately white and middle class. Furthermore, many people of color generally disliked them, regarding them as spoiled kids that have the luxury to reject the society Black Americans could never attain or truly be a part of.

Women had especially limiting lifestyles, they were raised for nothing more than the position of a faithful obedient wife and mother, and even collages would prepare them only to be standing behind a man. They belonged to their parents first, and their husbands second. Feminism was almost considered an illness and seeking fulfilment beyond marriage and family was seen as neurotic and envious of men. As Rodnitzky states, it was their aggressiveness, not their views, that was unacceptable.



To be a young woman during the 1950s was to be well-mannered, timid, and sexually pure. Whilst boys enjoyed and were even encouraged to have a more adventurous lifestyle, women were raised to be domestically inclined and obedient, which resulted in many of them taking prescription drugs to numb their feelings.

This conservatism, materialism, consumerism, traditionally molded lifestyle, and sexual prudery were the realities from which the Counterculture sprung. The children that were molded in this status quo, dreaded nothing more than following in their parents' footsteps and conforming to the unyielding mold that was the American mainstream lifestyle.

### 3. Hippies and the New Left

When it comes to politics, the hippies of the Counterculture are most associated with the Left wing, both expressing cultural and political radicalism in a way. Nevertheless, a key distinction must be made between hippies and the New Left. The New Left represented a new political direction, breaking away from the communists and socialists of the Old Left. They had created a new political culture, whilst the hippies of the Counterculture created a new social culture.

The New Left encompassed many political organizations dealing with various issues, mostly concerning themselves with anti-war propaganda and social justice for all races and genders. New Leftists confronted the existing political establishment whilst most hippies dropped out of the mainstream and refused to participate in political demonstrations. Hippies generally strived more for personal transformations, whilst the New Leftists concerned themselves with establishing permanent political change.

New Left activists dealt with many prominent issues of the era, Civil Rights, anti-war protests, and of course, feminism. They were radical activists demanding political changes and advocating for all sorts of human rights. In the beginning of the 1960s, they represented a distinct entity and were generally not associated with Counterculture hippies, but became heavily intertwined with them as the Counterculture movement progressed.

Though the political views of the 60s can certainly be described as radical, the hope they left behind was towards a new, transformative politics. According to Stevens, what made the Counterculture different and unlike earlier expressions of radicalism in America, was how it bypassed most conventional organizations of the Left and bypassed the political party. A new Left politics was formed, and issues of rights were given priority, and social ethics became the basis for political action. The politics of the Sixties not only bypassed the political party but attacked the conventional methods of politics altogether.

It is no surprise then that many hippies rejected politics completely and would never participate in any political decisions or demonstrations. In reality, hippies generally rejected political protest and even opposed it, whilst the members of the New Left heavily engaged in political activism. However, even the apolitical counterculturers voiced a clear rebellious perspective through their communal living and engagement in social transformation.

Nevertheless, despite their initial differences, by the beginning of the 1970s, the New Left and hippies became a common and integrated youth culture, a 'countersociety' dedicated to creating the new America, consisting of demonstrators, radical politicians, dropouts, drifters, runaways, hippies, yippies, zippies, veterans, homosexuals, cultural feminists, and environmentalists, all standing against the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon, and the Establishment. (Bach, 224)

To sum up, in the words of Bach:

Throughout the sixties, the Counterculture, and New Left, despite some converging and overlapping, had remained distinct camps. Hippies and New Leftists, on the whole, had been different people. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions of hippie purists, refused to participate in political demonstrations, while some demonstrators eschewed cultural pursuits and cultural radicalism or believed that the counterculture was silly, a joke, or seriously misguided strategically and philosophically. In the early seventies, this was no longer the case. Young activists and political radicals developed hippie values, while engaging in quintessential hippie activities, closing the gap between themselves and hippie purists. Hippies and activists became indistinguishable; they were often the same people. (235)

New Left politics and Counterculture hippies will be further differentiated in the following chapters, where feminist implications and agendas of both will be explored in greater detail.

#### 4. Sexual liberation of the 1960s

One of the major trends of the Counterculture sixties was the burgeoning “sexual revolution,” which was evolutionary in so many ways. What dope did for mental pleasure, sex did for physical. (Miller, 53)

Though the views on sexuality that emerged from the 1960s were revolutionary for both sexes, the sexuality of the woman was transformed. Books like *Sex and the Single Girl* by Helen Gurley Brown screamed sexual liberation for women, and women were urged to have sex whenever they wanted.

Helen Gurley Brown’s *Sex and the Single Girl*, published in 1962, exploded the myth that women didn’t need or enjoy sex, encouraged women to accept their bodies, and skewered the sexual double standard. (Lemke-Santangelo, 63)

One of the biggest impacts on sex came from ‘The Pill’, which became available in 1960 and provided women with a contraceptive unlike any before. ‘The Pill’ absolutely contributed to the sexual liberation of women, since they were, for the first time, fully in control over the possibility of getting pregnant. The Pill had a massive impact on the sexual liberties of women, giving them, possibly for the first time, a taste of true freedom to have sex whenever they wished. It was a symbolic scientific stamp of approval for the sexual revolution.

Other breakthroughs came from studying the physiology of sex. In 1966, William Masters and Virginia Johnson revealed that women could achieve multiple orgasms, and that the clitoris, not the vagina, produced female orgasm.

Sexual freedoms were one of the foundations of the hippie lifestyle, hippies considered sex pleasurable and fun, but most of all they considered it natural and something to be celebrated instead of hidden and shunned.

Moreover, sex left the confines of marriage, and the human body and sexual urges were considered beautiful, and not dirty or obscene. As Miller states, nudity was in keeping with the counterculture's love of bodily pleasure and as such it was not so much exhibitionism and voyeurism as it was appreciation of the total body. (59)

The counterculture dropped society's "hang-ups" and "taboos," bringing sex into the open, writing about it, discussing it, depicting it, and doing it. (Bach, 81)

Sexual freedom organizations sprung around America's universities, handing out information on birth control, abortion, and sexually transmitted diseases. Many demanded legalization of homosexual relationships and any type of consensual sexual activities.

Polygamous communes sprung all over the country, many of them exploring tantric sex, and shifting the focus onto female pleasure and sex that would be considerate of all parts of the male and female body.

However, it is very important to note that the reality of sexual revolution was predominately still sexist and revolved around male desire. For many men, sexual liberation just meant easier access to women. It wasn't easy to let go of the internalized shame and guilt that surrounded sex and pleasure for women, and many struggled with redefining their sexual identities. On top of that, women had to deal with manipulative and predatory male behavior and would often struggle with asserting their sexual needs and preferences. Furthermore, sexual liberation also permitted men to avoid commitment and push for alternate sexual partnerships like open relationships, so women now struggled with demanding sexual exclusivity with men. (Lemke-Santangelo, 65)

## 5. Feminism of the 1960s

Though the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned gender-based discrimination in the workplace, many were rightfully discontent with its application in real life, so various organizations sprung all over the country, calling for gender equality and redefining the roles of a woman in a marriage or in a family.

The beginning of the decade of the 60s saw the advent of feminist movements, thanks to a new feeling of social movement, provoked especially by rise of the Black Movement, after Rosa Park's incident in 1955. It was then in the 60s that women saw the potential of a feminist movement. (Macías, 9)

The feminist impulse spread broadly, and feminists all over America began establishing various organizations aimed to aid and educate women.

Women did not only experience sexism in the mainstream, but also in the ranks of various political organizations, even those associated with the values of Counterculture and the New Left.

Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* emphasized a prominent issue amongst the American women- life of unfulfillment. Women were victims of brainwashing that keeps them out of the job market and bequeaths them the role of housewives. The book speaks of depression due to societal female role of wife and mother, and the author finds salvation in redefining marital roles as well as pursuing education and careers. Her book struck a chord with American housewives through extensive portrayal of women trapped in their domesticated roles, creating, as Friedan calls it, 'the problem with no name'. As Rodnitzky suggests, some believe women's liberation movement started with the publishing of this book.

There are certainly opposing views on the relation between feminism and Counterculture, whilst some believe both are heavily intertwined, some claim feminism was never truly part of the Counterculture.

Bach claims the counterculture predated women's liberation, and like the mainstream culture surrounding it, the male-dominated counterculture was, initially, sexist, and hierarchical. (246)

Most would agree with him, claiming feminism bypassed Counterculture, or better yet, Counterculture bypassed feminism.

On the other hand, Lemke-Santangelo believes hippie women were feminists, and the entire movement of Counterculture has strong feminist implications. She believes hippie women created new roles and identities for women, and in so created a new, alternative feminism. She believes the 1960s gave rise to multiple feminisms, and I wholeheartedly agree.

Both Bach and Lemke-Santangelo concur on one thing- women of the New Left embraced feminism sooner than their hippie peers, they had cast gender as a social construct whilst the hippies still seemed content with the counterculture gender roles.

As previously mentioned, hippies, especially in the early days, usually steered clear of politics, so whilst the feminists of the New Left raised important inequality issues, the hippie women usually remained on the journey of their own personal self-discovery.

Whilst I somewhat agree with Bach's claims that misogyny and sexism were very much a part of Counterculture, I strongly disagree with the implication that feminism and Counterculture have no common ground. What some fail to consider is that for Counterculture, revolution centered on changing the culture, and not necessarily replacing or improving certain political systems or institutions. To deny the existence of feminist counterculture is to deny the impact of women on the social and cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. (Braunstein & Doyle, 45)

## 5.1. Sexism and Counterculture

Though hippies yearned for an egalitarian society, sexism was still a prominent issue of the Counterculture youth. Rock'n'roll lyrics carried sexist messages, women were certainly not as popular as men when it came to music and other artistic ways of expression, and most hippie men still had somewhat traditional views on women's role in a relationship, marriage, society, and family. Women were always sexualized for the pleasures of men, and that certainly hasn't changed during the Sixties.

As Bach points out, many radical political feminists didn't see anything feminist in the behavior of young hippie women, and some even claimed the sexual revolution and Counterculture were just a cover for male promiscuity and further sexual exploitation of women.

However, the 1960s were awash with countercultural strategies for social revolution, many being built upon notions of consciousness as the key to overhauling society. (Braunstein & Doyle, 42)

To be fair, men certainly capitalized on the notion of a sexually free woman, expecting, and succeeding in having more sex with more women, but this certainly doesn't take away from the fact that women felt free to choose their own sexual journeys, regardless of their marital status, especially when taking into consideration that they now had a revolutionary new contraception method. Moreover, the sexual revolution of the Counterculture brought a much wider range of options for women, including same-sex partnerships, and those certainly weren't under the conditions of men.

There were certainly feminists that believed the sexual revolution brought nothing more than a new type of oppression- women went from cultural oppression to countercultural oppression. (Bach)



The 'groovy' men of Counterculture that rejected the mainstream family roles, just created a new role for women that was equally oppressive. For some individuals, being a hippie meant little more than getting laid and stoned.

Though I would concur with the notion that Counterculture certainly didn't lack in misogyny and sexism, I wouldn't go as far as to say that Counterculture wasn't feminist in any respect. Hippie women were cultural feminists of their own accord and have certainly had a drastic impact on the image of women in society.

As more and more young girls became associated with the hippie culture, rejecting the mainstream gender conventions, the more the media and the mainstream were interested in their reasoning for doing so. Nothing speaks more on the mainstream perception of women, than the fact that the media were so baffled by them exercising their agency, that they portrayed them as naïve victims that were lured into the lifestyle by predators. It was more reasonable to assume they were being taken advantage of and lured into the Counterculture, than to accept it might have been their own choice to do so.

Lemke-Santangelo mentions television programs that played this victim card, portraying young women being lured into psychedelics by drug-pushing men. The ones that were lucky would be saved by their parents, but others would meet tragic ends like flying out of windows high on drugs or ending up in prostitution or psych wards. It would seem young women were often characterized as stupid and easily misled, unfit to make their own choices without a man's guidance. (12)

Even when the portrayals of hippies became more positive, the women were still portrayed stereotypically, and the portrayals lacked in displaying their agency and substance.

With the rise of Counterculture, the media, whether mainstream or underground, had very stereotypical depictions of women. They were either pure virgins, naïve and brainless hippies, or unattainable sexual goddesses and seductive vamps.

A prime example were groupies, the followers of rock'n'roll bands that to this day serve as the stereotypes of hippie women. As Lemke-Santangelo states, they practically built careers by serving as love goddesses, nurturing earth mothers, wild chicks, and seductive vamps, with sexual availability as the most central component of their job description. (31)

At first glance, it would seem groupies did nothing more than enhance and further solidify the notion of male stars and female worshipers, giving into the notion that women could never amount to the genius of men.

## 5.2. Feminism and Counterculture

The entire notion of Counterculture was rejection of the mainstream society, and with it, rejection of gender norms, so being a hippie woman went directly against the notions of obedient housewife and suburban domesticity, which was absolutely feminist in its own way.

Gatlin also states contemporary American feminism has its roots in the Black Civil Rights movement and the New Left, as well as the youthful Counterculture. Women's participation in these movements, both political and cultural, provided them with radical ideas about society and themselves. The Counterculture's emphasis on sexual relationships and alternatives to the nuclear family influenced both feminist sexual politics and women's culture. (75)

As with any movement like feminism, there are differing viewpoints and ideas, regardless of a seemingly common goal. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that some feminists considered themselves to be an integral part of the hippie society, whilst others wanted nothing to do with them. Whilst some saw progress and freedom in the newly established notions of sex and womanhood, other believed it was nothing more than a new generational cycle of sexual oppression created by the dominant masculine ideals.

However, whilst it seems hippie women only further enhanced the stereotypes of women, I would certainly argue most were doing quite the opposite. In the words of Gatlin:

The Counterculture of the 1960s set the stage culturally for the Women's Movement much as the New Left and Civil Rights Movement had done politically. The Counterculture challenged all the conventional social realities: sexual relations, art and media, religion, and the family. (97)

Women weren't just sexual nymphs for male pleasure, and it wasn't all about sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll. Though it was fun, and politics was often avoided, the women that entered the Counterculture lifestyle discarded their society-given identities in search of their

own. Regardless of the identities they had proclaimed for themselves, and whether those played along with the male fantasies of women, they had journeyed out of the mainstream and conventional, and created their own image as they saw fit.

Moreover, it would be sexist and stereotypical to claim women had unknowingly fallen into another male-made environment of women's exploitation. It would be as ignorant and condescending as the media's first portrayal of hippie women as naïve brainless victims.

Even though Counterculture gave rise to new stereotypes of women, the women that joined hippiedom certainly forged for themselves a path of greater freedom to be more complex and dynamic individuals. Moreover, women yearned for community and meaningful relationships, and both would be found amongst the counterculturers.

Lemke-Santangelo describes the journeys of various hippie women trailblazers, rebellious girls that not only joined the Counterculture, but helped create it. She has told stories of women creating new lifestyles for themselves and alternative culture as early as during the Beat subculture. Young women from all over were discovering a new world that awaits them, and many fearlessly joined their ranks, growing tired of the suburban domesticity, limits on their autonomy, and the sexual double standard.

As previously mentioned, the Counterculture certainly wasn't rid of female stereotypes, on the contrary, it even perpetuated new ones. Amongst the countless communes sprouting all over the nation and beyond, women still held traditional domesticated and nurturing roles, and, at first glance, fell right back into the roles they were trying to escape all along.

However, the hippie setting was quite different from the suburban one, and though hippie women still did most of the domestic labor, this labor took place outside the mainstream family structure. Their labor was charged with purpose and political meaning and tethered to a broader agenda for social change. The Counterculture was deeply committed to

feminine traits and values, and whilst most New Left feminists had to function in a male-dominated environment, many counterculture women created their own space, unburdened by chauvinism. (Lemke-Santangelo)

Gatlin also states it was the first time many women had lived communally with non-related members of their sex, and they learned to value other women. (113)

Though there are clear distinctions and even opposing views between the hippies and the feminists of the New Left, both had permanently altered the social and political status for women. Furthermore, by the Counterculture's end, both groups were often indistinguishable and shared most values and beliefs.

The counterculture and New Left found many faults with one another, but ultimately stand together as the forerunners of a new, transformative society and lifestyle. Their strongest quality was ultimately the rejection of the mainstream ideals and policies, and their advocacy for a society founded on equality, love, and respect.

## 6. Analysis of *The Group* by Mary McCarthy

Mary McCarthy's novel *The Group* is one of the staples of feminist literature of the 1960s. It presented controversial themes that relate to contraceptive methods, women's sexual liberation, as well as the power balance between genders. The novel, however, is not immediate and 'in your face' with its feminist implications, but is overall more consciousness raising, and perfectly describes the struggles of most women.

Despite being a bestseller for 2 years after its publication, indicating its vast popularity in the 1960s, the novel is scarcely mentioned in the works dealing with Counterculture or feminism of the Sixties. Notwithstanding that the novel is a prime example of the reshaping of the dominant discourse, *The Group* has been almost forgotten in criticism. (Macías)

The novel, first and foremost, deals with a group of college graduates, a group of eight women coming of age and challenging the societal standards that are being imposed on them. The women of the novel suffer from 'a problem with no name', a term coined by another, already mentioned feminist work, *The Feminine Mystique*. They expect more from life than what their mothers got, especially now, entering the world after college, which left them feeling like the doors of the world were open to them.

In the words of Macías, the reader will become witness of the problems that affect a whole generation of women: the balance between the traditional and the new role of women in society, sexual freedom, contraception, marriage, and motherhood. (11)

The novel does not really have a plot, it is more a portrayal of their everyday lives. We learn about the protagonists through their relationships with each other, with other men, and with society itself. Though they all wish to be progressively different from their mothers, they are very clearly pulled in that same direction, fearing to be deviant and too sexual, and still competing for a good position in society.

The story begins with a wedding, Kay Leiland Strong is marrying Harald Peterson, and she is the first out of the group to get married. The novel ends with Kay's death, and between these events, the young women try to establish their place in society and navigate their own life.

As Macías cleverly points out, Kay's last name was ironically selected by McCarthy. Kay is portrayed as one of the most decisive and independent characters, but her strength is destroyed by her husband and the imposed traditional role of the perfect wife. She is one of the women in the group that truly tries to be anything but compliant but is ultimately forced to compliance by her husband.

The greatest discrepancy in the gender power balance can be seen between Kay and Harold. He hasn't achieved the success he was hoping for, so he had somewhat failed in fulfilling his breadwinning role of a man. His insecurities create arguments in their marriage, and Kay degrades herself by praising him and his abilities. Ultimately, Harold, dissatisfied with his own inability to retain the desired masculine authority, manipulates and abuses Kay to make up for his own losses, and to establish and maintain a position of power over her and, ultimately, her gender. Harold's masculinity becomes extremely fragile throughout the novel, culminating in his response to Kay's suicide, which becomes a representation of her superiority over him:

'She killed herself of course,' stated Harald. 'Why?' said Lakey calmly. 'Sheer competitiveness,' he answered. 'For years I've been trying to kill myself, ever since I've known her.' [...] 'She decided to show me how to do it. She could do it better. On the first try.' (McCarthy, 432-433)

One of the major themes of the novel is premarital sex and masturbation. Characters mainly exhibit feeling of shame when it comes to these types of sexual acts, which portrays

the societal confines that expect them to always maintain a passive role in sexual relationships.

Libby had a little secret; she sometimes made love to herself, on the bath mat, after having her tub. She always felt awful afterward sort of shaken and depleted and wondering what people would think if they could see her, especially when she took herself what she called 'Over the Top' (McCarthy, 256).

The shame around masturbation is so prominent in Libby's mind that she even wonders whether Nils, the man that tried to rape her, did so because he could see masturbation had made her 'dirty'. As Ikonen states:

Not once does she feel anger or think that the man would somehow be responsible for such an attack, not to mention that he should be charged for it. Instead, as she is socialized to behave, she takes all the blame, making excuses for Nils, even trying to make him seem as somehow noble. (62)

Furthermore, Dottie's visit to the doctor is one of the first examples of such open writing on contraception where the use of a diaphragm is explicitly portrayed.

This article, a rubber cap mounted on a coiled spring, came in a ranges of sizes and would be tried out in Dottie's vagina, for fit, wearing comfort, and so on, in the same way that various lenses were tried out for the eyes. The woman doctor would insert it, and having made sure of the proper size, she would teach Dottie how to put it in, how to smear it with contraceptive jelly and put a dab in the middle, how to crouch in a squatting position, fold the pessary between thumb and forefinger of the right hand, while parting the *labia majora* with the left hand, and edge the pessary in, so that it would snap into place, shielding the cervix, and finally how to follow it with the right middle finger, locate the cervix or soft neck of the uterus and make certain it was covered by the rubber. (57-58)



Dottie has a very interesting storyline. Not only does she lose her virginity with a married man, but she is also immediately after rejected by him. This, to an extent, ends her life as a modern woman, and she later marries, living a typical housewife lifestyle. The novel accentuates the passive role of women when it comes to sex, and this role is clearly imposed by both society and men. The fact that Dottie's acted on her sexual desires and impulses portrays a clear rejection of society's expectations of her as a woman, but she quickly sees she is not rewarded for it in any way. Her life hasn't improved, she didn't get the man she wanted, so she returns to society's expectations, and leads a life that is expected of her.

Polly has a similarly ending story, in the beginning she is truly independent, but by the end she becomes increasingly unable to speak her mind. She lets her mentally unwell father "hijack" her life and money, and her ultimate rescue is a husband, who restores order in her life again. She gets into trouble because of men but they are also the only ones that can get her out of it- she ultimately depends on men and cannot save herself.

Though there are clear discrepancies between the sexual lives of the group and their mothers, sex is still regarded as a woman's duty, and a man's pleasure. A great example is Norine's visit to the doctor because of her husband's erectile dysfunction. The doctor tells her "she should consider herself lucky that her husband doesn't want intercourse, and sex wasn't necessary for a woman". (McCarthy, 148)

Men in the novel are represented as oppressive figures and they usually resort to violence to impose their authority over women.

Priss has given up on her own desires and autonomy, and she has fully taken up a passive role in her own life, as well as in her household. Her husband, the pediatrician, even takes the reigns when it comes to her childbirth and breastfeeding.

Helena and Lakey are able to follow their own path in life, and it would seem this was due to their lack of relationships with men. They are not married to, or even in a relationship

with a man, and they are more successful in exercising their own autonomy than the rest of the group. This gives rise to a prominent idea of the novel- the gender role assigned to women by society and men restricts their freedom and ultimately strips them of their goals, aspirations, and freedom.

Pokey, though married, is very wealthy, and this wealth allows her to have a higher level of independence than the rest of the group. What Helena and Lakey are able to achieve because of their lack of relationships with men, married Pokey makes up by having money.

Lakey is later also revealed to be a lesbian, and the group seems to have mixed feelings about it. While they are able to accept their relationship on the surface, they are deeply troubled by what's underneath- the physical intimacy between two women.

It was astonishing, but within a month some of the girls found themselves talking of "having Lakey and Maria to dinner," just as they might speak of a normal couple. [...] Yet side by side with this the group felt, with one accord, that what had happened to Lakey was a tragedy. They tried not to think of what she and Maria did in bed together. [...] It troubled them to wonder which one of the pair was the man and which the woman. (McCarthy, 429-432)

Though Helena and Lakey have greater control over their lives than the rest, they are regarded as deviant and strange by the rest of the group, which further enhances the fact that women also oppress themselves and actively participate in society's misogynistic ways. They are dissatisfied with their own male-dominated lives, but regard Helena and Lakey's lives as second-class.

Though the novel depicts women of the 1930s, it was written at the beginning of the 1960s, at the cusp of another feminist revolution, and is a perfect illustration of the 'problem with no name'. The society was finally open enough to accept complex portrayals of women, especially when it comes to their own sexual perspective. Their struggles were finally spoken

out loud, their society openly accused of being patriarchal and misogynist, and the new generation of Counterculture and New Left women could finally see themselves and feel seen by others.

The protagonists are all women with higher education and most come from pretty well-standing families, but regardless of their education they are clueless. When the women begin their lives in the real world, the men are the ones who take charge, and most of them allow it to happen. There is a sense of uneasiness, their lives are not progressing as they hoped, but they are not able to break free from the expectations of their patriarchal society.

The novel beautifully illustrates the struggles of the modern American women, who would soon enter the Counterculture era, coping with similar issues as the women of *The Group*. This book therefore encompasses the struggles that have pushed many women of the 1960s into a drastic change of lifestyle, whether by joining various feminist organizations of the New Left, or exploring a new, sexually free feminine role of hippie women.

## 7. Analysis of *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, published in 1963, is another staple amongst feminist literature. Similarly to *The Group*, it embodies the issues of an entire generation of women. The novel is autobiographical, Esther Greenwood, the protagonist, represents Plath herself, and moreover, represents the divide between what a woman wants to be, and what society's gender rules tell her to be. In the words of Macías, "*The Bell Jar* in a way synthesized the anxieties and the problems of a complete generation".

The novel is set in the 1950s, at the height of the Cold War and there are strong implications concerning the American Government, and the politics involvement in private lives of American citizens, which certainly encompasses the atmosphere and fear of communism in post-war America.

This setting only further accentuates the parallel experience of Americans, especially American women, that are split between their own desires, and societal expectations. Esther herself exists in this antithesis of her freedom and her freedom's limitations and embodies the restricted role of the 1950s American woman.

Esther deals with heavy depression and has tried to kill herself several times before ultimately undergoing shock therapy. We follow Esther through her emotional collapse, followed by various suicide attempts, and ultimately observe her deterioration. Suicide becomes the only way Esther can escape the dictatorship of society, the imposed control on her behavior and self-identity. (Macías)

Ultimately, *The Bell Jar* is a critique of the traditional and patriarchal, but also a gloomy depiction of what such a society can do to a woman's state of mind. Interestingly, Plath first undergoes the shock treatment with a male doctor, which is ultimately unsuccessful, but the same procedure was a lot more successful with a female doctor, further emphasizing the alienation between the two genders.

Esther chooses not to follow traditional women's roles, she views marriage as a stripping of the woman's autonomy, and ultimately rejects the patriarchal image of a woman. Moreover, she finds that most jobs available to women are just positions that are under a man's command. Esther continually expresses unwillingness to be controlled by any man, but ultimately feels too uncertain to go on a different path. When discussing other women, she divides them into those that conform to the patriarchal standards, and those that do not. Those that do find harsh judgement from Esther.

Another prominent issue is sexuality, though Esther has relationships with men, she ultimately finds men unappealing, and they are almost always characterized as violent and authoritative. She even characterizes them as woman haters:

I could tell Marco was a woman-hater, because in spite of all the models and TV starlets in the room that night he paid attention to nobody but me. Not out of kindness or even curiosity, but because I'd happened to be dealt to him, like a playing card in a pack of identical cards. (Plath, 102)

Like *The Group*, *The Bell Jar* heavily criticizes the society and the traditional passive role of women, but similarly, protagonists in both novels struggle to create an alternative lifestyle. They are constantly navigating a man's world and are unable to assert themselves because the world around them heavily limits their choices. Moreover, they are being pushed into assuming different stereotypical female roles, and if they reject one, another appears as the alternative. The protagonists of both novels envisioned a different life for themselves, and believed the world was open to them, but they soon realize they are actually very limited. The expectations conflict with the actual experiences, and in Esther's case, this leads to a fragmented identity and severe mental health issues.

The problems carried by the split women suffered between their traditional role and the new, unconventional one is obvious in Esther Greenwood and the group of

women in McCarthy's novel, especially in Kay's figure. ... In both novels men are presented as obnoxious figures. The relationship between them and women is always violent and authoritative and masculine characters in both novels use rape as means of restoring their masculine power over women. However, the reaction of women will vary, while Greenwood faces these attacks in most of the cases, the women in *The Group* would react in a most submissive way. (Macías, 25)

The novel is another representation of the women's struggle, and the toll it takes on them to conform to society's expectations and norms. As with *The Group*, *The Bell Jar* was published at the right time, on the brink of a new society, on the cusp of a sexual revolution and societal and political transformation that would forever change the realities of being a woman.

## 8. Analysis of *I'm With the Band* by Pamela Des Barres

*The Group* and *The Bell Jar* provide a masterful depiction of women's struggles in the American mainstream and provide a not particularly hopeful insight into how women deal with them. Most of the protagonists fail to live authentically, and are, in some way or another, dependent on the relationships with their male counterparts. Though they believe in women's rights and want to be progressive, the protagonists in the end discover that they are dependent upon and dominated by men, which leads to an unauthentic life and a pessimistic outlook.

Pamela des Barres's book, *I'm With the Band*, portrays a very different experience, though still riddled with similar issues. Her autobiographical novel explores her own sexual journey as she becomes one of the most famous groupies of the Counterculture.

Her book, when published, was met with many raised eyebrows, and she was 'slut-shamed' before slut-shaming was even a thing.

Most hippie women grew up with a sexual double standard that demanded female purity, modesty, and restraint while generally accepting male desire as healthy and normal. "Good" girls waited until marriage to have sex, knowing full well that men never tied the knot with fast or loose women. ... But whether a girl gave in or held out, sex hardly gave free reign to female desire. (Lemke-Santangelo, 62)

Pamela Des Barres was one of those hippie women that grew up with a sexual double standard, and for a while, guarded her virginity with her life.

He even hinted that he had gone all the way, not just once, but several times, and this worried me, because my VIRGINITY was a sacred subject. (Des Barres, 31)

In comparison to Libby from *The Group*, she hardly carried any shame about her desires, sexual feelings, and masturbation, but the notion of guarding her virginity was still heavily embedded into her image of self-worth for quite a while, which indicates the societal

gender norms of her generation. However, as Pamela became intertwined in the Counterculture scene more and more, her sexual liberties and attitudes drastically change.

One of the first things Pamela mentions in *I'm With the Band*, is that she reveals her sexual desires and escapades with unbridled joy and fearless lack of guilt. She states:

People expected me to be full of remorse, asking me if I had any "regrets" about a rock'n'roll life lived to the fullest. I told these folks that I didn't believe in regrets and always tried to live my life smack dab in the moment. ... When uptight women on talk shows chided me for being too free-spirited and sexually open, I told them I was sorry they missed out on the good times and didn't get to sleep with Mick Jagger. ... I consider myself an American sexual pioneer, and I still have a ball on a daily basis! (11-12)

Immediately, the reader is assured the author regrets nothing from her 'promiscuous' lifestyle and had done exactly what she wanted to do with whomever she wanted to do it with. There is no question of whether she was pushed into another form of male fantasy, she didn't worry whether she jumped from the role of a housewife to one of a sexual goddess, she did exactly what she wanted and lived authentically. She states multiple times that, despite putting men on a pedestal, which she willingly did, she always considered herself a true feminist because she was doing exactly what she wanted to do and wanted other women to do the same.

There is certainly debate whether hippie women of the Counterculture were feminist, considering they usually maintained a mainstream feminine position in society. I believe they certainly were, and the feminist inclinations of the hippie women are beautifully depicted in *I'm With the Band*.

Arguably the most famous female hippie, Pamela Des Barres, joyfully portrays her desires and her fearlessness to act on them. She had left her suburban lifestyle, she was not



afraid to be perceived as ‘easy’ and promiscuous, she wasn’t afraid to show her naked body, and move it the way she wanted to. She wasn’t afraid to love men and treat them well, and though a big part of her life revolved around the men she adored and admired, she was never under their control.

Whilst *The Group* and *The Bell Jar* portray women that cannot break free from the patriarchal society around them, and ultimately face disappointing fates, *I’m With the Band* portrays a joyful rejection of society, and a truly authentic lifestyle. Regardless of their obvious differences, I would argue, all the above works are inherently feminist.

Whilst *The Group* and *The Bell Jar* illustrate the issues of women of the mainstream, *I’m With the Band* illustrates a new path that was taken by the women of Counterculture. Des Barres’s youth may have revolved around the men she desired, but her life had been authentic and entirely her own. Hippies like Pamela and the women she met along her way, made their own choices, and never allowed themselves to be swayed by the judgment of others.

Moreover, Des Barres was often accused of being submissive to men, which she states could not be further from the truth. She claims all her relationships with men were based on equal exchange between like-minded souls.

Furthermore, the influence of other women on Pamela is evident in her book. She not only celebrates her female companions, but heavily relies on them for support and guidance. They give her strength, comfort her, help her learn how to embrace her own life, and they teach others to do the same.

Whilst the women in *The Bell Jar* only enhance the protagonist’s alienation from society by conforming to its rules, the women around Des Barres carry a very positive influence on her, and act as her support system.

I admired Lucy from a distance before this incident; she was a couple of years older and had been on the scene longer, and wasn’t afraid to speak her mind right out

loud at all times. (...) I love being with Lucy, she had no inhibitions and helped me to squelch any that I was hanging on to (she thought my virginity was hilarious). (Des Barres, 81)

Possibly the biggest discrepancy between *The Group*, *The Bell Jar*, and *I'm With the Band* is in the portrayal of men. The women in the first two novels live in a society that clearly values men more than women, they are trapped in a world that is heavily male dominated, the men are portrayed as authoritative, restricting, violent, and ultimately represent women's demise. The men in *I'm With the Band* are represented in a completely different manner, they are intertwined with Pamela's own liberties and sexuality, instead of being her oppressors. Though there are certain depictions of male violence, Pamela is not afraid of them, nor expresses feelings of hate or resentment towards them, and whilst the protagonists of *The Group* and *The Bell Jar* want to escape men, Pamela runs towards them.

The major difference is the surrounding in which all protagonists live their lives, and it would seem the negative image of men severely diminishes with Pamela, since her liberties do not depend on them.

Ultimately, *I'm With the Band* illustrates new sexual and social liberties that the Counterculture had established, and her own youth is the antithesis of the youth that the protagonists in our other two novels had experienced. Though her memoir is centered around sex, and therefore, men, I would argue it's inherently feminist. It is a joyous portrayal of a woman's freedom, both sexual and social, and a beautiful illustration of the groundbreaking changes that Counterculture introduced.

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, the era of Counterculture was, and still is glorified as a speck in time where the youth 'got it', and a new way of life was stirring amid the American mainstream. Amongst all the groundbreaking and monumental changes this cultural phenomenon had brought, one of the biggest concerns women and their sexuality. The puritan values and misogynistic attitudes that weighed heavy on all women broke open, and women began taking control over their own lives.

Whilst many feminist agendas sprung out of the New Left and the Civil Right Movement, hippies of the Counterculture heavily influenced the advancement of women's lives and their societal image. I would certainly argue feminism was an integral part of the hippie lifestyle, whether consciously or unconsciously. The Counterculture's emphasis on sexuality, especially regarding women, and their alternative lifestyles that opposed traditional family structures influenced both feminist politics and women's culture in general, thus greatly contributing to the feminist agenda.

Whilst *The Bell Jar* and *The Group* perfectly illustrate what it was like to be a woman before the radical Sixties, *I'm With the Band* depicts a new reality for American women and their sexual autonomy that sprung out of the Counterculture movement. All three novels carry strong feminist implications and agendas, from conscious raising to a flat-out unapologetic portrayal of a woman's life lived freely and uninhibitedly.

Any and every movement that further enhances the position of women is inherently feminist, and Counterculture certainly did exactly that. Despite the presence of sexism and misogyny, which are to this day a big part of most society's structures, Counterculture has permanently altered the lives of women and given them more choices and liberties than they had before.

## Works cited:

Amaya Macías, María del Carmen *From the Kitchen to the Streets: The Feminist Counterculture*. 2016. University of Cádiz, Graduate thesis. <https://rodin.uca.es/handle/10498/18674>

Bach, Damon R. *The Rise and Fall of the American Counterculture: A History of Hippies and Cultural Dissidents*. 2013. Texas A&M University, PhD dissertation. <https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/bitstream/handle/1969.1/151736/BACH-DISSERTATION-2013.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=n>

Braunstein, Peter. & Doyle, Michael W. (Eds.). *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960's and 70's*. Routledge, 2002.

Des Barres, Pamela. *I'm With the Band: Confessions of a Groupie*. 1987. Chiacago Review Press, Incorporated, 2005.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. 1963. W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

Gair, Christopher. *The American Counterculture*. Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

Gatlin, Rochelle. *American Women Since 1945*. University Press of Mississippi, 1987.

Ikonen, Sarianna. *Women's Socialisation in Mary McCarthy's The Group: A Feminist Reading*. 2016. University of Eastern Finland, Master thesis. [https://erepo.uef.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/16526/urn\\_nbn\\_fi\\_uef-20160487.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://erepo.uef.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/16526/urn_nbn_fi_uef-20160487.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

Lemke-Santangelo, Gretchen. *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture*. University Press of Kansas, 2009.

McCarthy, Mary. *The Group*. 1963. Virago Press, 2009.

Miller, Timothy S. *The Hippies and American Values*. 1991. University of Tennessee Press, 2012.

Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar*. 1963. Faber & Faber, 2019.

Rodnitzky, Jerome L. *Feminist Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of a Feminist Counterculture*. Praeger, 1999.

Roszak, T. *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*. 1969. University of California Press, 1995.

Stevens, Julie. (1998). *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

## **Exploration of Counterculture Feminism Through Novels *The Group*, *The Bell Jar*, and *I'm With the Band*: Summary and key words**

Counterculture is a major cultural and political movement that affected all major spheres of the American mainstream, and this paper deals with its feminist implications. Young hippies, or counterculturers, sprung out of the 1950s mainstream society, rejecting the societal roles and lifestyles of their parents, and reviving egalitarian values and redefining the established gender roles.

Whilst many would argue feminism of the 1960s bypassed Counterculture, and would only associate it with the New Left, I would argue feminism was an integral part of the hippie society. Along with the sexual revolution, Counterculture redefined the sexual roles of women, and provided young women with a new alternate lifestyle.

This research aims to portray how the Counterculture influenced feminism, and vice versa, and to display the shift in the paradigm that occurred in the 1960s, with regards to women and how they are represented in society and the mainstream.

Counterculture feminism is explored through 3 distinctly feminist literary works, *The Group*, *The Bell Jar*, and *I'm With the Band*. Whilst the previous two deal with 'the problem with no name' that heavily affected women in pre-Counterculture mainstream society, *I'm With the Band* portrays a uniquely countercultural lifestyle of a groupie that embraced her own autonomy and sexuality.

## **Istraživanje feminizma kontrakulture kroz romane *The Group*, *The Bell Jar* i *I'm With the Band* : Sažetak i ključne riječi**

Kontrakultura je značajan kulturni i politički pokret koji je utjecao na sve veće sfere Američkog mainstreama, a ovaj se rad bavi njegovim feminističkim implikacijama. Mladi hipiji izašli su iz društva 1950-ih, odbijajući društvene uloge i živote svojih roditelja, oživjeli su egalitarne vrijednosti te redefinirali ustaljene rodne uloge društva.

Iako mnogi tvrde da je feminizam 1960-ih zaobišao kontrakulturu, te ga asociraju samo sa novom ljevicom, tvrdim da je feminizam sastavni dio hipi društva. Uz seksualnu revoluciju, kontrakultura je redefinirala seksualnu ulogu žena i pružila im alternativan način života.

Cilj ovog rada je izložiti kako je kontrakultura utjecala na feminizam, i obratno, te prikazati promjenu u paradigmi koja se dogodila 1960-ih kod pozicije žena u društvu i načina na koji su one prikazivane.

Feminizam kontrakulture istražujem kroz 3 inherentno feministička književna djela, *The Group*, *The Bell Jar* i *I'm With the Band*. Prva dva se dotiču 'problema bez imena' koji je uvelike utjecao na žene u društvu prije kontrakulture, dok *I'm With the Band* ilustrira jedinstveno kontrakulturalan način života 'groupie' djevojke koja je objeručke prihvatila svoju autonomiju i seksualnost.

**Key words**

Counterculture

Counterculturers

Hippies

The Sixties

Feminism

New Left

Sexual revolution

Femininity

'The Pill'

Masculinity

Patriarchy

Misogyny

Oppression

Women's liberation

'The problem with no name'

Social transformation

Egalitarianism

Consumerism

Capitalism

Consciousness

Gender roles

## **Ključne riječi**

Kontrakultura

Kontrakulturalisti

Hipiji

Šezdesete

Feminizam

Nova ljevica

Seksualna revolucija

Ženstvenost

‘Pilula’

Muškost

Patrijarhat

Mizoginija

Ugnjetavanje

Oslobođenje žena

‘Problem bez imena’

Socijalna transformacija

Egalitarizam

Konzumerizam

Kapitalizam

Svijest

Rodne uloge