

THE CRUSADE AGAINST THE WHISKER

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Local and Community History.

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INTRODUCTION

Strong cultural ideas have become attached to beardedness in American culture. It is commonplace to hear that one cannot find a job without shaving their face. However, to say that one cannot find a job without shaving their head sounds ridiculous to American ears. The difference lies in the cultural meanings placed on the two types of hair. Facial hair in some periods has been seen as an affront to society or a radical display. To uncover the roots of these cultural ideas, this research attempts to stitch together writers, poets, leaders, political theorists, activists, musicians, and student groups into an evolving American beard culture. These cultural radicals did not see themselves as a coherent bearded “fringe” group, nor did they all even see themselves as radicals.

The leading beard historian, and author of a good portion of the scholarship on the history of beards, Christopher Oldstone-Moore, claims that facial hair, unlike head hair styles, does not represent passing fashions, but rather “seismic shifts dictated by deeper social forces.” If “seismic shifts” underlay all shifts in facial hair style, this research attempts to identify the “deeper social forces” behind the American shifts at the end of the nineteenth century, and the middle of the twentieth century. Oldstone-Moore, as well as other scholars, points to the association of beards with radical left-wing politics in the twentieth century.¹

This examination into the hairy fringes of the political spectrum provides a lighthearted lens for the examination of some of society’s most free-thinking individuals. Consistently, men who advocated a radical rethinking of our political and social system also chose to grow facial

¹See, for example, Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men: the revealing history of facial hair*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016) ,“Mustaches and Masculine Codes in Early Twentieth-Century America.” *Journal of Social History*, 45, no. 1 (2011): 235-259 and *Of Beards and Men*, as well as “The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain.” *Victorian Studies*, 48, no. 1 (2005): 7-34.

hair. Although many factors accounted for the appearance of beards on the faces of history's prominent radicals, these men were products of the society in which they lived. While they and their beards grew to prominence, they inevitably shaped and changed the social meaning attached to beards and created images as bearded archetypes.

A useful framework for understanding twentieth century beardedness is primitivism. Primitivism is a cultural and political position that rejects the idea that technological development is always for the best. Anarcho-primitivist philosopher John Zerzan in his *Future Primitive*, claimed that technology "is all the drudgery and toxicity required to produce and reproduce the stage of hyper-alienation we live in. It is the texture and the form of domination at any given stage of hierarchy and commodification."² Thus, primitivists strive for a return the natural and rural as means of combating alienation, commodification and hierarchy.

Modern anarcho-primitivists have their roots in counterculture, but originated in the 1980s with groups like Earth First!. Many modern primitivists, including Zerzan, go so far as to reject domestication and agriculture as social ills, and favor strict hunter-gatherer lifestyles. It is somewhat anachronistic to apply the 'primitivist' label to earlier groups.³ Moreover, mid-twentieth-century primitivists hailed small-scale agriculture as a legitimate, if not utopian, ideal. In this, they tied back to a longer theme of agrarianism and romantic attachment to rural life in contrast to industrial society. However, not even the most radical primitivist completely rejects all technology, but rather questions developments for their capacity to create subjugation and suffering. Beat poet and hippie Gary Snyder explained "if you can think about what the

² John Zerzan, *Future Primitive: and Other Essays* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1994), 59-60.

³ Darren Frederick Speece, *Defending Giants: the Redwood Wars and the Transformation of American Environmental Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 3, 20.

Neolithic was and what the twenty-second century will be, simultaneously, then you've got it."⁴ The schema of 'progress' and technophilia, including modern, technical agriculture, was (and is) so pervasive in American society that primitivism in at least an American context has been an inherently radical position.

Beards did not always carry primitive associations. In what Oldstone-Moore has termed the fourth bearded age, beards were commonplace gracing the faces of prominent statesmen and industrialists. This emerged, however, out of the Romantic movement's challenge to industrialism, with figures like Walt Whitman advocating the return to nature. Meanwhile, a generation of frontier-raised figures like Abraham Lincoln, made the beard a common feature in American life. Primitivist attitudes have sought an authority not rooted in power or wealth, but in the land, nature, or sacred traditions. For thousands of years, these traditions have looked to bearded figures whose long beards seemed to be a symbol of their reluctance to conform to societal norms. Generations of monks, prophets, patriarchs, yogis and ascetics seemed to embrace the beard as a sign of calling as much as a hair shirt or hermitage.

Two examples where the rejection of modern society and the corporatocracy that it fostered were the Populist movement of the 1890s and the counterculture of the 1950s and the 1960s that began with the Beat movement and ended with one branch of the Hippie movement. Two men in particular, William Peffer and Allen Ginsberg, lend their beards to the public image of these two groups. For that reason they serve as case studies for investigating the cultural meaning of beardedness.

The short-lived agrarian political movement of the 1890s American west, expressed disillusionment with the power structures of America's Gilded Age. In 1890, the Populists

⁴Gary Snyder, *Gary Snyder The Real Work: Interviews & Talks 1964-1979*. Edited by Wm Scott McLean (New York: New Directions, 1980), 11.

elected their first US senator, William A. Peffer of Kansas. In fact, scholarship regarding the People's Party often hails Peffer as a father of the movement in his home state of Kansas.⁵ The role of Peffer has become especially prominent since the 1960s, when post-revisionist historians such as Norman Pollack broke with the revisionist school of the 1950s, which believed Populism to be a conservative movement aimed at recapturing Jeffersonian-Democracy. Post-revisionists point to the radical communal ideas of the party as evidence that they could be considered a socialistic movement.⁶ Even this historiographic debate is fueled by the confusing nature of primitivism. Unlike other leftwing movements that look to the future for inspiration, primitivism extols the past. This leads to mischaracterization of primitivist movements as conservative, and highlights the limits of the left-right duality.

When placed in the context of American radicalism, many Populists emerged as ambitious challengers of corporate power. They created a set of political ideas that coincided with and even encouraged the labor activism of the early twentieth century. In so doing, however, they inadvertently helped drive a shift in style away from the long beard of Peffer. Powerful industrialists led a vigorous "crusade against the whisker" that helped to end the bearded age of the Victorian era. By the 1900s, however, the Populist agrarian vision failed to remove existing power structures, and a capitalist consumer culture that emerged. This system was quickly exported to the rest of the world, through the pervasive spread of American cultural, economic and political power. Moreover, the image of beards as old fashioned and rural meant that even labor activists and radicals chose to be clean shaven in contrast to the Populist beard. The shift in popular facial hair style in the late nineteenth century demonstrates how primitivism

⁵ D. Scott Barton, "Party Switching and Kansas Populism." *The Historian*, 52, no. 3 (1990): 453-467.

⁶ Norman Pollack, *The Populist Mind* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1967) vii-ix.

represented a perceived danger to both established political attitudes and mainstream cultural norms. In the 1890s, third-party radicalism was so disdained by mainstream politics that it drove the facial hair styles of the entire nation, and the legacy of the primitive agrarian beard endures today.

Many leftists were not primitivists. Soviet-style communism and, labor activists such as the Industrial Workers of the World worshiped industry and technological advancement. If beardedness were simply a question of right versus left, then one would expect to find beards on the faces of leading leftists such as Eugene V. Debs or Upton Sinclair. Those discontented with the effects of this new capitalism of the early twentieth century promoted new forms of leftist radicalism that shied away from the agrarianism of the Populists. Instead organized industrial labor became the leading force of leftism in the United States. As a result the “hayseed” image of bearded Populists was abandoned in favor of the clean shaven industrial laborer.

However, by the middle of twentieth century, some radicals again sought to completely rethink social and cultural institutions. In so doing, they often, unknowingly and for different reasons, chose to sport the symbol formerly associated with the Populists. Groups such as beatniks and hippies challenged society to come closer to a primal past, and to do this they deliberately cultivated bearded appearances. Primitivism as expressed in the 1960s counterculture challenged corporate dominated consumer society, and championed cooperative solutions. Leftist philosopher Herbert Marcuse claimed hippies were “the only viable social revolution,” because they “reject[ed] the junk they’re supposed to buy now.”⁷

These bearded primitivists pushed society to explore the option laid forth by the People’s party. Unlike the established left, these hairy heretics advocated a leftist position that rejected

⁷ Timothy S Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 15.

industrialism. Peasants and average people rather than businessmen and career politicians drive populist causes. For the People's Party, and subsequent groups such as beatniks, Cuban revolutionaries, hippies, and musicians, this meant a rejection of existing power structures, social conventions, and modern technology. Through the lens of beardedness, we can see the striking connections between radical American thinkers that are often viewed compartmentally due to their significant temporal range.

In the twentieth century, poet Allen Ginsberg became a key figure in the developing counterculture, and promoting this primal beardedness. In fact, Ginsberg's beard is often applied to the countercultural groups he helped influence. As a result, groups such as beatniks and hippies are often portrayed as far hairier than they are in reality. Key figures such as Beat author Jack Kerouac and hippie writer Ken Kesey never cultivated any facial hair. This only speaks to the power of the "crusade against the whisker." Exceptional beards such as those of William Peffer and Allen Ginsberg are so extreme that they became archetypes that were applied to all members of certain groups. The idea of the primitive beard of the twentieth-century has only begun to show signs of weakening in the most recent decades. Thus, the era of the radical beard defined the social meaning of facial hair for years, and the legacies can still be seen today. Understanding the cause of this shift leads to a better understanding of its development. The push to conform and to distance oneself from radicalism by shaving has outlasted the knowledge of its origins. However, the goal remains important, and compels millions of men to shave everyday rather than appear radicalized. The refusal to shave, on the other hand, is used a marker of nonconformity and rebelliousness.

Although Populists, Beats and hippies have been criticized as overwhelming white and male, these revolutionaries pushed forward on ideas of race, gender, spiritual, and economic

equality and cohesion. Demographics may indeed have been skewed, but Amiri Baraka (AKA LeRoi Jones) and Jimi Hendrix stand out as examples of a hairy, black counterculturalists. Diane di Prima and Janis Joplin stand out, for example, as key female figures in counterculture who, while clearly not bearded, supported many of the movements where bearded figures flourished. As a result, the explosion of beardedness in the 1960s remained almost entirely male. Though few, if any, of these men had likely heard of William Peffer, they effected his style while advocating a similar stance. Thus these latter day Peffercrats are linked together by more than just similar political orientations. Despite the repeated demands of society, they also refused to partake in the daily ritual of shaving.

Linking the 1890s and the 1960s in this way provides a look into the explosions of beardedness and radical agrarian primitivism that occurred in these decades. The beginnings of the nineteenth-century beard movement in America are discussed in order to explain the importance of the beard as a symbols of hierarchy that motivated men of all social classes and political persuasions to grow such long beards. The subsequent crack down on beardedness contrasts with the radical nature of the beards of the 1960s. The research concludes with the year 1971, when beards were at their height. Though they had not penetrated into the established leadership, whiskers had been seen in full force, and the truly radical nature of the beard began to fade.

Note on Sources

Because the subject of this research is populism and the beard as a symbol, a deliberate effort was made to utilize popular sources. Newspapers, magazines, novels, poetry, political cartoons, music, films, and biographies not only provide a closer look at the feelings of everyday people, but are more likely to engage with the seemingly mundane topic of grooming habits.

These sources also provide a window into the popular primitive imagery tied to beardedness, because they depicted beards with dramatic symbolism. Indeed, this is in keeping with the works of artists discussed below such as Walt Whitman, Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, and Country Joe McDonald who chose to use the language of common people in their writings.

CHAPTER 1: WHITMAN AND WHISKERS

On December 5, 1894, a jury awarded a New Yorker named William Wahl \$200 in a suit against his cousin Herman Wahl. William claimed that Herman tore out his beard by the roots on one side of his face. Rendered unable to regrow his beard, William wore only a mustache. The prosecuting attorney, Max Altmeyer argued that his client had “suffered great damage to his reputation,” because he was “compelled to go whiskerless.” William claimed that his “magnificent whiskers” gave him an edge in business, but he had since “been reduced to the level of ordinary mortals.” He found that the prestige he had once enjoyed as a bill collector for a brewery was torn from him with his beard. The jury was sympathetic to William’s plea and awarded him \$200.⁸ This jury certainly understood the importance and value of a beard to the man that wears it. In the nineteenth-century United States, long flowing beards were markers of masculinity. From stereotypical forty-niners to Civil War generals, nineteenth-century America is remembered as a wilder and hairier time. Abraham Lincoln, perhaps the most iconic nineteenth-century American, famously grew his beard in order to appeal to voters. But what happened to this hirsute hierarchy?

What William Wahl could not have known was that his case may not have been so successful only a few years later. Shortly after this 1894 dispute, the popularity of beards plummeted. The appeal to masculine dominance that Lincoln used to help his election campaign was no longer effective. In fact, in many cases politicians led the charge against the primacy of the beard. In what may be one of the most dramatic historical shifts in facial hair styles, beards became an oddity increasingly associated with the old-fashioned and radicals. This shift in style was a product of the political climate of 1890’s America. Beards are often indicators of social

⁸ “For His Whiskers, \$200—A Jury’s Practical Sympathy with William Wahl,” *New York Times*, December 6, 1894; Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men*, 175-178.

station and affiliation. In the case of William Wahl, his beard earned him a measure of respect in his career. However, Wahl stood at the end of an era. After the 1890s, the American public began to see beards as uncivilized displays of political radicalism. This association with beardedness and primitive technologies is almost certainly a product of political associations in the twentieth century.

The Masculine “Facial Ornament” and the Right to be Bearded

The history of hair, and facial hair more specifically, is often tied to social changes and/or conflicts in the societies that bore these styles. One misconception that many works in the field address is that the history of shaving is dictated by razor technology. Daily shaving has been occurring for millennia, and achieved widespread institutional support with the conquests of the beardless Macedonian commander Alexander the Great. Rapid advances in metallurgic technology have not been tied to increases in the frequency of shaving. For example, in 1847, William Henson invented the hoe-type razor, which improved on the straight razor model, yet failed to prevent the increase in the popularity of beards in the 1840s and 1850s. Indeed, it failed to induce even Henson to go clean shaven, for he continued to cultivate long mutton chops.

Oldstone-Moore contends that there have been four major beard movements in Western civilization since the proliferation of shaving by Alexander the Great. In the mid-nineteenth century, the fourth of these movements made it the social norm for men in America to wear beards. The beard movement of the industrial age reached all classes of American society, and enjoyed a ubiquity, free of divisive political associations. Instead, beards were universally associated with masculinity and strength. This wider beard movement began in earnest, in the 1840s and continued into the 1890s.⁹

⁹ Bill Severn, *The long and short of it; five thousand years of fun and fury over hair*. (New York:

Understanding the Romantic origin of the ‘Industrial Beard’ is crucial to understanding the social meanings of the ubiquitous mid-nineteenth-century beard. A reaction to the clean-shaven Enlightenment, the origins of this industrial beard movement can be traced to the proliferation of beards among romantic thinkers in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, who sought a deeper connection to nature. Romantics also wished to imitate both classical Greek and Roman and Medieval writers who also customarily wore beards. Romantic, and later transcendentalist, artists and thinkers allowed their beards to grow as an outward symbol of the power of nature, and the natural origin of man. Romantic philosophy held that man should seek a harmonious and reverent relationship with the natural world around him. Since many men naturally grow beards, shaving seemed antithetical to the Romantic concept of nature as an ideal. Thus, Romantics favored allowing nature to take its course, rather than the slavish maintenance of regular shaving. As a result, artists and writers, such as Victor Hugo and Herman Melville, grew full, flowing beards. In the Romantic view of the world, modern society had become corrupt and had lost the imagination and connection to nature of earlier centuries. As Oldstone-Moore points out, Romantic ideals in many cases were married to revolutionary liberalism in Europe. Hugo specifically associated beards and revolution in his works, and the French gained both a revolutionary and bearded reputation. However, after the failure of the Revolutions of 1848 to remove the aristocratic ruling class, radical Romanticism was no longer a source of fear. Only after the defeat of these revolutionaries did it become acceptable for respectable men to grow their beards. Thus, long flowing beards quickly became the dominant

McKay, 1971) and Allan Peterkin, *One thousand mustaches: a cultural history of the mo.* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2012) establish this very well; Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men.* 2; Christopher Oldstone-Moore, “The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain.” *Victorian Studies*, 48, no. 1 (2005): 9,3,147.

style throughout the western world.¹⁰

During this period, the United States traditionally adhered to European styles. Because the formation of the country occurred in a time that Oldstone-Moore has labeled “The Shave of Reason,” the first half century of American history was particularly clean shaven. The emphasis on Enlightenment rationality, and the proliferation of wigs contributed to the smooth-faced look of the founding fathers.¹¹ The history of the American beard begins with a group of American writers known as transcendentalists. Transcendentalists drew inspiration from European Romantic thought, yet created a uniquely American style. Writers such as Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau sported beards to demonstrate their reverence for the natural. In fact, phrenology, a transcendental medical philosophy, encouraged beard growth, and viewed shaving as unnatural and the cause of shorter life spans.¹²

Walt Whitman and his “Bristling Beard”

Walt Whitman’s lifelong work *The Leaves of Grass* is essential to the American beard movement of the nineteenth century. The collection of poems offered Whitman’s personal philosophy that emphasizes a pantheistic view of the universe and placed the United States as the center of a new and exciting world of possibilities. He praised the natural and material world as divine, and thus the physical body was a divine instrument. To effect this universal divinity, Whitman wrote from an omniscient first person perspective. In this way the “I” of the *Leaves of Grass* lyrically produced lists praising every detail of various subjects including landscapes, cityscapes, world religions, planetary motion and the human body.

For Whitman, no inventory of the human body was complete without a reference to the

¹⁰ Charles Colbert, “Razors and Brains: Asher B. Durand and the Paradigm of Nature.” *Studies in American Renaissance* (1992): 270; Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men*, 151-173.

¹¹ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 130-150.

¹² Colbert, “Razors and Brains,” 262.

beard. Beards or “unshaven faces” are mentioned a total of 27 times throughout the book, always in a positive light, and often accompanied by words such as “manly” and “commanding.” Most of the mentions of beards appear closer to the beginning of the book. Whitman released *The Leaves of Grass* in multiple additions throughout his life, and the cluster of hair in earlier editions indicates that beardedness was a topic he preferred in earlier versions of the work.¹³ This puts him on the cutting edge of the beard movement, and every copy of the *Leaves of Grass* included a full body picture of a bearded and nonchalant Whitman.¹⁴ In this way, readers could see for themselves that Whitman practiced what he preached when he declared, “Washes and razors for foofoos for me freckles and a bristling beard.”¹⁵ Thus Whitman associated the clean shaven face with an unreasonable obsession with cleanliness and appearance. This was antithetical to his world view that upheld America as an energetic new experiment that did away with the strictures of “feudal Europe.” Whitman sang the praises of the common man and the natural man, and beards fit perfectly into this world view.

These transcendental philosophies seized on the idea that men could demonstrate their natural power and potency with a beard, and harken back to virile classical and Medieval figures. As the hairy faces of these Romantic and transcendentalist authors became easily recognizable by the American public, the facial hair styles they wore gained popularity. This explosion of beardedness coevolved with changing definitions of masculinity in America at this time. Ideas of asserting natural masculinity, popularized by transcendental thinkers, meshed well with the moral reforms of the era.

The rise of beardedness also coincided with changing definitions of masculinity. In the

¹³ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Bantam, 1892)

¹⁴ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 185.

¹⁵ Whitman, *Leaves*, 40.

early decades of the nineteenth century the United States experienced the Second Great Awakening. With church attendance on the rise, new moral reforms—namely the temperance movement—preached the importance of restraint. The temperance movement and religious revival led to a change in the way that society viewed manhood. Masculinity in earlier periods in American history had been tied to violence, heavy drinking, and gambling. Fighting was exceedingly common, and taverns and saloons were the center of male social life. In the mid-nineteenth century, as a result of the changes in American religious views, a “moral revolution” took place. Men in this new period of masculinity were expected to be hardworking and reserved.¹⁶ However, changing ideas of masculinity in the nineteenth century did not change the importance of manliness. Men were expected to be morally conscious, yes, but also unquestionably masculine. In this time of incredible gender inequality, asserting one’s masculinity meant asserting one’s power. Marginalized men, in fact, particularly took advantage of this power relationship to assert their dominance over women.¹⁷ Thus, asserting masculinity was incredibly important to men who were members of lower social classes or ethnic minorities. The masculine symbol of a beard became particularly important for these men—bereft of significant political power—in the domestic sphere. As a result, masculine symbols emerged as powerful political tools, and one of the most obvious outward symbols of masculinity was facial hair.

This association between masculinity and the legitimacy of the rule is evident in the incredible popularity of beards among elected political officials in the later decades of the nineteenth-century. As the world industrialized, peasant farmers were seen as the backbone of

¹⁶ Richard Stott, *Jolly fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 282-285.

¹⁷ Patricia Kelleher, “Class and Catholic Irish Masculinity in Antebellum America: Young Men on the Make in Chicago,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28, no. 4 (2009): 7-42.

the economic system, as well as the quintessential everyman. Jeffersonian democracy upheld the small farm as an ideal, and a number of nineteenth-century presidents emphasized their real or imagined humble beginnings. The 16th president of the United States would ride on his backcountry origins, and the growing wave of beardedness, in his bid for the nation's highest office.

Grace Bedell and Lincoln's "Silly Piece of Affection"

One of the most iconic elected officials of the nineteenth century was Abraham Lincoln. Although he is remembered as one of America's most effective presidents, Lincoln was not seen as a likely candidate for the Republican Party convention of 1860. The famously ugly Lincoln had made a name for himself in a series of debates with Senator Stephen Douglass, yet faced many experienced Republican politicians in the bid for the presidential nomination. Lincoln's detractors consistently accused the Kentucky-born self-taught lawyer of rural tactlessness. His lanky frame and homely face were given as evidence that the man lacked the refinement required of a president. These accusations, however, did not prevent his meteoric rise.

In 1860, the year of his election to the country's highest office, Lincoln received a letter from an eleven-year-old girl from New York named Grace Bedell. Bedell attempted to convince Lincoln to join the quickly growing beard movement. She claimed she had four brothers, "part of them will vote for you any way, and if you let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest of them to vote for you," she wrote. Because of the thinness of Lincoln's face, Bedell assured him that a beard would make him "look a great deal better." "All the ladies like whiskers," Bedell claimed, "and they would tease their husband's [sic] to vote for you and then you would be President." Evidently the Victorian beard movement in America was already such a force in 1860, that the aesthetic appeal of a beard was clear to children. Lincoln replied to Bedell's letter

with courtesy, yet made no promises. “As to the whiskers, having never worn any, do you not think that people would, call it a silly piece of affection if I were to begin it now?” Nevertheless, Lincoln chose to sprout his now-famous beard. Though it is impossible to tell how much of a role Lincoln’s facial hair played in winning him the presidency, he did become the first American president to thrust forward a hairy chin. In February 1861, on his cross-country tour to Washington DC, Lincoln stopped in Westfield, New York, Grace Bedell’s home town, to address the crowds. He told the crowd that he had corresponded with a little girl from their town, and that he would like to see her. After the speech, Bedell was brought to Lincoln’s railcar. “You see I have let these whiskers grow for you, Grace,” Lincoln told her before shaking her hand.¹⁸

Lincoln had thus joined the beard movement, and was soon followed by a number of bearded Civil War generals such as Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee. Lincoln’s unusual face quickly became one of the most well-known in America and to a lesser extent the entire western world. Walt Whitman, an early promoter of the American beard movement, was particularly impressed with the sixteenth president. Whitman was a nurse during the Civil War in a field hospital just outside Washington DC. Besides instilling in him a knowledge of the horrors of war, his position gave him a regular opportunity to walk past Lincoln on the streets of the capital. Whitman wrote multiple poems praising the war time president often using Christ-like imagery, and referring to Lincoln as “Him” with a capital ‘H.’¹⁹ Thus linking Lincoln to the famously bearded messiah. Perhaps one of the most well-known Whitman poems “O Captain! My Captain!” praised Lincoln’s ability to steer a steady course through a bloody war, while lamenting his untimely death. Indeed in his *Memoranda During the War*, Whitman claimed that

¹⁸ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 175-178.

¹⁹ Whitman, *Leaves*, 405.

Lincoln's appearance defied description. For Whitman, Lincoln's visage belonged to a special group of faces that defied "the lines of art, making the real life of their faces almost impossible to depict as a wild perfume or fruit-taste." He went on to write that, "the current portraits are all failures—most of them caricatures."²⁰ The unique face that made Lincoln so recognizable was not complete without his trim beard. Elected leaders deliberately promote themselves as symbols of their constituencies, and Lincoln provided a striking symbol for mid-nineteenth-century America.

The recognizability of Lincoln's face has remained with us in more modern periods. Researchers in 1973 attempting to determine the mechanics of facial recognition, found that Lincoln's face was easily recognizable, even with high levels of artificial blurring. They concluded that some faces, such as Lincoln's, were particularly easy to recognize because of distinguishing features, such as sharp hairlines and beards. In fact, faces with beards were removed from later experiments, because they proved to be too easy to recognize. These research findings were published in the *Scientific American*, where they inspired the Spanish artist Salvador Dalí.²¹ Dalí was fascinated by pixelated portraits of Lincoln contained in the article to demonstrate the blurring techniques used by the researchers. In response, Dalí created a painting known as *Gala Contemplating the Mediterranean Sea which at Twenty Meters Becomes the Portrait of Abraham Lincoln-Homage to Rothko*, or *Lincoln in Dalívision* in its print form. The painting features Gala, a common character in Dalí's works, looking through a cross shaped window at the ocean. However, as the title indicates, the blocky frame of the window becomes a portrait of Abraham Lincoln when viewed from some distance. Besides the cruciform window, the painting also includes an image of Christ on the cross viewed from

²⁰ Walt Whitman, *Memoranda during the War* (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 2011), 84.

²¹ Leon D. Harmon, "The Recognition of Faces," *Scientific American* 229, no. 5 (1973): 70-83.

above. These elements are striking considering the Christian imagery involved in Whitman's depictions of Lincoln.²² Though the full extent of Dalí's work and his distinctive two pillar mustache lay outside the scope of this research, *Gala Contemplating the Mediterranean Sea which at Twenty Meters Becomes the Portrait of Abraham Lincoln-Homage to Rothko* demonstrates the universal recognizability of Lincoln's face. The beard was an essential element of both Lincoln and Christ imagery.²³ The hairy countenance of Lincoln lends itself to his recognizability, and strengthens the association between the nineteenth century and whiskers. With the emphasis that a representative democracy places on physical appearance, the presence of bearded American leaders points to the grip that the beard movement had on the American voting populace.

After the untimely death of Lincoln, the popularity of beards continued to grow. A string of bearded president such as U. S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, and Benjamin Harrison followed Lincoln's example. By the 1880s, beards were already a mainstay among politicians, as well as the general public. An article in the May 27, 1888 issue of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* titled "Whiskers in History—A Facial Ornament Now Popular Once Ridiculed" affirms the primacy of the beard in this period, while seeking to trace the historical legacy of the beard movement. The article claimed that the nation's founding fathers had "faces so clean that their every thought might be read," and that beards were "unknown to all the officers of the revolutionary army." The article presented this as the prevailing trend until, suddenly, American men "threw away their razors and turned their faces out to nature for covering." It went on to

²² "Gala Contemplating the Mediterranean Sea Which at Twenty Meters Becomes the Portrait of Abraham Lincoln-Homage to Rothko (Second Version)." *The Dalí Museum*. 2019. Accessed June 17, 2019. <http://archive.thedali.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=152;type=101#>

²³ Oldstone-Moore provides an in depth look at the use of facial hair in images of Christ in *Of Beards and Men*.

discuss one of the first judges to take the bench with such an “appendage of hair.” There was much uproar about this “unbecoming” choice of style. Many contemporaries believed there would be “no managing a jury.”²⁴ The idea that a bearded judge could not control a jury would have been ridiculous in William Wahl’s time. By the time the Wahl case was tried in 1894, bearded judges were likely commonplace. Certainly, a jury that deemed the loss of beard worthy of \$200 would not find a beard “unbecoming” of a judge. The article concluded by arguing that the status of facial hair was divorced from political meaning, and that no one could determine any one’s political leanings “from the sign he carries on his face.” In fact, “the majority of voters” the article judges “cultivate[d] the beard in some form.”

This article demonstrates that by the end of the 1880s, the choice to grow a beard was no longer a cultural or political statement as it had been in the early days of the Romantic beard. Beards had taken root in most of American society, and had become symbols of masculinity rather than ideology or political affiliation. As a result, an American beard culture that prized beardedness had developed. Like romantic artists before them, these newly bearded Americans looked back to historical examples of bearded societies.

A *New York Times* editorial that appeared on October 17, 1890 titled “Beard Culture: Tribulations through which the Bare-Faced Man does not Pass” described this bearded era. The author tells of his decision to grow a beard, and thus enter the world of beard culture. Though he started by claiming that shaving is “incontestably the most confirmed of all masculine habits,” and has “given rise to industry,” the author went on to claim that “denuding his face of its natural covering” was a “tedious and painful sacrifice.” The indictment of regular shaving did not stop there. The author claimed the practice “gives pleasure to no one, not even [oneself,]” and

²⁴ “Whiskers in History,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 27, 1888.

suggested that the “fifteen minutes of scraping himself before a mirror” should be “devoted to music or literature” rather than being “productive only of a smooth face.” This eloquent condemnation of shaving demonstrates the importance of a wider beard culture for the author of the editorial. He also associates beards with learning and saved time, rather than carelessness and a lack of hygiene. Though he did shave after some time, the author argued that he lost something other than his beard, namely a “proudness of heart” that caused him “to look down upon the barber.”²⁵ This beard culture framed against shaving and barbers, is the result of a peak in the popularity in beards that elevated beards to near mythical heights. Beards were seen not only as masculine displays, but a near sacred right of every individual.

The idea that the right to grow a beard was a human right would most likely have appealed to William Wahl, or at least his attorney, when seeking compensation for his beard. Just months before the Wahl case, an article titled “Beards, Hair, and Human Rights” appeared in the *New York Times*, the same paper that covered the case. The article explained that “the ancient right of man to have as much hair as nature would let him” is only voidable by the disapproval of the man’s wife.²⁶ This represents an interesting gendered view of a right, in a time when women were denied many rights that men enjoyed. The article even quoted Shakespeare and claimed the inclusion of the bearded Jacques in *As You Like It* demonstrated the playwright’s approval of bearded men.²⁷ The idea that beardedness was a basic human right was

²⁵“Beard Culture: Tribulations through which the Bare-Faced Man does not Pass,” *New York Times*, October 17, 1890.

²⁶A.D. Harvey, “Men’s Beards and Women’s Backsides.” *The Historian*, Winter (2009): 20-24. Harvey’s article provides an interesting look at how women, and women’s styles, are related to the development of facial hair style.

²⁷ Oldstone-Moore provides an exhaustive look at the use of facial hair in many of Shakespeare’s plays including *As You Like It*, as well as *Much Ado about Nothing*, *King Lear* and a *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. “Beards, Hair, and Human Rights,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1894; Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 117-120.

an outgrowth of the intense popularity of facial hair in early 1890s. Just months after the publication of this article in August 1894, the Wahl case set a legal precedent for this “ancient right.” Shortly after this point, however, beards quickly fell out of favor in American society, and facial hair as a human right would be challenged.

CHAPTER 2: PEFFER AND POPULISM

By the 1890s a wide range of facial hair styles was firmly entrenched in the American government. The U.S. Senate provides a window into the facial hair styles of the period, because it provides representatives from across the country. The 52nd Senate of the United States met from 1891-1893 and contained two men from each the country's 44 states. Of those 88 men, 90% wore facial hair of some kind. Even if the 30 distinct, and often immense, mustaches are removed from the count, 50 bearded men constituted a majority by themselves. Only 8 of the 88 total senators were clean shaven. Nor did this escape the attention of contemporaries. In 1893, a *Los Angeles Times* article reported that there were “few faces among our statesmen...which were shaven every morning.” It went on to claim that there were “as many different styles of beard and hair in Congress” as there were members.²⁸ However it was this broad spectrum of beard styles that allowed for the disgrace of whiskers in the years to come.

The longest beards in the Senate of 1891 belonged to William Peffer of Kansas. Born in 1831 in rural Pennsylvania, Peffer became an advocate of temperance and abolition as a youth. Eventually, in 1870, he settled in Kansas and worked as an editor and lawyer.²⁹ In 1881, Peffer became the editor of *Kansas Farmer*—one of the most widely read agrarian publication—which was eventually named the official paper of the Farmers' Alliance in Kansas. In March 1890, the Farmers' Alliance joined with the Knights of Labor in order to create the People's Party. The party found their political base in the multitude of indebted farmers of the West and South. The collapse of the agricultural boom of the post-Civil War era in the late 1880s angered and impoverished farmers across the states such as Kansas. The agrarian platform of the Populists

²⁸“Senatorial Silver: Not Dollars, but in Torsos of Statesmen,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1893.

²⁹Peter H. Argersinger, *Populism and politics: William Alfred Peffer and the People's Party*. (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 2014), 1-2.

appealed to these farmers who advocated for monetary reform, and collective ownership of railroads, telegraphs and some land, as means challenging railroad monopolies. These positions had been advocated by the Farmer's Alliance, but local Republicans proved unsympathetic. When the People's Party swept the state legislature in 1890, they appointed Peffer to the US Senate, making him the country's first Populist senator.³⁰

The press of the time viewed the alliance as a radical example of party-switching. A 1891 *Chicago Daily Tribune* article, "Kansas—Craziest of Alliances" claimed that the 1890 election of Peffer was a "greater victory than was ever achieved by a new party in any state." The article went on to question the wisdom of electing "obscure men of no known fitness for political life," to the United States Congress. In fact, popular opinion in states without major Populist followings was certainly anti-Populist. As a result, Kansas became known for its "fanatic" and "crazy" politics in both the conservative South and the industrial North.³¹

Peffer quickly became one of the most famous senators, and was the subject of numerous articles, cartoons, and interviews. He was so heavily associated with the third party movement that before the term "Populism" became popular in late 1891, the movement was often referred to as "Pefferism." However, Peffer became notorious for more than just revolutionary politics. Other than the shock of a third party senator in a traditionally two-party system, Peffer quickly became famous for his beard. Peffer's whiskers reached to his waist, and were the focus of much attention from the American press. Since 90% of the Senate cultivated facial hair in some form, it was not simply Peffer's beardedness that shocked people, but its incredible length. Peter Argersinger, one of Peffer's most influential biographers argues in his *Populism and politics: William Alfred Peffer and the People's Party* that Peffer's appearance lent itself naturally to

³⁰ Barton, "Party Switching" 453-461, 456-458.

³¹ "Kansas—Craziest of Alliances," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 6, 1891.

caricature, and became a more consistent symbol for the People's Party than the donkey or the elephant for Democrats or Republicans respectively. Moreover, Argersinger claims that Peffer's nickname of "Whiskers" was an "appellation so compelling that Peffer is known even to historians solely as the possessor of his beard."³² Political cartoons were exceedingly popular in this time, and were utilized by both supporters and opponents of the People's Party.³³ Peffer was a favorite of the two leading political magazines of the time, *Puck* and *The Judge*. These magazines were controlled by Democrats and Republicans respectively, and though they could agree on little else, both fiercely opposed the Populists. In fact, Peffer appears in these magazines over 60 times during his term in the Senate and is more often than not depicted with a "grossly exaggerated beard."³⁴ Mention of Peffer's name in the press is almost always accompanied with mention of his beard. "Peffer of the long beard," "Long Beard Peffer," and "Peffer Longbeard" were monikers for the senator.³⁵

The September 24, 1893 *Los Angeles Times* article discussed above concerning beards of the U.S. Senate focused mainly on the "well-bearded face" of Peffer. The article argued that Peffer had "the longest whiskers in the Senate," and that they gave "a sort dignity to his features."³⁶ Nor was Peffer unaware of these depictions. In reference to a Bible verse in which King David told his men to "tarry at Jericho...until their beards had grown long," Peffer claimed

³²Argersinger, 105.

³³Worth Robert Miller, *Populist Cartoons: An Illustrated History of the Third-Party Movement of the 1890's* (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2011) is a great resource for People's Party Political Cartoons.

³⁴Roger A. Fischer, "Rustic Rasputin: William A. Peffer in Color Cartoon Art, 1891-1899." *Kansas History*, 11, no. 4 (1988): 222-239.

³⁵"Political Gleanings and Gossip," *New York Times*, November 5, 1894; "Senator Long Beard Peffer's Plea for a Re-election," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 9, 1896; "Kansas—Craziest of Alliances"

³⁶"Senatorial Silver: Not Dollars, but in Torsos of Statesmen," *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1893.

on the Senate floor that “if the newspaper and magazine caricatures are to be taken in evidence, I have been at Jericho some time.”³⁷

In an attempt to win compensation for his client’s beard, William Wahl’s attorney, Max Altmeyer, compared Wahl to “the great Senator Peffer.” “Who of us all would ever have heard of the distinguished Kansas statesmen, Senator Peffer but for his whiskers?” Altmeyer asked the jury. “Would you? Would I? No, gentlemen, we would not.” Altmeyer argued it was Peffer’s “fine growth of whiskers” that made him a “national figure.” Peffer’s pictures were “published throughout the length and breadth of the land” Altmeyer claimed, because he had “the finest beard in either house of Congress.”³⁸ If William Wahl was awarded \$200 for his beard because it gave him prestige in the same manner as William Peffer, then what happened to the national fascination with beards that gave these men notoriety?

By 1892, Populism and Peffer seemed to be on the rise. Peffer, in a series of essays titled *The Rise and Fall of Populism*, published in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1899, described some early Populist meetings at his lodgings in Washington. They believed they were at the “skirmish line” at “the beginning of a great and powerful organization.” These men saw themselves as revolutionaries, fighting against the interests of big business and the “commercial mastodons” of railroad monopolies.³⁹ Populists believed that once the ‘producers,’ agricultural and industrial labor, recognized their shared interest they would band together against the corruption of the two main political parties. The economic ideals espoused in the Omaha Platform of 1892, such as government ownership of railroads and telegraphs were coupled with social ideas that were also radically fringe. Peffer himself was an ardent supporter of women’s suffrage, which was in line

³⁷ William A. Peffer, *Populism, Its Rise and Fall*, ed. Peter H. Argersinger (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991) 92.

³⁸ “For His Whiskers, \$200”

³⁹ Peffer, *Populism*, 184, 196.

with the general attitudes of the Populists. Peffer also held a radical view of race during the early 1890s, claiming on more than one occasion that the Farmer's Alliance and the People's Party recognized no racial differences. He claimed the South should take a similar view, because "the interests of the oppressed transcended race." He believed the issue of race was used by the powers that be to divide the working class, and keep their focus off their exploitation.

One of the biggest supporters of Peffer's "true Populists" was a congressman from Minnesota named Ignatius Donnelly. Donnelly was the author of the celebrated Omaha Platform of 1892 that became the quintessential document for diehard Populists like Peffer. Perhaps one of the most radical populists, Donnelly advocated government ownership of key industries. Populist historian Norman Pollack referred to Donnelly as the "Don Quixote of the Left," and stressed that he had "messianic qualities."⁴⁰ Donnelly also penned a 1890 dystopian novel *Caesar's Column: A Story of the Twentieth Century*.

In *Caesar's Column*, Donnelly paints a horrifying picture of New York City in 1988. *Laissez-faire* economics and unrestrained technological growth have allowed capitalists to become princes that are in complete control of both economy and policy.⁴¹ In the apocalyptic clash with the capitalist princes, a labor union known as the Brotherhood of Destruction commandeers a fleet of air ships that drop massive bombs, which destroy everything and reduce the survivors to bloody rioting. The main characters then flew to the remote mountains of Africa, and proceed to set up what might be called an anarcho-primitivist society. Donnelly's warning, that reform of the capitalist system was necessary before its too late, was clear. Suggesting that it "may be God's way of wiping off the blackboard," Donnelly urged the reader

⁴⁰Pollack, *The Populist Mind*, 471-487.

⁴¹ Ignatius Donnelly, *Caesar's Column* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003).

to consider the future consequences of the global industrial capitalist system.⁴² While Populists may not have referred to themselves as primitivists, they were willing to take on the railroad in defense of an agrarian life. Donnelly's primitivist views are on display in *Caesar's Column* as well as the Omaha Platform, and true adherents to the document were likely of like mind.

Populism became a major political movement in the state elections of 1892, with a number of western states, including Kansas, electing Populist governors and state legislatures. The depression of the 1890s fueled the Populist challenge of the establishment, which pitted farmers against urban, corporate elites. However, Populist numbers were not enough to overcome entrenched political systems, and some Populists favored creating coalitions to promote aspects of their platform. By the presidential election of 1896, some Populists favored this "fusion" ticket with the Democrats.⁴³ A young smooth-faced Democratic congressman from Nebraska named William Jennings Bryan came out in support of free silver. One of the planks of the 1892 Omaha Platform was the free and unlimited coinage of silver. Silver had been legal U.S. currency until it was demonetized in 1873, causing severe deflation. The People's Party wanted a return to silver with the previous ratio of sixteen ounces of silver to every ounce of gold. This plank of the Omaha Platform appealed especially to poor indebted farmers, the backbone of the People's Party, who saw the values of their debts increase with deflation. This caused a split in the People's Party.

Some Populists were willing to join the Democrats if it meant the promise of silver, while some "true populists" wished to implement the entirety of the Omaha Platform.⁴⁴ Peffer claimed that "with the advent of the silver question, the leading ideas of the Populist creed were obscured

⁴² Donnelly, *Caesar's*, 225.

⁴³ Barton, "Party Switching," 463-464.

⁴⁴ Peffer, *Populism*, 72-90.

by the silver glare, and they were allowed to drop out of sight.”⁴⁵ Peffer was an outspoken opponent of the fusion ticket claiming a “true Populist” would hold to the other principles of the People’s Party such as government ownership of railroads and a graduated income tax, not just currency reform. “Principle before policy,” avowed Peffer, believing the “poisonous political drug” of fusion would spell an end for an independent People’s Party and its radical platform. When it was time to set the date for the People’s Party National Convention, the pro-fusion Populists favored a convention after the Democratic National Convention, in order to support the Democratic nominee. Even though Peffer claimed 75% of Populists favored an early convention, the People’s Party chose to hold their convention after the Democratic convention. The Populists nominated Bryan, leaving Peffer with few political allies. One anti-fusion Populist, Marion Butler of North Carolina, who also happened to sport a fine beard, lamented “they stole our platform and tried to steal our party.” The 1896 combined ticket eventually failed. Bryan and his “DemoPopulists” were defeated and Peffer’s prediction came true. After 1896 the People’s Party began to fade from political prominence, and was subsumed within the Democratic Party. Populist politicians were once known as “Pefferites” or Peffercrats.” Once ‘Populist’ saw mainstream use, however, ‘Pefferism’ came to mean outcries against poor social and economic conditions, and was used as such for a number of years as a contrast to the fusionists who were willing to moderate Populist idealism to work with the Democratic Party.⁴⁶ Pefferism, after its divorce from Populism more broadly, could be seen as a catch all for radical hayseed agrarianism.⁴⁷

In the months leading up to the 1896 election, representations of Peffer in the press

⁴⁵ Peffer, *Populism*, 185.

⁴⁶ Argersinger, 104-105.

⁴⁷ Peffer, *Populism*, 158, 73, 148-151; Argersinger, 244-245.

became far more negative. With these negative descriptions of Peffer came attacks on his personal character, the most common of which were attacks on his beardedness or the hygiene of his facial hair. In February of 1896, a *Chicago Daily Tribune* article describes Peffer's beard as "thin," "sparse," and "a starved vagrant thing." Later, it included an interview from the mustachioed Jerry "Sockless" Simson, a pro-fusion Populist, about how Peffer was in the Senate for only personal monetary gain. The article went on to accuse Peffer of nepotism.⁴⁸ Moreover, Simpson argued that there was "no need for an independent party" and applied for a position on the Democratic National Congressional Committee.⁴⁹ A June 1896 *Los Angeles Times* article described Peffer as "the man of long beard and short of brains," before claiming that his political strategy was counterintuitive.⁵⁰ A 1899 *Chicago Daily Tribune* article titled, "The Kansas Pop and His Beard," explained a maximum barber rate bill proposed by Kansas Populists, and sarcastically refers to the "sacred beard of Peffer." The article placed barbers as the natural enemy of the Populist, who never trimmed his beard.⁵¹ These depictions of Peffer stood in contrast to the power of William Wahl's claim that Peffer was famous for his great beard. Consequently, beardedness was conflated with Peffer and his agrarian anticorporate political stance. No doubt the disgrace of Peffer politically coincided with the disgrace of his beard. Fusion ticket Populists began to deliberately distance themselves from the bearded hayseed image.

The radicalism advocated by Peffer was discredited, and the voting base was absorbed into the center-left position of William Jennings Bryan. The clean shaven world view of the capitalists won out with the victory of William McKinley over William Jennings Bryan in 1896.

⁴⁸ "Peffer the Populist," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 18, 1896.

⁴⁹ Peffer, *Populism*, 12.

⁵⁰ "Peffer Wants Repudiation," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1896.

⁵¹ "The Kansas Pop and His Beard," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 19, 1899.

Though both men were clean shaven, McKinley certainly represented the old order. The strait-laced Republican opposed the monetary reform that Bryan had promised the Populist wing of his fusion party. On the night of McKinley's election, Chicago's elite business tycoons were so pleased that they played a massive game of follow the leader. They danced up and down one of Chicago's elite clubs, walking over sofas and tables.⁵² This euphoric outburst from men who belonged to a class and era particularly devoted to propriety is astounding. These industrialists feared Populism, even in the whitewashed form presented by Bryan, and were elated when it was defeated. The way had been made clear for the capitalist to continue to dominate American politics.

After the fall of Populism, Peffer remained staunchly anti-Democrat. Peffer, and other anti-fusionist Populists, held to all of the planks of the Omaha Platform so staunchly because they believed that it was the basis for monumental government reform. He refused to rejoin the Republican Party for a few years, and when he finally did, he claimed to be "an insurgent" in the ranks of the GOP.⁵³ Nor was Peffer alone in this revolutionary spirit. Other members of the People's Party, especially the faction that refused to support the fusion ticket and remained loyal to the independent Populist Party.

Following the defeat of Pefferism, industrialists resumed their ruthless competition. In so doing, they adorned their faces with militaristic mustaches, or no beards at all. The nineteenth century, with its agrarian notions, was shaved away. In its place, the industrialists and the growing middle class sought to create a new kind of man. This new, twentieth-century man was

⁵² Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3. McGerr's depiction of the progressive movement is illuminating. The Populists are only briefly mentioned, as an example of the failure of agricultural America to adopt a collectivist stance.

⁵³ Peffer, *Populism*, 45, 22.

expected to energetically devote himself to work in the growing corporatocracy, rather than agitating for a radical change to the social system like the recently-defeated Populists. He was to accept his place in the army of industry, and put forward a shaved or mustachioed face of a loyal soldier. Like the regulations of military units, capitalist were able to compel their employees to shave with company rules. In this way, industrialist were able to quickly drive large numbers of men to the razor, completely driving the style away from the long whiskers favored by Peffer.

CHAPTER 3: CORPORATISM AND THE CLEAN SHAVEN

In 1910, a *Chicago Daily Tribune* article titled “Kansas is Shaving” reported that “there is going on a quiet but determined crusade against whiskers” in Kansas. The state, the article claimed, was known as a “nursery of whiskers,” and “impression prevail[ed] over the civilized world that Kansas beats the Boers for beards.” However, the article argued that Kansas did not deserve this reputation, because whiskers were “less conspicuous in Kansas than in other states.” “A traveler in Missouri,” may have seen “more alfalfa on men’s faces in a day than he will see in Kansas in a week,” and there may have been “more whiskers in a county of Indiana” than “in all of Kansas.” Yet despite the fact that Kansans did not deserve this reputation, the state was “held up to ridicule the year round as being the country where men run to whiskers.” In 1910, beards had already fallen out of fashion, and this article argued that the bearded reputation of Kansas was “bad for people,” and indicated “poverty..., a contempt for bath tubs..., carelessness..., slovenliness, and other disagreeable things.”

The article provided a reason for the idea of a bearded Kansas in the minds of many Americans. “Insurgency in Kansas” it claimed, was “no mere matter of politics.” “Populism flaunted whiskers,” reported the article, suggesting that Kansas’s reputation was a result of the beards “flaunted” by Populist politicians. Furthermore, the article did not shy away from claiming that the “crusade against the whisker is a patriotic movement,” and even closed with the statement: “Let plutocracy beware a democracy that shaves.”⁵⁴ An ironic assertion considering Populist railed against the moneyed interest of American plutocrats. Evidently, Kansas was associated with beards because of its Populist Party politicians who chose to grow long flowing beards.

⁵⁴ “Kansas is Shaving,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 14, 1910.

This turn to the razor was visible in the Senate of 1910. Beards had lost the majority they enjoyed in 1891. Of the 92 senators of 1910, only 16 wore beards. The clean shaven look was represented by 31 senators, and contrary to popular imagination many of them came from the west. Oklahoma, Nebraska and Texas sent two clean shaven men to the Senate. By contrast, with 45 different examples, the most popular style in the Senate was the mustache. Indeed, the mustache quickly became the go to style for the industrialists of the turn of the century.

Looming figures such as John D. Rockefeller and J.P. Morgan preferred to keep only a mustache rather than the flowing whiskers associated with the People's Party. Capitalists were often depicted in the political cartoons of the day as fat men with mustaches and top hats, a symbol so ubiquitous that it rarely demands explanation even today. Since the sixteenth century, mustaches had been associated with militarism, and specifically the cavalry. Regulations often required soldiers not to shave their upper lips in order to increase the *esprit de corps* of their units.⁵⁵ So-called "captains of industry" found much to admire in the militaristic style, particularly in its associations with the traditionally upper-class cavalry. Industrialists were essentially in a state of perpetual war. They commanded armies of workers in a competition with other companies that required ruthless efficiency to create any possible advantage over the competitor. Thus the industrialists presented war-like mustaches to the world.

The End of a Harrier Era and the "Manly Devotee"

The September 30, 1906 issue of the *New York Tribune* ran an article titled, "Does a Man Look Better Bearded or Clean Shaven?" The article debated the issue of wearing a beard, which was prohibited by certain corporations at the time. It went on to provide a barber's and "woman's perspective" on the matter, but eventually agreed with the new clean shaven look.

⁵⁵ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 208-212.

Just a few years earlier beardedness was not up for debate. It was an assumed part of daily life. This piece came in the middle of this flashpoint in the history of facial hair styles. Large American corporations began to create regulations that required their employees to shave regularly, although there is no clear consensus in this article. While possible reasons for the corporate beard prohibitions were given, a man described as “a manly devotee of the curling tongs” as well as a “tonorial artist” were given ample space to argue against the “rank insult” of prohibiting facial hair. Thus, the picture presented by the article was one of an American society that was still split on the matter of beards. Although the author believed that the “trend of civilization is in favor of a smooth face,” testimonials from men who uttered “pshaw” at the corporations’ attempt to force their “hairy staff” to shave were included. Men such as these, regardless of their political views, were made to choose between their beards and employment. The article concluded in favor of shaving by claiming that “a face that frightens and inspires distrust” should be “remodeled.”⁵⁶ Rather than associating beards with power and masculinity, the article associated facial hair with “crookedness.” This represents the dramatic shift in the social meaning of beards. The hairier era that William Wahl enjoyed was coming to an end.

This shaving crusade that began in America and quickly spread to the rest of the western world has received little scholarly attention compared to larger scholarship on labor changes, regulation, and Progressive reform. Oldstone-Moore argues that the shift is due to corporate regulation. He claims “a smooth face” represented “energy and disciplined reliability,” as well as “honesty and sociability.” Thus, appearing younger and appealing to conformity drove many men to shave in this new corporate America.⁵⁷ Although the corporate prohibition of beards was mentioned in the article, it was not framed as the cause of a turn to shaving but rather the result.

⁵⁶ “Does a Man Look Better Bearded or Clean Shaven?” *New York Tribune*, September 30, 1906

⁵⁷ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men*, 213, 234.

Indeed, the article claimed that important politicians and “muckrakers” had for some time “thrust forward clean jowls for the inspection of their admiring fellow citizens.”⁵⁸ This supports the idea that the move to shave was already a trend in politics rather than the companies themselves. This trend was already well-established before large New York-based corporations imposed regulations against bearded employees. If this is the case, then the regulations could not possibly be the cause of the shift in style.⁵⁹

It is more likely that the corporate prohibitions coincided with changing definitions of what it meant to be bearded. If beards in earlier periods were associated with patriarchal dominance in both politics and the home, then shaving in this new period was associated with conformity. While conformity is a natural goal for large companies with numerous employees, these associations were merely seized upon by corporations that recognized the importance of these ideas. Rural radicals, such as William Peffer, threatened the system that earned the owners of these large New York firms their fortunes.

A 1911 article in a Chicago newspaper, *The Day Book* titled “Plant a Mustache and Part Your Hair in the Middle to be in Style,” explained to readers that they “must raise a mustache.” “It needn’t be a big one—oh gee no—just a little aggravation on either side,” continued the article. “Fashion’s mandate” did not “call for a lip garnishment of the soup strainer variety,” instead, “it must be kept trimmed close.” Large mustaches were described in primitive or rural

⁵⁸ “Does a Man Look Better Bearded or Clean Shaven?”

⁵⁹ Nancy Tomes contended that the shift was driven solely by the prevalence of germ theory. Though understanding microbes may have helped push men toward shaving, this characterization ignores the political context. Furthermore, much of the evidence for the germ theory comes from corporate regulations. If the reason for these regulations was purely cleanliness, then it seems likely that a newspaper article debating the merits of such regulations would discuss this reason. See Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 176.

terms when the article claimed they might “suggest a refuge for field mice and meadow larks.”⁶⁰ One of the most well-known promoters of the mustache and center-part style was president Theodore Roosevelt. If Lincoln was the symbol of America in the mid-nineteenth century, Roosevelt, with his outsized personality quickly became the symbol of turn of the century United States. However, he was certainly not sympathetic to Populism, Peffer, or even his beard. Roosevelt referred to Peffer as “a well-meaning, pinheaded anarchist crank, of hirsute and slab-sided aspect.”⁶¹

On October 27, 1908 a *Los Angeles Times* article titled “Statesmen Are Smooth Shaven” explained that six of the seven men running for president that year had “smooth-shaven countenances.” The seventh, Roosevelt’s hand-picked successor, William Howard Taft, wore only a mustache. While the gift of hindsight tells us that Taft’s presidential bid was victorious, the importance of the candidates’ beardlessness is clear. These statesmen no longer believed that beards would appeal to their constituencies. Furthermore, the article explains that a publication of 103 pictures of congressmen showed that only ten sported beards. The article goes on to prophetically claim that “the era of bearded politics... is past.”⁶²

In the century since the Taft presidency, not a single United States president has sported any sort of facial hair while in office. Evidently, the conception of masculinity of earlier periods that saw the beard as a symbol of legitimacy of rule, no longer held sway. The diverse beards of the Senate of 1893 were shorn by the by the time of this 1908 article. Even the mustache was failing to make a strong showing on the faces of politicians. The turn of statesmen, and Americans more generally, to the razor had important implications for the rest of the western

⁶⁰ “Plant a Mustache and Part Your Hair in the Middle to be in Style,” *The Day Book*, Chicago, December, 20, 1911.

⁶¹ Peffer, *Populism*, 187.

⁶² “Statesmen Are Smooth Shaven,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 1908.

world at the time. American styles, for both facial hair and clothing, spread across the globe in the years to come.

Bearded “Reds” and A. Mitchel Palmer

As Taft approached the end of his first term, the country was confronted with a difficult decision. Four men were running for the presidency in 1912. The incumbent William Howard Taft represented the conservative option. Despite the fact that he had introduced more trust busting legislation in his one term than Teddy Roosevelt had in his two, Taft was a favorite among businessmen. Roosevelt, Taft’s long-time friend, had recently returned from a world tour, and chosen to seek election from a party of his own creation called the Bull Moose Party. The Bull Moosers were in many cases progressive Republicans who sought new progressive legislation. The Socialist Party, meanwhile, had again nominated the clean shaven Eugene V. Debs. Debs was a labor organizer and was instrumental in the Pullman Strike of 1894. Debs certainly represented the radical choice. In the 1890s, he had even been sympathetic towards the People’s Party. However, Debs represented a new direction for radical leftism. Leftists such as the Industrial Workers of the World cultivated a clean shaven look that hailed modern industrial labor rather than agrarian populism. The fourth major candidate was the equally clean-shaven Woodrow Wilson. Wilson was an established Democrat and president of Princeton University. He hailed from the conservative wing of the Democratic Party that feared the pseudo-populism of William Jennings Bryan. He supported states’ rights, and was devoted to his southern origins. Once again the voting public disdained the radical choice in Debs or even the Bull Moose Party, and elected Woodrow Wilson to the presidency.⁶³

The election of Woodrow Wilson signaled the final victory for shaving. He had beaten

⁶³ James Chace, *1912: Wilson, Roosevelt, Taft & Debs—the Election That Changed the Country* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 40, 43.

both the mustachioed and radical opponents. As Peffer's long beard became associated with the wing of the Populists unwilling to compromise on fusion, Roosevelt's mustache may well have been, to a lesser degree, the symbol of an aggressive power grabber rather than popular reformer and, like the Peffer beard, helped doom the style in the years to come. Taft's walrus mustache, like that of corporate tycoon J.P. Morgan, may perhaps have been seen as symbolic of earlier monopolies and trusts that were now the targets of Progressive Era reform measures. The Gilded Age robber barons and agrarian Populists both had long beards and facial hair among their ranks but both now were seen, by the 1910s, as holdovers from a fading time in contrast to the new, "modern" world of clean shaven reform. The Democratic Party had shown that they could win the nation's highest office with a staid university president, while they failed repeatedly with Bryan's Populist leanings. Wilson's two terms saw both continued economic growth, moderate reform, conservative segregationist attitudes, and a continued decline in facial hair growth. As the American beard increasingly became an oddity, the daily shave took over the wider western world that had previously been under the spell of the Victorian beard movement.⁶⁴

A special correspondence in the *New York Times* titled, "Beards Must Go, Is Dictum in Paris" demonstrates the importance in the American influence in the case of the French shift in style. The article claimed that "manly beauty of the American type" recently became the "only kind in favor among the feminine element of Paris" in the spring of 1912. "The day of beards and mustaches is now over," read the report, "neither beard nor mustache can be tolerated any longer." The article went on to assert that "hair on the lips or chin should only be worn by men unfortunate enough to have ugly mouths or bad teeth." This rapid rate of a change is noteworthy, and likely points to a very specific social meaning behind the drive to shave. The

⁶⁴ Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain," 7-34.

article claims that the “change of ideals” is “of course due to the influence of the American invasion of Paris.” As a result, “capillary growth” was quickly becoming as rare in Paris as it was in America at the time, “since the fashion of shaving clean” grew “among Frenchmen every day.”⁶⁵ Evidently, there were those who viewed this trend among Parisians to shave their mustaches and beards was an American import. This is particularly interesting considering Paris had driven the styles of the western world for decades, if not centuries. Furthermore, bearded romantics such as Victor Hugo influenced American beardedness in the nineteenth century. Since the author of the article was a correspondent for an American newspaper, it is possible that American origin of the decision of Parisian men to go beardless is overemphasized. Nevertheless, the importance of American facial hair styles to the wider western world is represented here. The American style, by the time this article was written in 1912, was so firmly defined as beardless that the author referred to a shaven face as “manly beauty of the American type.” In a reversal of the early nineteenth-century trend that saw American writers emulate the styles of French radicals, the American conceptualization of masculinity drove traditionally hairy Frenchmen to the razor. The crusade against the radical beard that began in America would continue to be exported to Europe and eventually the globe, as the United States grew to become an economic, political and cultural power.

The United States had a chance to demonstrate this power in 1917 with its entrance into the Great War. The war had been ravaging Europe for years, and Wilson had finally decided to commit young, clean shaven American troops, despite running for his second term on a campaign that emphasized his ability to keep Americans out of the conflict. However, 1917 also witnessed the Russian Revolution, bringing to power a communist government in Russia. The

⁶⁵ “Beards Must Go,” *New York Times*, April 7, 1912.

Russian Revolution sparked America's first Red Scare. Red baiting dominated American politics for decades, to the detriment of many radical nonconformists. Attorney General A. Mitchel Palmer created the General Intelligence Division, a precursor to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in an attempt to seek out radicals.

These excessive measures did not just target violent anarchist plots. Peace advocates, such as the progressive activist Jane Adams, were routinely denounced as Bolsheviks. In January 1919, Adams was included in a list of sixty-two radicals that was given to the Senate by the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department. Progressives like Adams were pushed to the margins, helping to end Progressivism. Though Adams was not a member of the beard movement, her struggle for peace foreshadows a significant trend in the history of facial hair, as well as falling in line with Whitman's depictions of the horrors of war.⁶⁶

Nor was facial hair far from the minds of these red fearing agents. The Russian Revolution provided a veritable battle of facial hair styles. Long beards had long been standard for Orthodox clergy and many believed that Grigori Rasputin, with his excessively untrimmed beard, was in complete control of Tsar Nicholas II and his wife Alexandria. Nicholas wore a trim beard with a long a mustache, a style popular with European aristocracy at the time. Indeed, Nicholas was often confused with his cousin George V of Great Britain, the resemblance augmented by the similarity of their royal beards. When Nicholas II abdicated, the first leader of the new Russian republic was the clean shaven Social Democrat, Alexander Kerensky. Late in 1917, the Kerensky government fell to the Bolsheviks of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, who both sported trim Van Dykes and evoked the long-whiskered Karl Marx.

The association with beardedness and radicalism was fully entrenched by the time of the

⁶⁶ Walt Whitman, *Memoranda during the War* (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 2011).

first red scare. A 1920 political cartoon in the *Chicago Tribune* titled “A. Mitchell Palmer Out for a Stroll” clearly depicts this hairy association. The cartoon shows Palmer, the architect of the radical-hunting FBI precursor, anxiously walking down the street. Bearded characters labelled “Reds” run all around Palmer. A policeman, a woman, and even a baby in a stroller sport bristling beards.⁶⁷ The cartoonist was clearly playing on the notion that beardedness connotes radicalism. Beardedness, as well as political radicalism, was shown as a target of the Palmer Raids. Americans feared hairy Eastern European anarchists and communists, and saw their refusal to shave as an affront to American political systems.

However, the bearded foreigners of the American imagination did not map perfectly with actual styles. Clean shaven Nicola Sacco and mustachioed Bartolomeo Vanzetti became some of the highest profile immigrant anarchists when they were arrested in 1920, yet neither wore a full beard. This association between beardedness and radicalism was tied to the radicalism of the People’s Party, and a lingering sense of agrarian beards did remain. A 1920 *Omaha Bee* articles claimed, “it is not many years since agriculturalist of the west were identified with long whiskers.” Yet, “farmers today have mail order catalogues, safety razors and rural mail.”⁶⁸ Nevertheless, neither western agrarian, nor eastern industrial, radicalism was acceptable to groups such as the General Intelligence Division. Thus, the first red scare would help to usher in the 1920s, a decade of unprecedented conservatism and shaving, with a few notable exceptions.

Beards and radicals were already associated thanks to figures like Peffer, though conservative Republican statesmen Henry Cabot Lodge and Charles Evens Hughes both grew Tsar-like beards in their youths before the demonization of beards and chose not to submit to the

⁶⁷ “A. Mitchell Palmer Out for a Stroll,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 1920.

⁶⁸ “Whiskers! Omaha Boasts All Types,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, November 7, 1920.

crusade against the whisker. However, they were part of a shrinking minority, the Senate of 1921 featured only 5 beards and 33 mustaches. This meant that 60% of the senators were clean shaven. Evidently, beardedness was going out of fashion with the nation's most prominent men.

The first red scare helped to usher in the 1920s, a decade of unprecedented conservatism and shaving. If beards and facial hair were not associated with radicalism, they were associated with being old fashioned and rural. As American society embraced the modern urban world, anything associated with the Victorian Era appeared as quaint and obsolete. For women now enjoying unprecedented new opportunities such as the right to vote, this shift was signaled by abandoning corsets, long hair, and long dresses. For men, one symbolic target was the long beard of the fourth bearded age.

The King Whiskerino and his “Flock of Luxurious Bewhiskered Followers”

In 1922, the city of Sacramento was quickly expanding. The post-war economic boom elevated consumerism to dizzying heights, and new fashions were spreading across the country, particularly in urbanizing California. However, in the state's administrative seat, an attempt to return to the past began in earnest. In commemoration of the city's origin's as a gold rush town, the city fathers offered a \$49 prize to the man that could grow the beard with the best “length, appearance and luxuriance of growth.” This “strange new struggle for bewhiskered splendor” left Sacramento with, “not a chin to scrape.” Sacramento men young and old cultivated “any style from professor to the cow puncher,” however “hundreds... adopted no style, preferring to let ‘em sprout to the four winds as nature directs.” In March, the decision to hold the contest was accompanied by the formation of the Sacramento Whisker Club by the city manager, mayor, and members of the city council.⁶⁹ Over the following months, membership in the Whisker Club

⁶⁹ A.B. Waugh, “Grow a Beard is New Slogan of Sacramento,” *The Rock Island Argus and*

skyrocketed to include most of the men in the city.

By April, the city government passed an “emergency ordinance to compel all males of the city above 21 to grow whiskers.” The bill, thought to be “one of the most drastic ever passed,” in the city, was supposedly demanded by 500 hairy men outside of city hall with six-shooters. “The wretched shavelings were dragged by the city police,” before a kangaroo court. “Punishments varied with the degree of guilt,” and the judge told one “smooth article” that his “chin [was] an insult to [his] native city.” The judge believed he “could grow a few pinfeathers,” if he “made a genuine attempt.” The “smooth, cheeky rascalion” then “promised to present himself in a repulsively shaggy condition.”⁷⁰ Evidently, the leaders of Sacramento were determined to keep their city defiantly bearded. Though politically powerful men were drivers of this short-lived “hirsute craze,” women were inevitably involved in this gendered display of hair.

A *New York Herald* article claimed that, “even women and flappers [were] roused.” Though it seems incongruous to imagine bearded men and these short-haired modern women, the article argued that the “hairy facial adornment [was] as popular as nude hose with a flapper.” The president of the Whisker Club, Jeff Larasch, however, was not supported by his wife. After she convinced him to shave he was labeled the “Judas of Whiskerdom,” and lost his presidential position. “Shorn of his glory and his beard,” Larasch became “the only clean shaven man in a sea of whiskers,” and was “branded as an outcast, a derelict in his duty, and a Brutus to his fellow contestants.”⁷¹ Larasch’s wife compelled him to shave despite his presidency. This line

Daily Union, March 23, 1922.

⁷⁰ “Guns Force Enactment of Beard-Growing Bill,” *The New York Herald*, April 29, 1922; “Bearded Like the Gold-Hunters of ’49,” *The Hollbrook News*, June 30, 1922.

⁷¹ A.B. Waugh, “Wife Forces President of Sacramento ‘Whisker Club’ To Shave; Now He’s Deposed,” *The Rock Island Argus and Daily Union*, April 12, 1922.

of reasoning follows sentiments expressed in the 1894 article “Beards, Hair, and Human Rights” discussed above.⁷² This, however, did not mean that the men of Sacramento had cast off ideas of male dominance. Indeed, the Whisker Club paid homage to one of the most traditional patriarchal symbols when they chose a king.

Hans Langseth, a resident of Barney, North Dakota, was personally invited by the Sacramento Whisker Club to come to California to be crowned King Whiskerino. His travel costs were paid, and he would receive \$50 per day for the week of the Days of '49 celebration. Langseth was chosen because he was, “possessor of the longest natural beard in the world.” At 17 feet 6 inches, Langseth’s beard was truly a testament to his patience. Langseth was 75 at the time of his crowning, and he had been growing his monstrous beard since the age of 28. Langseth tucked his record-breaking whiskers into his vest, leaving only 18 inches exposed. “It’s a good chest protector,” he quipped. Joking aside, Langseth’s position came with benefits outside of ceremonial functions. A dispute arose when Langseth attempted to buy land with his son in California. Thirteen Whiskerino attorneys volunteered their services, and Langseth was awarded \$20,000.⁷³ It is clear that the Whiskerinos of Sacramento took their membership in the Whisker Club seriously. Langseth was able to benefit considerably from his position. Like Peffer, his ability to grow a massive beard gained him instant recognizability and national fame. The King Whiskerino, Hans Langseth, lived on in California until 1927, when he passed away at the age of 80. Langseth still holds the world record for the longest beard. The whiskers in question were donated to the Smithsonian in 1967 (a particularly hairy year) by the Langseth family. Only 17 feet, however, were donated, for the family did not wish to bury Hans clean

⁷² “Beards, Hair, and Human Rights” *New York Times*.

⁷³ “Longest Beard in the World on Way to Sacramento Fete.” *The Seattle Star*, May 17, 1922; “World ‘Whisker King’ in Twin Cities.” *The Appeal*, May 20, 1922; “Whiskers for All.” *The Bemidji Daily Pioneer*, June 27, 1922.

shaven.

This sharp, but local, spike in beardedness was an humorous, even sarcastic homage to an idyllic past. The original purpose of the beard-growing contest, and thus the Whisker Club, was a celebration of nineteenth-century gold miners. However, '49ers were not the only part of the past that Whiskerinos idolized. The Whiskerinos were able to create an environment in Sacramento that praised beardedness even more than the previous bearded age. Even in the heights of the Victorian beard movement, having a clean shaven face was never illegal.

They also repeatedly invoked rural and agrarian imagery as they sprouted their beards. City Manager Clyde Seavey, was one of the original Whiskerinos, and an early frontrunner in the contest. Seavey was confident that “with careful cultivation and plenty of irrigation” he would “harvest a bountiful crop.” He even reportedly worried that “the recent cold snap somewhat retarded the growth of his bristles.”⁷⁴ This overtly agricultural view of facial hair points to the nostalgia wrapped up in the motivations of the Whisker Club. While the prominent men of Sacramento did not advocate radical policies like “Long Beard Pepper,” they did cash in on similarly homespun feelings.

In fact, the total victory of shaving consumer capitalism, and the discrediting of radicalism Wilson’s red scare allowed for the prominence of the Whiskerinos. For the time being, the bearded communist had been rooted out and shaved, allowing the Whiskerinos to operate without fear of accusation. The Whisker Club, however, can be seen as a reaction to the victory and all encompassing reach of consumerism. The alienating effects of capitalism were hard to swallow, even for the successful leaders of Sacramento. They desired a temporary return

⁷⁴ “Sacramento,” *The New York Herald*.

to the simplicity of the rural America of their childhood. They longed for a return of the sense of togetherness and familiarity found in tight knit agrarian communities, not unlike the regionalist art of the following decade. Through the use of facial hair, Sacramento crafted a unique local identity for a short time.

However, the Whisker Club of Sacramento was not a shift in style. With the end of the Days of '49 celebration, many of the Whiskerinos shaved, and rejoined the ranks of shaving conformity. The Whiskerinos were part of a wave of beard growing competitions that became popular across the country, and subsequent contests were often framed as return to the past.⁷⁵

Regionalism and “Stately Old” John Brown

Like the Whiskerinos of the 1920s, many Americans were left pining for simpler times in the face of a modern, industrial America. Regionalism, an artistic movement that praised idyllic rural life, gained popularity. The failure of urban capitalism drove many to create art that provided an escape with pastoral scenes.⁷⁶ This nostalgic praise for the agricultural communities of America's past brought with them references to the People's Party. Two years after the death of King Whiskerino, in October of 1929, the Wall Street Stock Exchange crashed, beginning what is now known as the Great Depression. The Depression left millions of Americans in poverty, and demonstrated the fickle nature of hyper capitalism. Regionalist nostalgia of the 1920s became even more entrenched in the 1930s. These romantic depictions of a former bearded age, evidently appealed to a depression weary audience. However, some of the most well-known drivers of the regionalist movement were not filmmakers, but painters.

⁷⁵ Nancy Shepherdson, “America's Amazing Artifacts,” *Boys' Life* 105, no. 7 (July 2015): 18.

⁷⁶ Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

Artists such as Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton painted scenes of farm life, while receiving critical acclaim and national attention. Wood's *American Gothic* (1930), depicting a stoic, clean shaven farmer with a pitch fork and his equally stiff wife, is one of the most universally recognized paintings of the twentieth century. However, Kansas native John Steuart Curry took regionalist painting in a more radical direction than Wood or Benton. Curry explored political themes with his paintings, depicting the horrors of racism and war on multiple occasions. Benton's booster, Thomas Craven, a self-proclaimed Populist, criticized Wood for "stylization," and enjoyed the realism of Curry's dangerous weather depictions and "frenzied" people.⁷⁷ When Curry was asked by the Kansas state government to paint a mural for the capital building in Topeka, a careful observer might have been able to expect a radical display.

The result of this formal request was titled *Tragic Prelude* (1937-42). The painting quickly caused a stir in the state capital. The mural depicted the violent pre Civil War conflicts known as "Bleeding Kansas." Wildfires and a tornado rage all around the combatants, showcasing Kansas's violent weather. At the center of the conflict is an enormous John Brown. He stands with outstretched arms, one holding a rifle and the other a Bible. Brown was a deeply committed abolitionist preacher, who used violent means in the fight to admit Kansas to the union as a free state. One of the most striking features of Curry's depiction of Brown is his large flowing beard. The whiskers are long enough to be blown in the wind, and if they were to lay flat, would likely reach halfway to his waist. However, the historical figure John Brown, had no such beard.

When Brown was operating in Kansas, he was clean shaven. Photos ranging from 1856 to 1858 all show a smooth-faced Brown with his characteristic intense stare. Brown's

⁷⁷ Dennis, *Renegade*, 65, 40.

participation in the Potawatomie Creek Massacre of 1856, most likely occurred when he was shaving regularly. In a biography of the abolitionist by the mustachioed W.E.B. DuBois, an associate described an interaction with Brown in Lawrence, Kansas in July of 1858. “On the whether-worn face was a stubby, short, grey beard, evidently of recent growth,” claimed Brown’s visitor.⁷⁸ If Brown began growing his beard in the summer of 1858, he would have little over a year of growth before his death in 1859. Even if Brown was particularly gifted in the art of beard-growing, it would be difficult for whiskers to reach the grossly exaggerated length depicted in Curry’s *Tragic Prelude*.

In fact, Brown grew his beard for a disguise, in preparation for a raid he was planning on a government arsenal in Virginia. The same visitor, meeting with Brown just one week before he arrived in Harper’s Ferry, described Brown’s “patriarchal disguise” as something that made him appear as a “stately old man.” To complement his disguise, he also assumed the name Isaac Smith. Rendered unrecognizable, Brown moved to Virginia in preparation for his raid. The raid eventually proved unsuccessful. Though Brown and his men captured the arsenal, it failed to inspire the slave uprising that he had expected. Without the support of an army of liberated slaves, Brown’s little band was unable to hold the arsenal, which was quickly recaptured along with Brown himself. The following trial, which allowed Brown to clearly espouse his antislavery views, gained national attention. Brown would eventually ride to the gallows on his coffin, and become an anti-slavery martyr.⁷⁹ If he spent most of his life clean shaven, then it seems odd that Curry decide to depict him with such a large beard.

⁷⁸ W.E.B. DuBois, *John Brown* (Philadelphia: G. W. Jacobs, 1901), 100.

⁷⁹ Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge this Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 253, 275, 354.

A likely reason for this exaggeration may lie in the social meaning placed on beards at the time. Curry wished to tap into the radical heritage of Kansas with his mural. To add a dramatic flair to this depiction of his home state, he focused on the violent weather, and included dramatic displays of political radicalism. With nationally recognized figures like John Brown and the hatchet-wielding prohibition advocate, Carry Nation, operating in Kansas history, Curry wished to celebrate this wild and exciting past. In so doing, however, Curry seems to have included a nod to Kansas radical, William Peffer. Though Curry may not have made a conscious effort to evoke the first Populist senator, he did paint a beard of Peffer-like proportions on his main character. This decision was both informed and reinforced the perception that beards connote a radical past. Viewers of *Tragic Prelude* could look upon the wild-eyed Brown and see that the notorious radical was incredibly hairy. He then fit perfectly into a schema that placed sensible shaving as an advancement over a wild, rural, and bearded past.

Brown also shared a number of connections with early promoters of the bearded movement, particularly transcendentalists. He was immortalized in poems by both Herman Melville and Walt Whitman. Victor Hugo, a Romantic leader of European beardedness, referred to Brown as “the champion of Christ.” Ralph Waldo Emerson compared Brown’s speech at his trial to the Gettysburg address. Thus, he likened Brown to Abraham Lincoln, another figure that we have seen was described in Christ-like imagery. Henry David Thoreau claimed Brown was “a transcendentalist above all, a man of ideas and principles.”⁸⁰ Despite the fact that photographs of Brown show him to be clean shaven, Curry included him in the beard movement because that was where he seemed to fit best. Nineteenth-century farmers like Brown were

⁸⁰ Oates, *To Purge*, 356, 327, 319.

supposed to be bearded while modern farmers like those in Curry's 1928 painting *Baptism in Kansas* were clean shaven, with the occasional mustache.

Although Curry may have been in favor of populist scenes, the Kansas state legislature was not. The state government disapproved of the mural, believing it be an unsightly display of Kansas's hayseed heritage. It did not present the calm and conservative view of Kansas that they wished to promote. Because of the extreme opposition to his creations, Curry left the painting unsigned.⁸¹ The radical feeling evoked in *Tragic Prelude* is, in part, due to the exaggerated display on Brown's face. This was not lost on the Kansas legislators. Kansas was no longer a base for radical Populism. The state had just defined itself as a conservative stronghold by challenging the liberal New Deal administration with the nomination of governor Alf Landon for president. Though the challenge failed to put a Kansas man in the oval office, the state had a reputation to maintain. The radicalism of Curry's mural with its populist imagery was more than Kansas's archconservatives could bear.

“The Importance of the Beard”and Dewey’s Mustache

By the 1940s, the crusade against the whisker had taken its course and beards became exceedingly rare in America. Those who still chose to sport a beard were often subject to criticism, and many men chose to wear just a mustache. Even mustaches, symbols of military prowess or aggression, became associated with the willful individualism of movie actors and jazz musicians.⁸² Mustaches adorned the faces of villains and rogues in the popular imagination of many Americans. The one major exception was the thin, very well trimmed pencil thin

⁸¹ M. Sue Kendall, *Rethinking Regionalism: John Steuart Curry and the Kansas Mural Controversy* (New Directions in American Art. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986)

⁸² Allan Peterkin, *One Thousand Mustaches: a cultural history of the mo.* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2012), 42-43.

mustache of movie stars like Clark Gable or the Mexican comic hero Cantinflas. Similar to the events of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent Red Scare, this reputation was only strengthened by the events of the Second World War. Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, two men who understood the martial implications of the mustache, sent their armies to wage apocalyptic war. This only strengthened the negative associations given to the mustache by radical-fearing industrialists.

In 1944, during the Second World War, New York District Attorney “Racket Buster” Thomas Dewey challenged Franklin Roosevelt for the presidency. Rather than switch presidents in the midst of war, the voting public reelected Roosevelt by a large margin to an unprecedented fourth term.⁸³ In 1948, this time as New York’s governor, Dewey faced off against Roosevelt’s less popular vice president Harry Truman. This race was much closer, and Dewey lost by only 38,218 votes of 8.6 million total.⁸⁴ The race was so close that the *Chicago Daily Tribune* famously ran the incorrect headline “Dewey Defeats Truman.”⁸⁵ Dewey needed every vote he could get if he was going to beat Truman, but some were put off by his appearance. Though the Republican governor was by no means a political radical, he wore a trim black mustache. Dewey claimed he first grew his mustache because shaving hurt his lip, but he kept it because his wife liked the look. However, Dewey did not realize that his mustache carried with it a long history of social and political meanings.

Political Columnist Helen Essary claimed that Dewey’s mustache took “from the seriousness and strength of his face,” and that it would damage his chance of earning the woman vote. “You see only the mustache. You remember only the mustache,” argued Essary. Emilie

⁸³ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin*, 312.

⁸⁴ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 233.

⁸⁵ “Dewey Defeats Truman,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 3, 1948.

Spencer Deer, an Ohio wife and mother from a Republican family, chose to vote for Truman rather than a Republican man with a mustache.⁸⁶ Nor was Dewey unaware of the aversion to his signature ‘stache. In a meeting with a boy scout troop after his failed 1948 bid, he told the young boys “remember fellows, any boy can become president, unless he's got a mustache.”⁸⁷ American voters had demonstrated their unwillingness to vote for a candidate with facial hair. Even a small, trimmed mustache on the face of a center-right politician was too far outside the bounds of conformity for the voting public. Nor was Dewey alone in his struggle to gain votes for a hairy face.

The popularity of historical beard growing contests of the time suggests that shaving was so common that men had to be pushed, even coerced, into growing beards and suffering the repercussions. In 1954, Judge Seavy Carroll of Fayetteville, North Carolina began campaigning for North Carolina’s Seventh Congressional District. Carroll was “normally a clean shaven man,” but he “joined hundreds of other Fayetteville men in preparing for the bicentennial celebration.” Like the members of the Sacramento Whisker Club, the men of Fayetteville began growing beards to harken back to their city’s hairy past. The fact that the city’s founding occurred in the midst of what Oldstone-Moore termed the “Shave of Reason” was inconsequential.⁸⁸ When the men of Fayetteville looked to the past they saw a simpler and hairier time. The women of Fayetteville wore bonnets and long dresses, and even had to “obtain a \$5 permit to use cosmetics.” Children wore Alpine hats, and “mustaches, sidebars and string ties” became “the main bicentennial attire of men.” Carroll was an early front runner for the

⁸⁶ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, “Mustaches and Masculine Codes in Early Twentieth-Century America.” *Journal of Social History*, 45, no. 1 (2011): 47; Peterkin, *One Thousand*, 86; Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 130-134.

⁸⁷ Geoffrey C. Ward, “Republican Loser,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1882.

⁸⁸ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 130.

beard contest, but he made it clear that after the Fayetteville Bicentennial he would “tour the District as a clean-shaven candidate.”⁸⁹ Despite some claims that Carroll’s “slight beard” made him “a fully-fledged candidate for the best growth honors as well as for the congressional seat,” many viewed Carroll’s beard as an unsightly display.⁹⁰ Sporting a growth of only “a half inch or so,” Carroll went door-to-door Campaigning. One elderly woman told Carroll, “Mr., I think I might vote for you, but I believe you should shave every morning before asking people to vote for you.” “She just didn’t grasp the importance of the beard,” opined one reporter, who would have made William Wahl proud. When delivering a speech, the assembled crowd had trouble seeing past Carroll’s “full growth of beard.” “Why you got the beard? You belong to the house of David?” asked one astonished viewer, linking beardedness to biblical times.⁹¹

Despite the fact that Carroll was growing his beard for a local festival, voters were not enthused by his hairy visage. When they went to the polls in November, the voters of North Carolina’s Seventh Congressional District elected the smooth faced F. Eitel Carlyle instead.⁹² Though it cannot be said for certain whether Dewey or Carroll would have won if they had chosen to shave, it is clear that Americans felt unsure about politicians sporting facial hair. Both of these politicians were also running in an environment of oppressive antiradicalism akin to the Red Scare of the Wilson era. This Second Red scare began with Dewey’s opponent president Harry Truman, who signed an executive order in 1947 calling for all federal employees to be screened for connections with communist or other radical political organizations. In 1950 Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy delivered a speech in which he alleged that communists were working within the state department, enlarging the hysteria to include a myriad of hearings

⁸⁹ “Candidate Carrol,” *Tabor City Tribune*, March 17, 1954.

⁹⁰ “Seavy Carroll,” *Tabor City Tribune*, March 31, 1954.

⁹¹ Horace Carter, “House of David, Sir?” *Tabor City Tribune*, April 14, 1954.

⁹² “Citizens go to Polls Tuesday, Nov. 2,” *Tabor City Tribune*, October 27, 1954.

and blacklists. The movement came to be known as McCarthyism after the Republican senator that widened the craze, and made the affair a media circus.

It was in this environment that Dewey and Carroll found such an intense backlash to their facial hair. Voters questioned the ability of hairy-faced men to be political leaders. These detractors were merely following a tradition of opposing those who go against the grain with their grooming habits. This unspoken code, which stretched back to the 1890s, informed voters that leaders that looked like William Peffer were not to be trusted.

CHAPTER 4: BEATNIKS AND BARBUDOS

This climate of intense shaving and conformity was challenged in the middle decades of the twentieth century with the growth of an American counterculture. In 1954, the same year that Seavy Carroll's beard was causing a stir in North Carolina, a key figure in the bearded counterculture was growing his beard for the first time. Poet Allen Ginsberg had been living and working on a small farm in southern Mexico. No longer concerned with the appearance he maintained as a marketing agent, Ginsberg let his hair and beard grow. Ginsberg's long hair and whiskers eventually became his trademark, making him the archetypal bearded man of the period. However, in 1954 he was still relatively unknown. Ginsberg was born in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1926. His father, Louis Ginsberg, was a committed socialist, and his mother, Naomi Levy, was a die hard communist with Russian origins. Allen's older brother, Eugene, was named for Eugene V. Debs, and they regularly attended a communist run summer camp as children. This instilled in Ginsberg a lifelong interest in politics and commitment to the underprivileged.⁹³

By 1954, Ginsberg had taken up a Bohemian lifestyle that proved to be as evergreen as his unconventional political ideals. His travels in Mexico had provided him with a significant break through in his writing. Mexico itself was experiencing a romantic age of artistic rebellion. In Mexico City, a figure famous for a different kind of facial hair, Frida Kahlo, was involved in a mass demonstration protesting CIA interference in Guatemala. The ailing painter had become famous for her self portraits, which honestly depicted her own unibrow.⁹⁴ After Ginsberg's trip to Mexico he traveled to another center of art and contrarianism, San Francisco. Ginsberg's

⁹³ Michael Schumacher, *Dharma Lion: A Critical Biography of Allen Ginsberg* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1992), 5-9.

⁹⁴ Jon Lee Anderson, *Che: A Revolutionary Life* (New: Grove Press, 1997), 160.

biographer, Michael Schumacher, described the atmosphere in San Francisco's North Beach as "a magnet for radicals, anarchists, populists, Communists, Wobblies, bohemians, Abstract Expressionist painters, performance artists, poets, jazz musicians, playwrights in experimental theater, atheists, Buddhists, and street musicians—all living in a free-spirited environment that seemed to defy the cautious national sociopolitical climate caused by McCarthyism."⁹⁵

Ginsberg and his bohemian artist friends Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassady, and Gary Snyder fit well into this environment. It was in San Francisco that the group of writers known as the Beat generation achieved national prominence. Kerouac coined the term "Beat" in 1948 to refer to this circle of friends who refused to conform to society's strictures. The term captured the suffering of these artists who praised the spontaneous and movement for movement's sake in their search for beatitude. The Beat generation had a number of influences such as jazz and Buddhism that were blended in a uniquely American writing style that probed the depths of human consciousness. In 1955, the Beat generation rocketed to fame with a groundbreaking poetry reading at the Six Gallery in San Francisco. The reading, which is often cited as the beginning of the San Francisco poetry renaissance, featured a number of area poets. Ginsberg delivered his first public reading of "Howl," a poem that eulogized a number of his friends both living and deceased. The poem places these tortured souls in opposition to an unholy representation of modern industrial society named "Moloch, whose mind is pure machinery."⁹⁶

"Howl" was delivered with such raw emotion that it became an instant success. Kerouac was certain that the poem would make Ginsberg famous. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Ginsberg's lifelong publisher and friend, quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous reply to Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, "I greet you at the beginning of a great career. When do I get the manuscript?"

⁹⁵ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 183.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

Comparisons between Ginsberg and the early promoter of the nineteenth-century beard movement were not uncommon. Ginsberg's home town, Paterson, was not far from Whitman's home town and final resting place, Camden, New Jersey. Ginsberg learned of Whitman in school, and he quickly became one of Ginsberg's largest artistic influences. He identified with the themes in Whitman's work including humanity and homosexuality.⁹⁷ Ginsberg came to see his work as a continuation of the *Leaves of Grass*, as he challenged the politics of normativity. He also hoped to follow in the footsteps of Whitman's whiskers. In a 1955 poem about a fictitious encounter with Whitman, he asked "where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in an hour/ Which way does your beard point tonight?"⁹⁸ "Howl" was deliberately written in a Whitmanesque form with long lines and a base to which to return. Like Whitman, Ginsberg also mentioned beards in a number of his poems including twice in "Howl." When the landmark poem was published, Ginsberg chose a quote from Whitman to illustrate his purpose: "Unscrew the locks from the doors! Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!"⁹⁹

Ginsberg had certainly unscrewed the doors from their jambs with his public reading of "Howl." The Six Gallery reading launched a movement across America. Beat poets imitating Ginsberg, Kerouac, and others became widespread. In the following decade, young people across the country flocked to San Francisco to join in opposition to the country's oppressive political environment. One particularly sagacious line from "Howl" predicted this phenomenon when it described counterculturalists "who reappeared on the West Coast investigating the FBI in beards and shorts with big pacifist eyes." Ginsberg's image, from his beardedness to his pacifism were

⁹⁷ David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: the Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Historian David K. Johnson has shown that McCarthyism was fueled by homophobia, and that far more homosexuals than communists were purged from the government.

⁹⁸ Allen Ginsberg, *Collected Poems: 1947-1997* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 287.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3, 16-17, 181, 235.

in direct opposition the standards of American culture and government agencies such as the FBI.¹⁰⁰

Though the Beat writers may not have been Soviet agents in disguise, their artistic movement was somewhat political and challenged social norms. Beat writers, by definition, felt marginalized by an oppressive society. The Beat movement rejected stuffy established forms, and praised spontaneity and humble forms of humanity. In many ways, the Beats idolized the west, and especially movement through it. *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, one of the quintessential works of the movement demonstrates this folk approach.¹⁰¹ Kerouac's 1958 novel, *Dharma Bums*, immortalized Beat poet and Six Gallery reader Gary Snyder. The novel describes Kerouac's hiking trip with Snyder in the Pacific Northwest. Snyder's decision to live in a "shack" in the wood is described as a "simple monastic life."¹⁰² The simple crates of Buddhist literature in Snyder's shack are even mentioned in "Howl" as "orange crates of theology." This emphasis on the primitive and natural within the Beat generation would only be further entrenched in the later hippie movement.

In some ways, the beat generation were literary populists and/or primitivists. In addition to the praise for the natural rather than industrial world, Beats challenged the establishment to come closer to the real experiences of the people on the ground. Beat writers attempted to accomplish in the field of literature what the People's Party hoped to achieve in the realm of politics. Though Kerouac turned to conservatism late in life, many writers of the Beat movement, such as Ginsberg, supported progressive political themes while they were pushing the bounds of literary form.

¹⁰⁰ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 285.

¹⁰¹ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Penguin, 1955).

¹⁰² Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (New York: Viking Press, 1958).

The Beat generation also shared the refusal to shave with the 1890s Populists, although the Beat beard was more intentional than Peffer's holdover from the fourth bearded age. Ginsberg eventually became famous for his Peffer-like beard, and aspiring poets imitated his hairy display. In 1957, novelist Norman Mailer published a 9,000 word essay on American counterculture titled "The White Negro." Though Beat writers and others criticized Mailer's characterization of both beatniks and blacks, Mailer did demonstrate some similarities between counterculture, and ethnicity.¹⁰³ Both race and subculture are social constructs that rely heavily on physical appearance. As beatniks became more widespread, a particular visual display became associated with the movement.

The Cold War associations involved in the Beat movement appeared most readily in the term "Beatnik." San Francisco columnist, Herb Caen, coined the term to refer to the bohemian artists, while capitalizing on American's fears of the recently-launched Soviet satellite *Sputnik*. Beatniks were a favorite target of the city's police and conservative politicians, and red baiting always provided ammunition.¹⁰⁴

In 1959, a photographer named Fred McDarrah created a "Rent a Beatnik" business. The enterprise was part satirical and part serious. Writers were hired to read poetry at parties, giving them the opportunity to practice their work on an audience and earn a living. McDarrah's plan involved selling the entire San Francisco poetry renaissance experience. An advertisement for the program read, "Rent a Genuine Beatnik. Fully Equipped. Eye-Shades, Beard, Dirty Shirt. With or Without Sandals. Special Discounts for No Beard or No Bath."¹⁰⁵ Evidently, the bearded reputation of the beatnik was already well-known. If a beatnik without a beard justified

¹⁰³ Norman Mailer, *The White Negro* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1957).

¹⁰⁴ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 285.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, *Dharma Lion*, 320.

a discounted price, then it can reasonably be assumed that they did not present a “fully equipped” beatnik appearance. ‘True’ beatniks, like true Populists, demonstrated their rejection of the modern American industrial society by cultivating rebellion on their faces. Although the symbol of the beatnik was defiantly bearded, many members of the Beat generation, such as Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs and Neal Cassady, were clean shaven. The image of the stereotypical beatnik is very much an emulation of Ginsberg specifically. Like Peffer who became the image of the stereotypical Populist, Ginsberg became the symbol of the stereotypical beatnik and later hippie.

This fascination with the Beat movement allowed Ginsberg a platform for his political views. He used his poems and public appearance to discuss topics such as censorship, his homosexuality, the war in Vietnam, marijuana legalization, LSD research, and the disastrous effects of consumer capitalism. He met with famous artists of all kinds, including Salvador Dalí the famous painter and creator of *Lincoln in Dalivision* whose eccentric mustache was a readily-identifiable symbol of his equally quirky persona. Ginsberg also contacted mustachioed musician Thelonious Monk, in an attempt to get the musician involved in LSD research. Ginsberg travelled widely across Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and even met His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1962. His travels opened his eyes to the spirituality and politics of people all over the world, creating a worldview that he referred to as ‘global consciousness.’¹⁰⁶ Beards had been associated with religious figures for thousands of years, from the classically bearded image of the Hebrew patriarchs, Jesus, and the Prophet Muhammad to the long beards of monks, rabbis, and holy men. Western religion had long recognized a connection between beards those religious figures who challenged secular society. Now the

¹⁰⁶ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 244, 237, 376.

Beats added a new group of bearded religious figures who were tied with Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.

Ginsberg's radical views on social injustice led him into numerous clashes with authorities. In 1964, Ginsberg took up the charge of Lenny Bruce, a sometimes bearded comedian that had been pulled from the stage of a New York night club and charged with indecent performance. Neither Bruce nor Ginsberg were unaccustomed to this kind of legal trouble. Ginsberg's publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti had been arrested on obscenity charges in 1956 for selling a book that contained his landmark poem "Howl." A similar turn of events occurred in 1964 at a bookstore in Wichita, causing Ginsberg to ask, "Is anybody home in Wichita?" Bruce, like Ginsberg, dealt with controversial topics such as sexuality and race. At the time of his arrest in New York, he had cases pending in Los Angeles and Chicago. Since none of the audience members had filed a complaint, Ginsberg was sure that the arrest of Bruce had been the mandate of the assistant district attorney. He wrote a petition comparing Bruce's "social satire" to Jonathan Swift and Mark Twain. The petition was signed by a number of notable artists including Bob Dylan, Norman Mailer, Woody Allen, James Baldwin, Joseph Heller, John Updike, and Paul Newman. In a final act of defiance, Ginsberg sent the assistant district attorney clippings from his beard.¹⁰⁷

Ginsberg certainly saw his beard as an act of rebellion. By mailing a piece of it to a high ranking government official, he was sending him some of his nonconformity. By using vernacular language, Ginsberg and Bruce were attempting to bring their art closer to the lived experiences of ordinary people. Criticizing the social systems and refusing to shave, brought backlash from established power structures. Recognizing the social meanings placed on facial

¹⁰⁷ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 264, 409-411.

hair, Ginsberg quite literally chose to fight back against this suffocating environment with his beard.

Ginsberg's star studded petition, however, was unsuccessful. Bruce was sentenced to four month's in a work house. Less than a month after the Bruce incident, Ginsberg was invited by the Cuban minister of culture to attend an all-expenses-paid trip to Cuba for a writer's conference. Once a haven for American neocolonialism and organized crime, Cuba had recently become the front line of the Cold War conflict with the victory of a lawyer named Fidel Castro.¹⁰⁸

“Los Barbudos” and the Cuban Revolution

For years, Castro and his revolutionaries had been fighting a guerilla war in the Sierra Maestra of eastern Cuba. During their jungle campaign, the rebels grew beards, and were even referred to as *los barbudos*, or “the bearded ones.”¹⁰⁹ In the years to come the beards of Castro, and an argentine doctor know as “Che” Guevara would become easily recognizable symbols of opposition to American corporatocracy and neocolonialism.

Indeed, besides the populist symbols that these revolutionaries carried on their faces, they also conducted their guerilla campaign with populist tactics. Thanks to the dedicated peasants of the Sierra Maestra, the guerilla campaign proved successful, and Fidel Castro took Havana, the Cuban capital in 1959. The agrarian base of the revolution flew in the face of traditional Marxist-Leninist doctrine that the rural peasantry were too miserable and backward to be drivers of the social revolution. In fact, in the early stages of the revolution Castro insisted that he was not a communist, and he did not ally himself with the Soviet Union until well after the revolution had succeeded. This anti-American, non-Soviet revolution made Castro the darling of the

¹⁰⁸ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 419.

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, *Che*, 160.

growing counterculture in America. One American toy manufacturer even created one hundred thousand olive hats with a false beard attached that read “El Libertador.”¹¹⁰ Evidently, even America capitalists sought to cash in on Castro’s decision to liberate his country, and his face, from daily shaving. In a letter to Ginsberg in 1960 regarding the Cuban revolution, Beat poet Gary Snyder proclaimed, “let there be beards in politics.”¹¹¹

In 1975, a Senate committee, known as the Church Committee, created by Idaho Senator Frank Church studied CIA and FBI involvement in the assassination of foreign leaders. The report provided numerous accounts of American attempts to remove Castro from his position. It stated that the earliest attempts were aimed at destroying Castro’s public image rather than killing him. In 1960, the year Castro dubbed “The Year of Agrarian Reform” the CIA planned to expose him to thallium salts, “a strong depilatory that would cause his beard to fall out.” The plan was to dust the shoes when Castro put them outside his hotel room to be shined on an upcoming trip. They procured the chemical and tested it on animals, but were forced to abandon the plan when Castro cancelled his trip.¹¹²

The CIA was opposed not only to Castro’s populist ideas, but also to the Peffer-like symbol that he wore on his face. It might seem almost ridiculous to assume that Castro would lose all of his political power if his beard fell out. However, in a political climate that understood facial hair as anticapitalist displays, the attack on Castro’s beard makes perfect sense. Nor was the CIA off base in assuming that Castro’s power had come from standing up to

¹¹⁰ Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year That Rocked the World* (New York: Random House, 2004), 162-163.

¹¹¹ Gary Snyder, *The Selected Letters of Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder*, Edited by Bill Morgan (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2009), 20.

¹¹² United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, Report No. 94-465, November 20, 1975, 72.

American moneyed interest. He promised agrarian reform at the expense of absentee American landlords. With a huge portion of Cubans and Cuban land devoted to the production of sugar for large, often American owned estates, Cuban peasants were quick to accept a leader that promised to end the system of exploitation. It was this support that the CIA wished to destroy by targeting his beard after the nationalization of American owned sugar fields in 1960.

In February 1960, Castro met with Soviet Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan in the hopes of securing a trade deal. Castro attempted to convince the Soviet emissary that the Cuban revolutionaries had proven Marx wrong. “We have over taken Marx,” Castro claimed, citing the fact that the July 26 movement had succeeded outside of the Cuban Communist Party. The guerillas had used peasants to help them fight in the mountains rather than the traditional mass struggle of the urban proletariat. Mikoyan argued that Marxism was “a way not a dogma,” and that Castro had succeeded only in proving the *Cuban* Communist Party wrong. Nevertheless, this difference in opinion from the established global left provides a striking parallel with the People’s Party. Just like Peffer’s true Populists, the Cuban revolutionaries provided an agrarian alternative to the established left that focused more primarily on the people, than on top down leftist schemes.¹¹³

Though in later years Castro fell in closer to the party line, an even more radical *barbudo* was operating in the highest levels of the Cuban revolution. Castro’s close friend Ernesto Guevara, known as “Che,” had served as a doctor and later *comandante* in their guerilla operations in the Sierra Maestra. An Argentine expatriate, and committed Marxist long before Castro, Che would quickly become a larger than life symbol. Che’s motorcycle and hitchhiking expeditions through South America had convinced him that Latin America’s problems stemmed

¹¹³ Anderson, *Che*, 463.

from North American economic exploitation. Throughout his travels, he saw dismal displays of poverty, most often at the hands of large American plantations or mining companies.

Che was a committed Pan-American and believed that Cuba was only the beginning of a hemisphere wide revolution against American imperialism. In 1960 Che called on the peasants of the world “to make agrarian revolutions, to fight in the fields, in the mountains, and from there to the cities.” Che’s commitment to continue “until there is no peasant without land, or land left untilled,” made him a symbol of agrarian revolution the world over. In particular, a 1960 photograph, taken the day after Castro claimed that they had “over taken Marx,” gained incredible fame. The photograph, showing a defiant Che with his signature star beret, and bristling beard, can be found all over the globe.¹¹⁴ It is said to be the most recreated photograph in the world, and has endured as a bearded symbol of agrarian revolution.

After the success of the revolution, beards became wildly popular in Cuba. A young revolutionary named Reinaldo Arenas described the atmosphere in which both men and women “went wild over these hairy fellows; everybody wanted to take one of the bearded men home.”¹¹⁵ Castro even announced to these soldiers, “your beard does not belong to you, it belongs to the revolution.”¹¹⁶ However, this tradition of Cuban beardedness did not last. When Allen Ginsberg arrived in Cuba, in 1965, he was soon contacted by a group of young artists who saw themselves as the Cuban version of beatniks. These “*infermos*” (“the sick”) as they were known told Ginsberg that they were persecuted by the police. They claimed that youths could be arrested on charges of homosexuality just for wearing beards and long hair, despite the fact that this was the

¹¹⁴ Anderson, *Che*, 465.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 378, 379, 385.

¹¹⁶ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 247.

style of Castro and his revolutionaries.¹¹⁷ One youth told Ginsberg that “they’ve forgotten the revolutionary beards already.” The group claimed that they supported the revolution, but they feared arrest.¹¹⁸ This shift towards tighter control of Cuba was accompanied by a turn to the razor. By 1968, the government ordered that all university students would be subject to military discipline, including regulations against beards and long hair.¹¹⁹ Ginsberg experienced the changing atmosphere in Cuba personally in 1965, when he was deported for his remarks concerning marijuana and homosexuality. Ginsberg concluded that though they were working towards revolutionary goals in wealth redistribution, Cuba was quickly becoming a police state just like the United States.

***The Twilight Zone* and the “Worker of the Dirt”**

Ordinary Americans were certainly not ignoring the revolutionary happenings in the Caribbean. In late 1961, with tensions heating up between the United States and Cuba, an episode of the *Twilight Zone* attempted to deal with growing anxiety over the revolution. The episode, titled “The Mirror,” followed a Castro lookalike named Ramos Clemente, who had just overthrown a dictator name De Cruz. In the opening narration, Rod Serling informed the audience that “a year ago [Clemente was] a beardless, nameless, worker of the dirt, who plodded behind a mule, furrowing some one else’s land.” After Clemente achieved this “dream of the impossible,” he stood in the deposed dictator’s office with his fellow revolutionaries. Every man in Clemente’s crew wore a beard, and he even had a beret-wearing Che doppelganger under his command. His *barbudos* brought forward de Cruz, the recently disgraced dictator. De Cruz responded with a chilling speech aimed at explaining that he and Clemente were “of the same

¹¹⁷ Allen Ginsberg, *Spontaneous Mind: Selected Interviews 1958-1996*. Edited by David Cater (New York: Perennial, 2001), 238.

¹¹⁸ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 420.

¹¹⁹ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 247.

breed.” “You are me, you are de Cruz, you are Batista, you are Castro, you are Trujillo,” de Cruz assured Clemente while making overt reference to the Cuban leader.

De Cruz then spotted a mirror hanging in what was once his office. He explained that by looking in the mirror, Clemente would be able to see his assassins. Clemente soon began to see his friends in the mirror trying to kill him. When he turned around he saw placid companions, but the seeds of paranoia had been sown. Clemente killed his barbudos one by one, believing them to be his eventual assassins. After Clemente shot the last of the bearded rebels, the dying man shouted “now you will be all alone.” Staring at his reflection, the true architect of his downfall, Clemente broke the mirror and shot himself. The otherworldly narrator returned to lament this “would-be god in dungarees, strangled by an illusion.” Serling then explained for any remaining skeptics that “any resemblance to any tyrants living or dead is hardly coincidental, whether it be here or in...*the Twilight Zone*,” dispelling any question as to the comparison to Fidel Castro.¹²⁰

The *Twilight Zone* is a particularly good source for the fears and anxieties of the American public. The creator and narrator, Rod Serling turned to science fiction when he found that other genres had little patience for serious social commentary. “Things which couldn’t be said by a Republican or a Democrat could be said by a Martian,” explained Serling.¹²¹ “The Mirror” clearly represents American fears over the Cuban revolution. As Castro was turning toward an alliance with the Soviet Union, once enthusiastic Americans began to fear the Caribbean Island.

The following year, American spy plans revealed that Soviet missiles were being shipped

¹²⁰ Rod Sterling, writer, “The Mirror,” in *The Twilight Zone*, dir. Don Medford, CBS, October 20, 1961.

¹²¹ LeRoy Ashby, *With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture since 1830* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 327.

to Cuba. In response, American president John F. Kennedy ordered a naval blockade to prevent more shipments. The Cuban missile crisis, as it became known, ended with an agreement between Kennedy and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev. Kennedy agreed to remove US Jupiter missiles that were within striking range of the USSR, and Khrushchev agreed to dismantle the bases in construction on Cuba. Furious with Khrushchev's decision to make a deal behind his back, Castro smashed a mirror in his office, a scene ripped straight from the screens of *The Twilight Zone*.¹²²

¹²² Anderson, *Che*, 544.

CHAPTER 5: HIPPIES AND HAIR

On May 27, 1966, *Life Magazine* ran a story titled “The Guru Comes to Kansas,” that covered Ginsberg’s trip to the University of Kansas. Like *Puck* and *Judge* in the nineteenth century, *Life* and *Time* shaped the way Americans visualized key figures and events in the twentieth century. This issue of *Life* included full page glossy photos of the “wild-haired wild man of the beat poets.” Ginsberg was followed by large groups of students which were more interested in the “larger spectacle” of the man rather than his latest poems. The “still shaggy” Ginsberg was indeed a spectacle in the shaved world of the one-time Populist stronghold. This “enthusiastic violator of world behavior norms,” bathed the students of Kansas University in “the equivocal light of his great shaggy smile,” as he advocated liberation.¹²³ Ginsberg’s image as a “guru” was dramatically enhanced by his beard and hair, which gave him a resemblance to Indian gurus. His Tibetan teacher Chögyam Trungpa even gave him the Buddhist name “Lion of the Dharma,” a moniker that was most likely influenced by his hairy mane. Ginsberg’s world travel, interest in eastern spirituality, countercultural credentials, and theory of “global consciousness” could come together to create the image of a global guru. In fact, he had been working on a theory that language is magic. This theory allowed him to combine his spoken word poetry, Hindu chanting, and Buddhist mantras into a single theoretical framework. This, together with the apocalyptic tone of his poems, allowed Ginsberg to take a position as the prophet of the hippie movement and the 1960s in general. With his biblical beard and long thinning hair, he looked the part of the aging prophet.

In many ways, Ginsberg was taking on the role of his hero, Walt Whitman. But the US in the twentieth century, needed a much different prophet than the nineteenth century. Whitman

¹²³“The Guru Comes to Kansas,” *Life Magazine*, May 27, 1966.

had sung the praises of the American experiment, seeing the country as a place where the aristocracy of the old world could be expelled. He wrote of the electric energy that compelled Americans to build what they believed to be a new civilization. However, Whitman had suspected that America would eventually fade, due to its lack of spirituality and generosity. Spirituality was important to Whitman, who claimed in his poems to embody the essence of religion the world over. In “Song of Myself,” one of Whitman’s most celebrated poems, he wrote “I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over, my faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths.” He continues with a shockingly complete inventory of world religions and priestly figures.¹²⁴

Whitman’s commitment to a universalist spirituality takes on a near populist view of religion. This universalist approach made perfect sense to Ginsberg and his idea of “Global Consciousness.” The Beat generation, as well as the transcendentalists, had been inspired by Eastern philosophy. Ginsberg himself came to his global view as the result of a trip to India that exposed him both to extreme rural poverty and different forms of religion. What emerged was a primal guru that challenged the US to cast off plastic materialism and return to its simple agrarian roots.

In 1965, after his trip to Cuba, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, Ginsberg began work on the project that would eventually be called *The Fall of America*. The project was intended to update Whitman’s prophecy. Indeed when the work was published, one critic wrote that it “confirm[ed] Ginsberg’s status as the successor to Whitman.”¹²⁵ The subject material for the poems would come from a cross country poetry reading tour. Ginsberg had recently

¹²⁴ Whitman, *Leaves*, 63.

¹²⁵ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 572.

purchased a tape recorder with money donated by folk musician Bob Dylan. He used the device to inject words and song lyrics that he heard on his trip into spontaneous spoken work poetry.

One of the early successes compiled in this manner was a poem titled “Wichita Vortex Sutra” that catalogued Ginsberg’s trip to Kansas and Nebraska. The poem, whose title indicates a heavy influence of Buddhism, was intended to address the spiritual desert of America’s center. The poem served as a vehicle for Ginsberg’s antiwar views, and his theory of language as magic. To demonstrate his theory, Ginsberg himself declared an end to the war in Vietnam. The Vietnam War itself pitied primitive rice farmers directed by the bearded Ho Chi Minh against the world’s most technologically advanced military. It is not surprising that Ginsberg, with his primitivist views, would not support the conflict. Ginsberg’s declaration did not stop the bloodshed, but the War in Vietnam would come to be one of the largest causes taken up by the growing counterculture.

Ginsberg saw Kansas as a place that accepted edicts out of Washington without question, a state that claimed to be religious but supported unholy slaughter of thousands. “Wichita Vortex Sutra” depicted a drastically different Kansas from the state headed by Peffer and the People’s Party. However, the Silverites of the 1890s received mention in the poem. He wrote, “William Jennings Bryan sang *Thou shalt not crucify mankind on a cross of Gold!*,” though Ginsberg was skeptical that any progress has been made, and continued with “Gold’s department store hulks o’er 10th street now.”¹²⁶ Kansas and Nebraska, in Ginsberg’s mind, had become a vortex of apathy and unquestioning obedience. Wild-eyed John Brown radicalism had been in disfavor since the days of John Stuart Curry’s mural. However, Ginsberg did encounter a number of fans when he arrived in the sunflower state. The 1966 Wichita State University

¹²⁶ Ginsberg, *Collected*, 867.

yearbook, *Parnassus*, claimed Ginsberg “caused mixed emotions on campus” when he read “Wichita Vortex Sutra” to “over 300.” Tellingly, the picture is one of only two instances of facial hair in the entire volume. None of the student pictures contain any facial hair, and the only other beard is found within the book is a picture of the university literary club *Mikrokosmos*.¹²⁷ However, the youth who followed Ginsberg through Wichita and Lawrence were only the first in a larger trend. Ginsberg eventually returned to San Francisco, where the counterculture he helped launch in 1955 was quickly growing.

The Human Be-In and “A Swelling Sense of Utopianism”

By early 1967, in San Francisco counterculture was evolving from the Beat scene to the hippie movement. Bearded and long haired hippies gathered in the city’s Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in solidarity against war, racism, and middle class values. In January, Ginsberg joined with Gary Snyder and Jerry Rubin to organize a festival called The Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In. Ginsberg met Rubin in 1965, when he helped the bearded Berkeley dropout organize an antiwar protest put on by the Vietnam Day Committee (VDC). Ginsberg had helped diffuse a situation between the VDC and the fiercely anticommunist Hell’s Angels biker gang by calling for a meeting. When tensions rose at the meeting Ginsberg began chanting from Buddhist sutras, calming both sides. In fact, the Hell’s Angels were on hand to work security for the Human Be-In.¹²⁸

A prelude to the Summer of Love, the Gathering of the Tribes was a four hour long festival that drew an estimated twenty to thirty thousand people to San Francisco’s Gold Gate Park.¹²⁹ Gary Snyder blew a conch shell beginning what Ginsberg described as “a gathering of

¹²⁷ *Parnassus* (Wichita: Student Publications Wichita State, 1966), 71.

¹²⁸ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 452.

¹²⁹ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993),

younger people aware of the planetary fate that we are all sitting in the middle of, imbued [*sic*] with a new consciousness and desiring a new kind of society, involving prayer, music and spiritual life together rather than competition, acquisition, and war.” People would be free to appear as they saw fit. *Time* reported that “beards, beads, and bangles—the costume of the conforming nonconformity—are worn at San Francisco peace rally to show a rejection of ‘straight’ society.”

“A swelling sense of utopianism pervades hippie philosophy,” reported *Time*.¹³⁰ “The hirsute shoeless hippies” of San Francisco wanted to completely rethink society, and create a more natural one based on love and understanding. Theorist of the hip Timothy Miller in his study of countercultural newspapers concluded that “the hippies rejected the industrial for the agrarian, the plastic for the natural, the synthetic for the organic.”¹³¹ Journalist Tom Wolfe saw Haight-Ashbury culture moving in two directions. One direction consisted of “pastoral purity” and “hand-made Indian teapots” that would be a welcome sight to Gautama Buddha if he stepped out of 485 BC. The name “Gathering of the Tribes” reinforced this primitive imagery. The other direction, which Wolfe believed was embodied by the hip writer Ken Kesey, consisted of “every hot wire, every tube, ray, volt, decibel, beam, floodlight and combustion of American flag-flying neon DayGlo.”¹³² Adherents to this primitivist side of hippieism such as Ginsberg and Snyder tended to wear full beards, unlike the clean shaven Kesey.

This primitivist ideal led to the creation of thousands of rural hippie communes. Theorist Timothy Miller saw this as “a replay of the agrarian ideal—not to mention a communal vision—

208-209.

¹³⁰ “The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture,” *Time*, July 7, 1967.

¹³¹ Timothy S Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 4.

¹³² Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, 361.

which was well established in the nineteenth century.” Much like nineteenth century Populists, this branch of the hippie movement saw utopia in the small farm. In order to demonstrate this nineteenth century communal vision, they grew Peffer-like beards. Like primitive gatherings throughout history, the Human Be-In had a festive tone, accompanied by dancing and music. San Francisco area psychedelic rock bands that were popular with the Haight-Ashbury crowd Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead, and Country Joe and the Fish played a free concert.¹³³

***Bring It All Back Home* and Country Joe**

This electric rock may seem to fly in the face of the new and more natural society that hippies longed to create. However, the 1960s also witnessed an explosion of social commentary in the form of music. One of the early leaders in this field went by the name of Bob Dylan. Dylan was inspired by the beatniks of the 1950s, and was a life long friend to Ginsberg. Folk music, Dylan’s chosen genre, was a mixture of rural American influences that often carried with it a political. Untrained musicians on acoustic instruments gave folk a populist quality, and it’s support for the downtrodden gave it a definite political bent.¹³⁴ In fact, the US Communist Party and Eugene V. Debs’s Industrial Workers of the World routinely employed folk music to spread their message.¹³⁵

Dylan certainly followed the socially conscious folk tradition. His 1964 album *The Times They Are a-Changin,*’ was filled with political rhetoric in poetic form. The title track would become the anthem of a generation. His impassioned plea for “Senators” and “Congressmen” to “please heed the call” captures the pervasive feeling that America’s political institutions had

¹³³ Ed Ward, Geoffrey Stokes, and Ken Tucker *Rock of Ages: the Rolling Stone History of Rock and Roll* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1987) 373.

¹³⁴ Ashby, *With Amusement*, 355.

¹³⁵ R. Serge Denisoff, and Richard A. Peterson. *The Sounds of Social Change: Studies in Popular Culture* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972).

became detached from the American public. Indeed, Dylan foretold the turmoil that lay ahead. Singing “the battle outside raging will soon shake your windows and rattle your walls” Dylan stood in agreement with Ginsberg’s Whitmanesque commitment to unscrew the doors from their jambs.¹³⁶ *Life Magazine* claimed that Dylan “established beyond a doubt that poetic imagery belonged in pop music,” and went to ask “Is Bob Dylan the Walt Whitman of the Jukebox?”¹³⁷

Dylan was a leading force in a revival in folk music that encouraged large folk festivals that were suffused with agrarian imagery. His lyrics had a prophetic voice, not unlike Ginsberg’s “Howl.” In fact, the two worked together for years, and would be some of the largest characters in the nascent hippie movement. Ginsberg appeared on the back of Dylan’s 1965 album, *Bringing It All Back Home*, an album that attempted to recapture his rural feel after his decision to move to electric instruments.¹³⁸ Dylan, unlike Ginsberg, usually appeared with a clean shaven face. He had backed away from Ginsberg’s attempts to involve himself more heavily in the causes of the growing hippie movement, particularly antiwar protests. However, as violent clashes between counterculture and the authorities continued to heat up, Dylan could holdout no longer. A 1968 letter from Ginsberg to Snyder claimed “Dylan emerged this weekend with a little beard,” and on the cover of his 1970 album *A New Morning*, Dylan appears defiantly bearded.¹³⁹

As the 1960s progressed, and Beat culture gave way to hippie culture and music rather than poetry and theater came to dominate the countercultural art scene. Eventually, hairy psychedelic rock bands from the Bay Area such as The Grateful Dead, Big Brother and the

¹³⁶ Bob Dylan, *The Times They Are a-Changin,* Columbia Records, 1965.

¹³⁷ “Wiggly Words that Feed Your Mind,” *Life Magazine*, June 28, 1968.

¹³⁸ Bob Dylan, *Bringing It All Back Home*, Columbia Records, 1965.

¹³⁹ Ginsberg, *Selected Letters*, 101; Bob Dylan, *A New Morning*, Columbia Records, 1965; Ward, *Rock of Ages*, 255-261; Ashby, *With Amusement*, 377.

Holding Company, Jefferson Airplane, and Country Joe and the Fish gained natural recognition. Many of these bands got their start in the Dylanesque politically engaged folk music of the mid-sixties. It may seem odd at the highly electric sounds of psychedelic rock emerged from primitive, rural folk music. However, before their turn to psychedelia with their 1967 album, *Electric Music for the Mind and Body*, Country Joe and the Fish played as a politically engaged jug band for the Students for a Democratic Society.¹⁴⁰ With their roots in the Depression Era West, jug bands were a type of folk band known for their primitive instruments such as jugs, kazoos and washboards. Even after their turn to highly electric music, the band still demonstrated their rural origins by posing for *Life* in 1968 with a live cow and two sheep.¹⁴¹ The band that coined the term “psychedelic rock,” The 13th Floor Elevators even featured an electric jug player. The pulsing sound of the electric jug is what made the Elevators sound so ‘psychedelic.’ Nor did their psychedelic sound necessarily remove their agrarian feel, as songs such as “Barnyard Blues” illustrate.¹⁴²

Ginsberg even sought to understand psychedelic rock in a primitivist framework. In a 1967 interview for a student publication in St. Louis, Ginsberg explained that modern rock music had its genesis in negro spirituals. He had witnessed traditional African ceremonies on his trip to Cuba that reminded him of the “caves of Liverpool where electric rock groups were dancing.” Just as Afro-Cuban dancers channeled Yoruba gods, so to did “kids flip out and go into trance states for George or John Lennon.” He claimed that this “emerged as the sacramental assembly of worship because rock’s the one thing that flower children do take seriously.”¹⁴³ Thus,

¹⁴⁰ Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (New York: Bantam, 1968), 226; Country Joe and the Fish, *Electric Music for the Mind and Body*, Sierra Sound Laboratories, 1967.

¹⁴¹ “Wiggly Words that Feed Your Mind,” *Life*.

¹⁴² The 13th Floor Elevators, *Bull in the Woods*, International Artist, 1969.

¹⁴³ Ginsberg, *Spontaneous Mind*, 69.

Ginsberg reaffirmed his role as the modern global guru, while reconciling this seemingly electronic intrusion into the “pastoral purity” of the hippie movement.

The Filmore and *The Beard*

The mustachioed Country Joe and even comedian Lenny Bruce preformed at San Francisco’s countercultural “cave,” The Filmore. The club’s promoter Billy Graham staged elaborate light and rock shows that would come to define San Francisco hippie culture of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood.¹⁴⁴ Since the Six Gallery Reading, San Francisco counterculture has been a performative movement. As the beatniks made the transition to become hippies, they cultivated a “spectacle” akin to Ginsberg’s position as a guru. Early hippie groups like the Merry Pranksters and the Diggers had their roots in avant-garde film and guerrilla theater respectively. Indeed hippies like Ginsberg embraced the spectacle, and purposefully cultivated unconventional appearances. One of the most striking example of avant-garde theater in the San Francisco was a play called *The Beard* by Michael McClure. McClure was one of the readers at the Six Gallery that debuted Ginsberg’s “Howl.” His 1965 play told of a love story between Billy the Kid and Jean Harlow, who both wore “small beards of torn white tissue paper.”¹⁴⁵ Though neither Billy nor Harlow refer to the paper beards, they certainly added to the eeriness of the setting which is repeatedly described as “eternity,” and foreshadowed a growing trend towards facial hair.

Filmore promoter Billy Graham also managed Jefferson Airplane, a band that played at the Gathering of the Tribes and was extremely popular with the Haight-Ashbury crowd. The new style of rock cultivated by the Airplane was as much a visual spectacle as was an audio

¹⁴⁴ Kulansky, 1968, 180-181.

¹⁴⁵ McClure, Michael. *The Beard and Vktms*. New York: Grove Press, 1985.

performance.¹⁴⁶ In a direct reference to Jefferson Airplane's lead singer Grace Slick, *Life* editor George P. Hunt explained that this new rock was easier to cover in a visual format than older genres because they were "as much fun to look at as to listen to." The 1968 *Life* cover story featured a guru-esque Slick meditating on top of a glass pyramid explained that "rock is subversive, not because it seems to authorize sex, dope, and cheap thrills but because it encourages its audience to make their own judgements about societal taboos."¹⁴⁷

The Airplane's 1967 song "3/5 Mile in Ten Seconds" captures the essence of the evolving counterculture movement. "Do away with people laughin' at my hair / Do away with people frownin' on my precious cares / Take me to a circus tent where I can easily pay my rent and all the other freaks will share my cares." The song even turned in a primitivist direction when the pulsing "do away with people" changed to "do away with things / That come on obscene / Like hot rods, pre-cleaned real fine nicotine."¹⁴⁸ Journalist Tom Wolfe explained the importance of the word 'freak' to the hippie movement by highlighting The Gathering of the Tribes. Wolfe claimed that "*freak* referred to styles and obsessions as in 'Stewart Brand is an Indian freak.'" 'Freak' was not a "negative word," but rather a celebration of nonconformist habits.

Slick claimed that her nonconformist views shocked her conservative parents when she was a child. In her autobiography, *Somebody to Love?*, she recalled an impression she did of Thomas Dewey involving a false mustache. Slick compared the display to a comedy routine by Lenny Bruce, who she described as her "soulmate" because "he *said* things that most people only

¹⁴⁶ Ward, *Rock of Ages*, 330-4.

¹⁴⁷ "Wiggly Words that Feed Your Mind," *Life*.

¹⁴⁸ Jefferson Airplane, *Surrealistic Pillow*, RCA Victor's Music Center, 1967.

thought.”¹⁴⁹ The tendency of Jefferson Airplane songs to address subjects that others found unspeakable was well known. The Airplane also performed a song called “Triad” by mustachioed David Crosby of The Byrds about a threesome, that his band found too controversial.¹⁵⁰ This inspired Crosby to leave The Byrds, and create the supergroup Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young (CSNY). Their first album *Déjà Vu*, paid homage to the fourth bearded age when it featured an album cover that made use of nineteenth century photography techniques and Civil War era costumes. The album included “Almost Cut My Hair,” a song written and performed by David Crosby in which he defiantly declared he would let his “freak flag fly” in reference to his flowing hair.¹⁵¹

Music had demonstrated its ability to shape hairstyles in the mid-sixties when a proliferation of the iconic ‘mop top’ haircuts worn by the British rock band The Beatles. A 1966 *Time* article showed a newly bearded Ringo Starr. *Time* wrote that The Beatles drummer hated shaving and preferred his “unweeded garden.” It went on to make much of his upcoming trip to “Tobago, the storied Caribbean island home of shaggy Robinson Crusoe.”¹⁵² However, all four Beatles appeared on the cover of their 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* with only mustaches. Behind the band stood a sea of faces including Bob Dylan, William Burroughs (a Beat writer), and Lenny Bruce, the comedian that Ginsberg attempted to save from obscenity charges by mailing his beard.¹⁵³ The band did not grow their famous beards until their 1968 trip to India. Much like Ginsberg, The Beatles found in India more spiritual and less industrialized

¹⁴⁹ Grace Slick, and Andrea Cagan. *Somebody to Love? a Rock-And-Roll Memoir* (New York: Warner Books, 1998) 20, 66.

¹⁵⁰ Jefferson Airplane, *The Crown of Creation*, RCA Victor’s Music Center, 1968.

¹⁵¹ Ward, *Rock of Ages*, 421; Ashby, *With Amusement*, 378; Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, *Déjà Vu*, Wally Heider’s Studio, 1970.

¹⁵² “Itching from the Beard,” *Time Magazine*, January 21, 1966.

¹⁵³ Ashby, *With Amusement*, 377.

way of life. To demonstrate their revelation and rejection of modern western society, they cultivated radical displays on their faces.

The power of psychedelic rock on the radical youth of America was not lost on spectators. Richard Nixon's Vice President Spiro Agnew specifically blamed the Beatles and Jefferson Airplane for promoting drug use in their songs.¹⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the seemingly traditional cultural format of the Broadway musical endorsed the movement when it produced *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical* in 1968. The musical made overt the connections between psychedelic rock, primitive 'tribal' qualities, and hair by making it the subject of the entire production. *Hair* included songs that addressed racism, sexism, drug use, the CIA, environmentalism, sexual freedom, be-ins, and eastern religions. While the focus of the musical may seem to be head hair, a number of lines emphasize the importance of hair all over the body. The musical even includes a birthday song for America's first bearded president Abraham Lincoln, "emanci-mother-fuckin-pator of the slaves."¹⁵⁵ Other songs reference Jesus Christ, a bearded figure idolized by hippies. Hippies respected Jesus's rustic origins and care for the poor, although they often distained the churches that claimed to expound his views.¹⁵⁶

The Democratic National Convention and "the Festival of Life"

While rock music, and even Broadway, may seem to have supported the growing radical youth movement, hippies still remained a small minority of the American population. However, the youth movement was growing increasingly vocal, and the one thing that all radicals could agree on was opposition to America's involvement in Vietnam. Rock concerts were filled with antiwar rhetoric, and student movement in countries such as Mexico, France, Italy,

¹⁵⁴ Kurlansky, *1968*, 230.

¹⁵⁵ *Hair: An American Tribal Love Rock Musical*, RCA Victor, 1968.

¹⁵⁶ Miller, *The Hippies*, 17-19.

Czechoslovakia, and Japan opposed the deadly conflict in Southeast Asia. To effect change, peace advocated would have to stage large demonstrations.

If 1967 had been a year of good feelings and San Francisco's Summer of Love, then 1968 took a far darker turn. When Ginsberg attempted a trip to Mexico, he was told he could not enter the country unless he shaved his beard. Even though the Mexican president Gustavo Díaz Ordaz had said only months earlier that, "everyone is free to let his beard, hair, or sideburns grow if he wants to, to dress well or badly as he sees fit," Ginsberg was turned away.¹⁵⁷ In a 1969 *Playboy* interview, Ginsberg claimed that if anyone asked him why he refused to shave he would say, "My beard just grows. I didn't plant it. I don't get up every morning and try to murder my hair and obliterate my human image. It's just Adam's hair."¹⁵⁸ Evidently, tensions were on the rise between the established power structures and a primitivist counterculture, and Ginsberg's beard clearly marked him as a member of the latter.

In a 1968 letter to Gary Snyder, Ginsberg worried about "more incidents of crackdown injustices," claiming "it's like a game that's gotten more nightmarish." His solution was a "withdrawal to Neolithic countries to die while the tide passes over cities." Snyder replied with a letter that was dated with the year 40068 in order to bring it in line with the "Tribal Reckoning" of ancient cave art, and agreed that "the 'Neolithic countryside' may be precisely the survival power we need to sit out a fascist takeover, or major economic depression, or total decay of the cities into violence." In a 1968 interview, Snyder explained that he wanted to move to the country because, "I want to get out there and agitate them trees and grasses into revolting against

¹⁵⁷ Kurlansky, *1968*, 334.

¹⁵⁸ Ginsberg, *Spontaneous Mind*, 168.

the exploiting class.”¹⁵⁹ Though Snyder was staying in Japan, Ginsberg would be on hand to witness the apocalyptic battle between a revolutionary counterculture and the exploiting class.

On January 19, 1968, *Life* ran an article titled “Some Bristly Thoughts on Victory Through Hair Power.” The article explained that “suddenly everyone and his brother is wearing a beard.” Nor did *Life* shy away from explaining the reason for this phenomenon. Beards “are messengers of a revolution that is long overdue,” claimed *Life*. “Today, hair power is second only to black power as a driving force of American life.” Evidently, beards were seen as a revolt against the establishment similar in power to black nationalism. Nor was black power unacquainted with the power of hairstyles. Malcolm X and other black Muslims grew beards as they challenged white cultural norms, and Rastafari in Jamaica grew beards and dreadlocks to demonstrate their religiosity and rejection of white imperialist society. Black Panthers across the country grew afros, mustaches and beards as symbol of their defiance. Furthermore, counterculture and black power were not completely incompatible as bearded Beat poet turned Black Panther Amiri Baraka clearly demonstrates. “We have chosen to express our rebellion against all this through our follicles,” expounded the article.¹⁶⁰ Thus, beards carried with them a powerful social meaning that the author of this article believed could help achieve victory over reactionary elements.

That said, shoulder length head hair, rather than beards came to be the most common symbol of the hippie and countercultural movements. Long hair was not exclusively primitivist or agrarian connection as was beardedness and so could appear in a range of forms from music to activism. Even though “everyone and his brother” was apparently sprouting a beard, the US

¹⁵⁹ Gary Snyder, *Gary Snyder The Real Work: Interviews & Talks 1964-1979*. Edited by Wm Scott McLean (New York: New Directions, 1980), 14.

¹⁶⁰ “Some Bristly Thoughts on Victory Through Hair Power,” *Life*, January 19, 1968.

Senate of 1968 included one black man, one woman, a handful of mustaches, but no beards. The US government had grown apart from the American people.

However, 1968 was a presidential election year, and hairy hippies got another chance to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the establishment. With growing dissatisfaction over his policy in Vietnam, President Lyndon Johnson chose not to seek reelection. Johnson's decision left the Democratic ticket wide open. A young, clean shaven senator from New York, Robert Kennedy became an early favorite with the nation's youth, and even met with the members of Jefferson Airplane. Ginsberg also "spent ¾ hour with Robert Kennedy discussing pot, ecology, acid, cities, etc."¹⁶¹ Kennedy was not a hippie or a radical, but even he was attacked for the length of his hair.¹⁶² However, on June 5, Kennedy was assassinated, ensuring that the Democratic National Convention was certain to be explosive.

To prepare for the convention, Mayor Richard Daley put Chicago under martial law in all but name. A force of 11,900 Chicago police officers, 7,500 members of the Illinois National Guard, 1000 FBI and secret service agents issued from Washington, and Cook County's riot squad prepared for a twelve hour shift with battle plans and command posts. The convention hall was surrounded by a square mile of barbed-wire-topped fence. In case this formidable force proved insufficient, US army troops across the country were prepared for emergency airlifts to Chicago.¹⁶³ A *Newsweek* cover story called Chicago "a city transformed by fear and force into an oppressive garrison state."¹⁶⁴ Daley had used the latest military technologies to set the stage

¹⁶¹ Ginsberg, *Selected Letters*, 103.

¹⁶² Kurlansky, *1968*, 184-185.

¹⁶³ Lawrence S. Wittner, *Cold War America: From Hiroshima to Watergate* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 294.

¹⁶⁴ "Battle of Chicago," *Newsweek*, September 9, 1968, 24.

for a battle of epic proportions.¹⁶⁵

The drivers of Daley's paranoia were a group of peace activists known as the Youth International Party or Yippies, who were planning a Festival of Life in protest of the Democratic National Convention. This "far-out fringe" party was organized by the sometimes bearded Abbie Hoffman and the bearded Jerry Rubin, who asked Ginsberg for help organizing the protest. Hoffman had proven himself a master of cultivating a nonconformist image by staging bizarre, semi-satirical displays. One such event involved marching on the Pentagon in 1967, with the stated intent of making the building levitate. Hoffman and Rubin claimed that the idea for the Yippies was spontaneously suggested under the influence of marijuana. However, the movement was actually the result of careful and methodical planning. This shows the importance of countercultural symbols such as hair and marijuana to the Yippie political strategy. Indeed, these antics led *Time* to label the Yippies "minions of the absurd."¹⁶⁶ The spectacle of the Yippies was put on display at the Festival of Life. They planned events such as a performance by Country Joe and the Fish, "pin the rubber on the pope, and other normal, healthy games," as well as the nomination of pig named "Mr. Pigasus" for president.¹⁶⁷ Through this degree of absurdism, these "shaggy, painted capering creatures," hoped to show how unreasonable the established democrats had been. Hoffman explicitly stated the primitivist intent of the party when he stated in a 1968 *Time* interview, "I feel guns alone will never change the System. You don't use a gun on an IBM computer. You pull the plug out."¹⁶⁸ Wearing

¹⁶⁵ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 319-340.

¹⁶⁶ "Stalag '68," *Time*, August 23, 1968.

¹⁶⁷ *1968*, 99, 275.

¹⁶⁸ "Soul on Acid," *Time*, December 20, 1968.

beads, throwing flowers, and “gravely waggling their beards” thus become incredibly potent political displays for the Yippies.¹⁶⁹

Daley refused to issue permits for the Festival of Life, instead ordering a strict 11pm curfew for Lincoln Park, the planned location of the festival.¹⁷⁰ At 10:30 on August 25, police swept through Lincoln Park beating youths, a half an hour before the curfew. A frightened Ginsberg sat in the lotus position and began chanting mantras in an attempt to calm the frightened protesters. The “chief guru to the Yippies”¹⁷¹ continued chanting for *seven hours*, providing a sense of calm in an environment of brutal crackdown. Ginsberg’s technique may seem futile, but within a framework of the magic of human language, his actions fulfilled his role as a globally conscious guru. Similar scenes were repeated the following evening, with “helmeted cops flailing teen-agers into the bloody pavement.” “More than 700 civilians and 83 police were injured, 635 persons, ranging from raggedy revolutionaries waving Viet Cong flags to bookish McCarthy sophomores, were jailed” reported *Newsweek*. The police shouted “Kill ‘em! Kill ‘em!” during their “sustained rampage” even though “the majority of the demonstrators were the thoroughly pacific hippies.”¹⁷² By the night of August 27, the protesters had moved to Grant Park. This brought the conflict close enough to the Hilton Hotel that many of the delegates of the conventions could smell the teargas from their hotel rooms. The protesters began shouting “If you are with us, if you a sympathetic to us, blink your lights.” The crowd erupted in cheers when lights began to flicker in the hotel.

The following night the confrontation came to a head as the police blocked off all the exists to Grant Park and began filling it with teargas. The police line eventually broke, allowing

¹⁶⁹ “The Loony Humor of the Yippies,” *Life*, October 25, 1968.

¹⁷⁰ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 452.

¹⁷¹ “Stalag ’68.”

¹⁷² “Battle of Chicago,” *Newsweek*, September 9, 1968.

the protesters to escape. However, the police were in pursuit. In what was eventually known as a police riot, riot cops beat anyone in sight including bearded Yippies, photographers, elderly people, tourists, and bystanders. As the police brutalized their victims, bloodied protesters chanted “The whole world’s watching!”¹⁷³ Evidently, the established power structures had little patience for the radical Youth International Party. Indeed, Ginsberg’s prediction that America would fall seemed to be coming true. A country that prided itself on freedom of speech and assembly was beating down peace advocates in the streets. Thanks to television cameras, the bloody spectacle was broadcast throughout the world.

After the events in Chicago surrounding the convention, the federal government charged eight individuals including Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin with crossing state lines in order to start a riot. The Chicago Eight as they became known represented various protest groups. Bobby Seale, Chairman of the Black Panther Party, was chained and gagged by the court for insisting to represent himself. The gagging of the mustachioed Seale was filled with symbolism, the judge was not willing to even consider allowing a hairy black radical to defend himself. Nor was the judge favorable towards the bearded prophet of the Yippies, Allen Ginsberg. The prosecution and the judge refused to consider Ginsberg’s chanting as a technique for preventing violence, and were quick to show their disgust with his poetry and homosexuality.¹⁷⁴ Although charges would eventually be repealed, the Chicago Conspiracy Trial did not bode well for any further mass demonstrations by radical youths.

Ginsberg was sorely disappointed by all of the violence and destruction he had witnessed in Chicago in 1968. He refrained from involving himself heavily in further protests for fear that they might too be consumed by violence. Instead he committed his time to the agrarian ideal by

¹⁷³Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 503-515.

¹⁷⁴Ginsberg, *Spontaneous Mind*, 335.

working his 70 acre organic farm in upstate New York.¹⁷⁵

Meanwhile, in 1969, 400,000 hippies also headed to a New York farm for what *Newsweek* called “the largest, freakiest and most apocalyptic be-in in the history of rock and the psychedelic movement.” What came to be known as the Woodstock Festival, “was not just a concert but a tribal gathering.” The massive gathering of hippies practiced “communal living away from the cities” for three days on the land of Max Yasgur.¹⁷⁶ When Yasgur addressed the crowd, his first words were “I’m a farmer,” setting cheers throughout the crowd and forcing him to wait to conclude his speech.¹⁷⁷ This agrarianism was also paralleled in the music itself. A new direction known as roots rock emerged at Woodstock. Roots rock attempted to bring rock in line with its rural origins, and in so doing used rural agrarian imagery. Jefferson Airplane, CSNY, and a number of folk singers played new roots-oriented songs for the crowd. Bob “The Bear” Hite, the lead singer of roots rock band Canned Heat, appeared on stage with an immense beard.¹⁷⁸

The following year, Senator Philip Hart of Michigan, grew a beard making him the first US senator since 1939, and the only senator in the second half of the twentieth century, to wear a beard. Hart was no hippie, but was challenged by his son to grow a beard a symbol to show his opposition to the war in Vietnam. Hart was known as “the conscience of the Senate” for supporting civil rights, and even established good environmental credentials with the creation of the country’s first two national lakeshores on the shores of Lake Michigan in 1966 and 1970.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Ginsberg, *Selected Letters*, 102.

¹⁷⁶ “Age of Aquarius,” *Newsweek*, August 25, 1969, 88.

¹⁷⁷ *Woodstock: Music from the Original Soundtrack and More*, Cotillion, 1970.

¹⁷⁸ Ward, *Rock of Ages*, 421; Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 243; “The Message of Histories Biggest Happening” *Time*, August 29, 1969; “The Big Woodstock Rock Trip,” *Life*, August 29, 1969.

¹⁷⁹ Michael O'Brien, *Philip Hart: the Conscience of the Senate* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995).

In 1971, to prove that he was not too attached to his beard, however, Ginsberg shaved it off. He liked that he was no longer immediately recognizable, an anonymity that he had not enjoyed for some years. Though Ginsberg eventually regrew his beard, he kept it well-trimmed. This gave him the appearance of a wise professor, rather than a countercultural icon.¹⁸⁰ The end of Ginsberg's beard coincided with a crisis of faith for the hippie movement. From the beginning, the movement was held together in part by opposition to the war in Vietnam. Although the US would not pull out entirely from the conflict until 1973 the war was winding down. Like their bearded Pefferite predecessors of the 1890s, the hippies had tied themselves too fervently to a single issue. The end of the Vietnam War, like the adoption of free silver by a major party, had left 'true' hippies with little allies. The primitivist agenda of the hippies had been forgotten, and the era of the radical beard was cut short.

¹⁸⁰ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 551.

CONCLUSION

Disgusted by the media spectacle of the movement, the countercultural group called the Diggers held a funeral for the hippie, as early as the fall of 1967. A May 1968 *Time* article reported that “love has been replaced by cynical commercialism.” “Haight-Ashbury district, once the citadel of hippiedom and symbol of flower-power love,” was taken over by a different crowd. “Methedrine addicts have replaced the work oriented Diggers and driven them out,” reported *Time*.¹⁸¹ As the sixties gave way to the seventies, hippie culture suffered the harshest of defeats: it became commodified. “Flower Power,” a term coined by Ginsberg, had become salable. In what Thomas Frank has termed the “The Conquest of Cool,” capitalists marketed myriad products that represented a safe and whitewashed form of hippieism.¹⁸² Thus, a movement that had begun as a revolution against capitalist greed and technocracy, was packaged and mass produced. Even radical symbols such as the face of Che Guevara were used to rake in millions for the capitalists that he despised. ‘The Peacock Revolution’ of the early 1970s saw the bright colors patterns that had been symbols of the hippie become common for everyday men and women.

Psychedelic rock was similarly commercialized, and the political lyrics of the 1960s gave way to the simple and repetitive lyrics of pop music. Jefferson Airplane became a pop band, and even changed their name to Jefferson Starship and finally just Starship, to represent this shift. Starship’s songs were even written by pop artist rather than the original band.¹⁸³ Cofounder of the Youth International Party, Jerry Rubin, even became a clean shaven businessman. Countercultural music, clothes, and jewelry were perfect injections for a capitalistic system that

¹⁸¹ “Wilting Flowers,” *Time*, May 10, 1968.

¹⁸² Frank, Thomas C. *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹⁸³ Slick, *Somebody*, 289.

was searching for new and exciting products. Even one of the most quintessential countercultural symbols was given a price tag when one of the psychedelic gift shops in San Francisco sold hippie wigs for \$85 and beards for \$125.¹⁸⁴ The absurdity of this aberration, however, does illustrate the potency of the beard as a primitivist symbol. No one can sell you a beard. One Yippie guide to living free in New York City illustrated this point when it claimed, “the sun is free. Hair is free. Naked bodies are free. Smiles are free.”¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, when hippie imagery became completely widespread, it lost its potency. Facial hair was no longer the radical display that it once was.

This self-expression that caused hippies to identify as ‘freaks’ has also been subject to the ‘Conquest of Cool.’ Art and fashion have been fragmented into numerous target markets that suit even the most unusual of tastes. Mass media historian LeRoy Ashby uses the framework of a freak show versus the main circus tent to argue that American popular culture has become exceedingly fragmented since the turbulent 1960s.¹⁸⁶ French philosopher Guy Debord argued in his 1967 work *The Society of the Spectacle* that authentic social relations in our image-based society have been replaced with commodity fetishism in which appearing like one owns the latest product is pursued with religious fervor. In this manner, Debord argues, truly radical options are incorporated in relatively innocuous forms.¹⁸⁷

The 1950s and 1960s countercultural beards of Ginsberg and the hippies did not usher in a fifth beard movement any more than the idealism of the 1960s ushered in the Age of Aquarius. Rather than launching a generation-long devotion to masculine facial hair or fading into near

¹⁸⁴ Szatmary, David. *A Time to Rock: a Social History of Rock 'n' Roll*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1996.

¹⁸⁵ “The Loony Humor of the Yippies,” *Life*, October 25, 1968.

¹⁸⁶ Ashby, *With Amusement*.

¹⁸⁷ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1977).

extinction, beards and facial hair from the 1970s on succumbed to commercialization as had other aspects of the counterculture. Like the 1910s, the 1970s also saw a proliferation of mustaches. These compromises between shaving and growing facial hair were similarly apolitical, and, like the mustaches of the early twentieth century, had little staying power. Facial hair again became a rarity, and when it did appear, it did not carry with it such strong associations with radicalism. Instead, the 1970s also brought with it the pursuit of individuality, which saw personal development rather than social challenge as the ultimate ideal. By the turn of the 21st century, beards had become infrequent symbols of self expression rather than challenges to the status quo. With every possible taste fulfilled by a different commodity and spectacle, beardedness has become just another gimmick. The gimmick of the beard was exactly what Ginsberg was trying to avoid by shaving in 1971. For example, the same year that Ginsberg shaved his beard saw a Houston rock band known for their beards, ZZ Top, release their first album. ZZ Top used their beards as their signature gimmick and demonstrated the fading of the agrarian primitivism attached to beards. They were just a bearded version of so many other bands who came to use long hair as their gimmick, initiating a proliferation of so-called “hair bands.”

Christopher Oldstone-Moore divided beardedness in the post-modern world, post 1970, into distinct categories: beard clubs, gender bending, and religious communities. His analysis of beard clubs claims them to be a recent phenomena in a nostalgic search for male-dominated organizations of the past such as labor unions.¹⁸⁸ They were latter day versions of the Sacramento Whisker Club, the Whiskerinos providing an early and dramatic example of a beard club in the American context and suggesting that these clubs were not a strictly postmodern

¹⁸⁸ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beard*, 285.

phenomenon. Many religious communities have a tradition of beardedness that goes back for centuries. However, Oldstone-Moore points out that in other periods such as the Shave of Reason, communities of Jews and Muslims often chose to conform and shave. The presence of bearded conservative religious communities seems to stand outside of a larger trend of radicalism. Many religious conservatives do support conservative economic and cultural policy. However, like hippies, traditional religious communities have often recognized spirituality and simple living, rather than fast-paced consumerism and personal acquisition, as the ultimate goal of existence.

Oldstone-Moore also explains the prevalence of facial hair in the LGBT community. This tradition could be extended back to Allen Ginsberg (a gay rights activist in his own right) and the hippies. Hippies called for the loosening of gender roles, and given the associations of gender wrapped up in hair of all kinds, it became a useful tool. American Poet Mark Doty explained that Ginsberg “somehow skipped around our American obsession with a binary scheme of human sexuality.” Doty claimed “Howl” “invented a new cultural category—neither homo nor straight, quite, but the ‘angel-headed hipster’ the beat who transcended sexuality lifts him out of the familiar categories, knocking the binary off its high horse, setting himself loose to sing.”¹⁸⁹ As we enter into a period that recognizes the nonduality of gender, it is likely that the extreme duality of the bearded age will not be seen again. The emphasis on individual expression, in many ways brought on by counterculture of the fifties and sixties, may not allow for such dualistic conceptualization of beardedness.

To illustrate his concept of gender-bending beards, Oldstone-Moore focuses heavily on

¹⁸⁹ Mark Doty, “Human Seraphim: ‘Howl,’ Sex and Holiness,” *“Howl” Fifty Years Later*, ed. Jason Shinder (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 13, 18.

the closely trimmed beards of metrosexuals like David Beckham.¹⁹⁰ By definition, metrosexuals are urban, modern men, not primal, rural hippies in communes. The most striking reversal of earlier trends can be found in the steampunk subculture, which worships the industrialism rather than agrarianism of the fourth bearded age.

However, it is readily apparent that beardedness is once again on the rise in America. Everything from the metrosexual scruff to Pefferesque whiskers can be seen regularly across the US. Though these beards are mostly apolitical in nature, American politicians remain almost entirely beardless. They shave themselves everyday day in an unconscious effort to avoid appearing like a “Pefferist.” Former Republican speaker of the house Paul Ryan even experienced considerable backlash to his decision to grow a beard in 2015. *The National Review* called on Ryan to “grow the economy, not facial hair, cut taxes, as well as whiskers,” in a comment that clearly placed conservative economics in opposition to whiskers.¹⁹¹ Primitivism may not be the force that it was in the 1890s and 1960s in America, but populism does continue to appeal to Americans and the wider world.

No technological force in history has intensified personal spectacles and gimmicks more than internet. Massive corporations like Facebook allow every person to be a performer. These connections allow desperate people with unconventional views to connect. Unfortunately, this has given rise to right-wing populist movements. In the contemporary political context, the term populism is nearly exclusively used for conservative movements that use xenophobia and traditional religious values to gain the support of the lower classes. Indeed in 2017, the US swore in a right-wing populist president. Donald Trump used political incorrectness and

¹⁹⁰ Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards*, 261-265.

¹⁹¹ Alex Williams, “Paul Ryan’s Beard Triggers a Style Debate,” *New York Times*, December 16, 2015.

nationalism to show that he was not a staid career politician. Trump was, however, a career capitalist. All too often, right-wing populism encompasses a social policy that is sold to the masses in order to bring probusiness governments to power.

Left-wing populism, or Pefferism, rather than idolizing existing power structures, searches for a direction forward, though simple agrarian means, or at least a nostalgic promotion of them. The 1890s and 1960s stand out not only as periods of prolific beardedness, but also as periods in which hairy fringe elements recognized the nonduality of humanity and nature. Prominent leaders stood firm in their conviction that society was not being run for the people, but rather for the capitalists. Though these movements faded, often after the first limited taste of victory, the call for simplicity and cooperation, rather than wastefulness and competition, is one that remains timeless.

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