The Influence Of The Counter-Cultural Movement

History is something that defines us, it is also something that influences us.

Everything in our history has led us to this moment here, the moment that you are reading this. Whether you like it or not our own individual history defines who you are and who you want to be. In Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas by Hunter S. Thompson, the main protagonist, Raoul Duke, (aka Hunter S. Thompson) documents his journey “gonzo style” showing the effects of the counterculture movement of the 1960s.

During the 1960s and the 1970s tensions were rising due to race, sexual

preferences and social traditions, ultimately sparking the counterculture movement of the 1960s. In fear and loathing in Las Vegas, there are many references of this movement and the main character Raoul Duke could even be seen as a symbol to this movement. One example of this was when Raoul returned to the hotel room which he was sharing with Dr. Gonzo who was listening to white rabbit, “White Rabbit,” he said. “I want a rising sound.” It is very interesting that Dr.gonzo asked for this specific song because White Rabbit by Jefferson Airplane is an iconic counterculture song released in 1967, the peak of the counterculture movement and also during the summer of love. It was basically their anthem, “One pill makes you larger And one pill makes you small, And the ones that mother gives you, Don't do anything at all.” this is a quote from the song “white Rabbit” it describes the illicit drug use that was commonly seen during this time period because of the counterculture movement. Another reference this book has to the counterculture movement was when Raoul said, “San Francisco in the middle sixties was a very special time and place to be a part of. Maybe it meant something. Maybe not, in the long run... but no explanation, no mix of words or music or memories can touch that sense of knowing that you were here and alive in that corner of time and the world.” This is directly referencing the movement in the 1960's. Raoul recalls this time as special, he said that there are no words to describe that time period and just being a part of this movement and seeing it was spectacular. It shows that the author was very supportive of this new counterculture and that it seems like he was actually actively involved in this movement as well. This quote could also be referencing the “Summer of Love” in 1967 in San Francisco and how tens of thousands of people, mainly hippies, gathered together. Raoul was very dedicated and enthusiastic towards this movement. However, he knew that this movement would ultimately fail. Raoul said, “All those pathetically eager acid freaks who thought they could buy Peace and Understanding for three bucks a hit.” Here you can show Raoul's frustration, to him it seemed like he was the only one dedicated to this movement, that everyone else was just getting high thinking that the world would fix itself, but the truth is that it won’t, that there is no amount of money that would fix the world. Raoul also stated that the counterculture created, “a generation of permanent cripples” This is because people at the time only wanted to do drugs and get high. That they weren’t willing to put in the work to get the change that they wanted. So, the movement at last crumbled.

The counterculture movement of 1960 also gave birth to the drug culture, an era that

was highly influenced by the use of illicit drugs, the ones that messed you up the most. In Fear

and Loathing in Las Vegas, Raoul Duke and Dr. Gonzo bring, “two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers and also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of Budweiser, a pint of raw ether and two dozen amyls.” This quote shows you that these guys are no strangers to drugs. Throughout this book drugs are mentioned on almost every page. This shows how prominent drugs were during the mid 1900s and especially during the counterculture movement. Duke argues that the drug culture was a result of the failure of the movement and that it is a response to the American culture. Raoul says, “Every now and then when your life gets complicated and the weasels start closing in, the only real cure is to load up on heinous chemicals”. To Raoul these drugs help him escape the reality of the world and he sees it as the only cure. The lifestyle of drugs and alcohol abuse is not a good life and it is a very slippery slope, Raoul acknowledges this however, he still is constantly under the affect of hardcore drugs it seems as though he would rather be high than face the world for what it is. Raoul Duke is also a representation of the counterculture movement, and that quote shows how the people involved in this movement acted. They were always heavily influenced by the use of illegal drugs which ultimately led to the failure of the movement. Raoul believes that the drug culture won’t be fixed until the American culture is fixed because when the culture is fixed, there will be no reason to use drugs. However, this “fix” doesn’t seem like it will be coming any time soon.

Fear and loathing in Las Vegas has a lot deeper meanings and concepts than what you might think. There is a lot of hidden knowledge that an average reader would miss. The author really dives deep into the major problems of American culture, especially the failure of the counterculture of the 1960s. He also gives a glance of the birth of a drug culture in the 1970's. As hunter S. Thompson once said, “Some may never live but the crazy never die”.

Work cited

1. Boundless. “Boundless US History.” Lumen, courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-ushistory/chapter/counterculture/. This source is about the counterculture. It describes what a counterculture is and it describes how the counterculture of the 1960s happened. It talks about the ideals and interests of this movement as well as the music and culture that it brought.
2. Chepkemoi, Joyce. “What Was The Counterculture Of The 1960s and 1970s?” WorldAtlas, 30 Nov. 2016, www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-was-the-counterculture-of-the-1960s-and-70s.html This source also talks about the counterculture movement and the effects it has. It ties In fear and loathing in Las Vegas so it shows how the movement directly influenced the book. It also talks about how hunter s Thompson was an advocate for this movement and how he ultimately knew this movement would fail.
3. Gorton , Thomas. “Hunter S. Thompson's Daily Routine of Drugs and Booze.” Dazed, 6 Jan. 2016, www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/29029/1/hunter-s-thompson-s-daily-routine-of-drugs-and-booze. This article is about hunter s Thompson and the drugs he used throughout his life. The book I read is basically the same way he lives. Which is not really caring about anything and doing a whole bunch of drugs. It talks about how he gets up at 3am and drinks whisky and snorts cocaine all day, then takes acid at 10 then begins to write his stories. I don’t understand how one person could do so much drugs. One thing I am curious about would be how much in his lifetime he spent on drugs.
4. Thompson, Hunter S. Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: a Savage Journey to the Heart

of the American Dream. Langara College, 2019. This is the primary source, the book, fear and loathing. It’s about a guy named hunter s Thompson and he documents his life, more specifically his time in Las Vegas. It talks about all the drugs he does and how he documents the mint 300 which is a race he is told to write about for a magazine company.

5. Ulin, David L. “Why's This So Good? Hunter S. Thompson and ‘Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.’” Nieman Storyboard, 13 Apr. 2017, niemanstoryboard.org/stories/whys-this-so-good-hunter-s-thompson-and-fear-and-loathing-in-las-vegas/ This article specifically takes about gonzo journalism. It talks about why it was such a good hit in the time it was made. It goes into it with great detail with lots of quotes from fear and loathing. It talks a lot about the context of the book. It talks about the chaotic life that he had and how his life isn’t like everyone else’s life and that’s why it is so good.