2004

"Never could read no road map": geographic perspectives on the Grateful Dead

Daniel R. Culli

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, dculli1@lsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses

Part of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/2331

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
“NEVER COULD READ NO ROAD MAP”:
GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON
THE GRATEFUL DEAD

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

by

Daniel R. Culli
B.A., Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville
B.S., Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville
August 2004
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all of my family and friends, especially my parents and Sandra, for their support while continuing my education and writing my thesis. I must thank Dr. Kent Mathewson for agreeing to take me on and allowing me to pursue this topic, as many professors would frown upon such research. Thanks also to my other committee members, Dr. Craig Colten and Dr. Andrew Curtis, for their support and advisement. I would also like to thank Dr. Roger Leonard for employing me during much of my time at LSU while I was pursuing research in a completely unrelated topic. Dr. Paul Burger deserves thanks for his teaching, advice, support, and encouragement to attend graduate school during my years at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. I can not forget to mention all of the other Grateful Dead scholars, some of whom offered their support via email, such as Dr. Rebecca Adams, Rob Weiner, and David Dodd. A special thanks also goes to Marc Evans and especially Kevin Weil of www.deadlists.com for graciously providing the tour data in digital format.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 CONTEXT: SAN FRANCISCO AND ACID ROCK</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 THE GRATEFUL DEAD CARNIVAL</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 TOUR GEOGRAPHY</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 LYRIC GEOGRAPHY</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

2.1. Acid Rock Places 1..........................................................31

2.2. Acid Rock Places 2..........................................................32


4.2. Locations and Quantity of Grateful Dead Concerts, 1965 – 1966...........76

4.3. Locations and Quantity of Grateful Dead Concerts, 1967....................77


4.5. Locations and Sequence of Grateful Dead Concerts, Europe 1972...........84

(excluding Hawaii and Europe).....................................................85

4.7. Locations, Quantity, and Sequence of Non-California Grateful Dead Concerts, 1985.................................................................89

4.8. Average Number of Grateful Dead Concerts per Year per State,
1965 – 1995 ..................................................................................93

4.9. Number of Grateful Dead Concerts in Each City Played, 1965 – 1995........93

4.10. Number of Grateful Dead Concerts per 100,000 People in Each State
Displayed by Standard Deviations Above or Below the Mean,
1985 – 1995 .................................................................................95
ABSTRACT

The Grateful Dead hold a unique niche in the musical, social, and cultural history of the United States. However, while the volume of available academic literature concerning the band is increasing, the Grateful Dead remain to be nearly ignored by academia and, to this point apparently, completely ignored by cultural geographers. This paper introduces the Grateful Dead into the field of geography. I analyze the geography of certain aspects of the band, such as its context in San Francisco, the carnival atmosphere of the entire phenomenon, the over 2300 tour dates, as well as the huge catalog of lyrics sung by the band throughout their thirty year career. I intend this thesis to serve as an introduction to geographic research of the Grateful Dead phenomenon as well as a basis for further geographic research of it, offering some ideas for further research in the final chapter.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The band the Grateful Dead holds a unique niche in the musical, cultural, and social history of the United States. While coming from various musical traditions, including the American popular styles such as folk, bluegrass, rock ‘n’ roll, and jazz, as well as European classical and marching band training, the members of the Grateful Dead banded together to create an original acid rock sound. The Grateful Dead as band and as phenomenon evolved to a certain extent out of the beatnik movement, but especially with the hippie and counterculture movements of the 1960s which were most prevalent in San Francisco, California. As time went on, the band experienced changes in their often evolving musical style, choice of drugs, and band personnel. Yet they continued to tour extensively for much of their thirty year career, establishing a unique and extremely devoted following along the way.

Inherently tied into the musical, cultural, and social history to which the band is so connected is the field of geography, which, generally speaking, attempts to locate phenomenon in space and (usually) time. Cultural geography is one of the discipline’s long established fields. However, music has only in the past forty years become a topic of interest to cultural geographers, and the Grateful Dead have received little if any attention in the field. Because of the obvious vital connections between music and culture, and because of the band’s significance in both time and place to the social, cultural, and musical history of the United States, the Grateful Dead (both as a group and as a phenomenon) lends itself well to study in the area of geography of music.
This thesis looks at several aspects of the Grateful Dead phenomenon, to my knowledge for the first time, from a geographical perspective. First, I offer reviews of the history and literature of music geography and the academic study of the Grateful Dead, pointing out the lack of and importance of geographic work on the band. In chapter 2, I discuss the geographical concept of place, especially as it applies to acid rock as place music in San Francisco. In chapter 3, I present the idea of the carnivalesque, as elaborated by Mikhail Bakhtin, and apply it to the Grateful Dead phenomenon and its geography, emphasizing the spatial aspects of the Grateful Dead carnival. In a related fashion, I look at Grateful Dead concerts and the adherents’ (“Deadheads”) patterns of migration or quasi-pilgrimage as they follow the band’s tours from show to show, briefly touching upon religious qualities of the phenomenon. Analysis and mapping of these tour patterns yields yet another Dead geography, which I present in chapter 4. Finally, in chapter 5 I demonstrate the textual geography which can be found in the multitude of lyrics of the band’s repertoire.

**History of Music Geography**

The following section provides a brief review of the work in music geography.

George Carney (1994a, 2), the most notable music geographer in the United States, writes:

Human geography research has focused on virtually every segment of human spatial behavior ranging from industrialization to settlement patterns. It has concentrated on the material (tangible/visible) and nonmaterial (oral/spiritual) elements of human spatial behavior including the distributions and effects of value systems, languages, religions, architecture, politics, sports, and foodways. But for years, cultural geography largely ignored the spatial and environment components of one of the most significant traits in American [and, for that matter, World] folk and popular culture – music.
Lily Kong (1995a, 183-84) similarly points out the lack of interest in music and popular culture in general, claiming the existence of bias in geographical research towards elite culture. While this lack of interest in popular culture has declined over the years, there most certainly remains a partiality towards the visual. So, while relatively little work has been done in music geography, this is not to imply by any means that the connection between music and culture has not been studied in other academic areas. Perhaps the best example - the field of ethnomusicology - began to emerge in the 1880s and 1890s and is often associated with but not necessarily contained in anthropology. This was approximately the same time as both academic anthropology and geography emerged as professional disciplines. Though the field has now expanded, ethnomusicology originally focused on the music and culture of non-Western peoples (Merriam 1964).

It was not until well over half a century later, however, that music in any cultural context was considered in academic geography. Carney (1994b, 2003) provides a thorough history of music geography, especially within the United States. The first journal article concerning music geography appeared in 1968, when *The Deccan Geographer* published “Music and Music Regions” by Peter Hugh Nash. Nash attempted to regionalize the globe into three broad areas based on similarities and differences in tonal or harmonic systems, where each region contains primitive, folk, and cultivated music traditions. Larry Ford (1971) wrote the first music geography article in an American journal. “Geographic factors in the Origin, Evolution, and Diffusion of Rock and Roll Music” appeared in the *Journal of Geography*, essentially placing rock and roll music in space and time on a map. Shortly before this in 1970, the first master’s thesis
concerning music geography had been completed, in which the author studied the diffusion of rock music by means of record sales (Gordon 1970).

After this initial boost, music geography became quite popular throughout the 1970s. Carney reports that there were fifty-two appearances of music geography in professional outlets (i.e., journal articles, books, atlas maps, theses/dissertations, book chapters, professional meeting papers, human geography textbook citations, and miscellaneous works such as unpublished manuscripts and bibliographies). Besides the numerous journal articles and theses/dissertations on music geography in the 1970s, the first music geography anthology was also published, edited by George Carney (1978). In the 1980s, music geography appeared to decline significantly, as there were only thirty-six appearances in professional outlets. It is worth noting here, however, that while Carney reports there were only two journal articles, there were nineteen papers dealing with music geography presented at meetings, compared to only seven such papers in the 1970s. It is also worth noting that Carney’s report of only two journal articles is apparently a misprint and therefore incorrect (Carney 2004). In fact, six previously published journal articles from the 80s exist even in his own anthology (1994c)! In addition to the articles included in that anthology, at least two more articles were published in the 1980s. James Kracht (1989) discussed folk songs of the Great Plains dating from the nineteenth century and their use as a tool for teaching about place. In addition, Kip Lornell’s (1984) annotated bibliography concerning the geography of United States’ pop and folk music was published in Current Musicology.

Since the 1990s and through to today, music geography seems to be making a comeback. Carney (2001) provides a brief bibliography of music geography, in which
the majority of articles date from the 1990s and were published in major journals. Daryl Byklum (1994), Nash and Carney (1996), and Carney (1998) all discuss the subfield of music geography in general, as opposed to the more common method of studying specific types of music or the music of different places. Perhaps more importantly, the 1990s saw two different journals publish special issues which focused on music geography. In 1995, an issue of *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* featured five articles concerning music geography as a result of “The Place of Music” conference held in London in 1993 (Royal Geographical Society 1995). An issue of the *Journal of Cultural Geography*, with contents dedicated entirely to the geography of music, was edited, not surprisingly, by Carney, and appeared in 1998 (Carney 1998b).

The 1990s also seem to mark the first appearance of attempts to apply theory to music geography. This is exemplified in Nash and Carney’s (1996) and Carney’s (1999, 2001) overview of the seven themes of music geography and linking of music geography to the five themes of geography (i.e. location, movement, human-environment interaction, regions, and place). In addition, Warren Gill discusses the connections between region, agency, and popular music. He (1993, 122) draws on structuration theory and “reconstituted” regional geography (i.e., “neo-regional geographic research focused on specific questions and…informed by theory, rather than regional description”) to discuss the rise and fall of a style of rock known as the Northwest Sound. Robert Kuhlken (2003) also discusses this Northwest Sound well known essentially only by the classic “Louie, Louie.” Other important theoretical contributions came from Susan Smith and Lily Kong. In “Soundscape,” Smith (1994, 233, 238) discusses the problems with the “persistence of an ideology of the visual in cultural geography” and calls for a greater
examination of sound, specifically music, and its effects on landscape and place, as “sound is inseparable from social landscape; and...music is integral to the geographical imagination.” Kong (1995a), who in the late 1990s wrote several articles on the musical geography of Singapore (e.g., 1995b, 1999), presents a possible agenda for future work in music geography focusing on musical symbology, cultural communication, cultural politics, and economics, while emphasizing the importance of taking music research from other disciplines into consideration. More recently, Allen Scott (1999) has discussed the cultural economic structure and geography of the recording industry in the US.

Further demonstrating the “comeback” of music geography, several music geography anthologies have also been published after the 1980s. For instance, Carney has continued his work in the field with third (1994) and fourth (2003) editions of his previously mentioned *The Sounds of People and Places*. The first British music geography anthology appeared in 1988 (Leyshon et al. 1998). The articles contained in this anthology, some of which originated at the aforementioned “Place of Music” conference in 1993, tend to read more academically, delving more into the cultural, social, and economic aspects of music geography than the “Carney-school,” typical U.S. style music geography. Though coming from anthropology, Martin Stokes (1994) edited an anthology dealing with the musical construction of place. The various chapters, written mostly by anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, deal with the interrelations between ethnicity, identity, and place, and are therefore inherently tied to geography. Most recently, John Connell and Chris Gibson (2003), two Australian geographers, authored a work entitled *Soundtracks*. This work is more aligned with the British style of music geography research in that it presents a more theoretical approach than the
idiographic and essentially atheoretical work presented by most of the American music geography researchers. The book provides a thorough discussion of music and its relations to place, space, identity, and identity’s ties to musical authenticity. The authors also present the importance of the economics of the music industry; the move towards globalization of the industry; the “globalization” of music itself, i.e. the fusion of different styles to create “world music”; and even discuss the “terra digitalia” for the first time in music geographic research. Terra digitalia is represented by digital music, its distribution, its ties to globalization, and its growing importance as more and more data becomes digitized.

While it is obvious from above that relatively little music geography research has been done, and only a small amount of literature concerning the subject has been published, it is interesting to note that the research which has been carried out tends to focus on Western “popular” and folk types of music such as rock, country, jazz, and bluegrass. While there is much room for geographical work concerning Western “classical” music, very little seems to have been done in this area. However, one such article that does concern “classical” music is Rolf Sternberg’s discussion of Wagnerian opera and fantasy and their ties to geography (1998). In the article, Sternberg presents examples of setting in various Wagner operas as representations of pastoral and urban landscapes experienced by the composer via travel and places of residence. He also presents opera diffusion patterns based on first performance dates in different locations.

Also of interest in music geography is the apparent dichotomy – implicitly expressed in the previous paragraphs – which exists between the classic “Carney-School” American music geography and the “Leyshon-School” music geography of Britain and
other countries. As Carney (2003, 4) states himself: “Like much of cultural geography, music research can be characterized by several adjectives – empirical, descriptive, humanistic, atheoretical, nonanalytic, and subjective...[and] more idiographic than nomothetic.” This is certainly true of the majority of American music geography research. However, music geography work done by non-Americans, such as Leyshon, Kong, Connell, and Gibson, tends to require a “deeper” attention of the reader, and is also more nomothetic and based in “new” regional and cultural geography.

Closer to home, the rising popularity of music geography can also be seen here at Louisiana State University. At least three current graduate students in the geography department are researching different aspects of music geography, and more have applied in recent years. Furthermore, William Davidson, former LSU geography professor, taught a class on the geography of Jimmy Buffett’s lyrics in the 1990s.

**Scholarly Study of the Grateful Dead**

While apparently no other geographic work has been done concerning the Grateful Dead, academic work has been done in other fields such as sociology, anthropology, musicology, and law, just to name a few. The following section will briefly review academic work concerning the band and the phenomenon, and will serve as an expansion to Weiner’s (1999a) and Adam’s (2000) brief reviews.

The earliest published academic article concerning the Grateful Dead was a comparison of drug use and medical problems at Grateful Dead and Led Zeppelin concerts (Gay et al. 1972). This is perhaps not a surprising topic as the popular media, from the beginning to the end of the band’s career often focused on drug use when discussing the band. The next year, an article (Krippner et al. 1973) was published
detailing a telepathic dream study in which the band and its audience during six shows acted as telepathic senders of art prints to two sleeping subjects. The goal was for the art being shown at the concert to somehow manifest itself in the dreams of the telepathic receivers (the sleeping subjects). The dreams were transcribed after the subjects awoke, and correspondence between the art and the dreams was determined by judges on a scale of 0-100. While study of telepathy may not be exactly sound science, the results perhaps showed telepathy at work. The results of the study had only a twelve percent probability of occurring strictly by chance, and they showed correspondence between the art and the dreams. Similar to the 1970s, very little academic work concerning the Dead is available from the 1980s. Baumeister (1984) takes a new look at the acid rock era. Pearson (1987), shortly before the band’s popularity exploded in 1987 due to a top ten hit with the song “Touch of Grey,” called for more study of the Grateful Dead in the social sciences, while providing an ethnography of the subculture surrounding the phenomenon and a discussion of the construction of Deadhead realities. The Dead were the subject of at least one textbook chapter of the 1980s. Davis and Davis (1987) discuss the band’s sound system, an appropriate topic as the band and its sound engineers paid extremely close attention to the amplification and sound of the music. The sound systems developed by the Dead were always on the cutting edge of the technology of the time and were the origin of several innovations now taken for granted in sound system design.

An increase in Grateful Dead academic literature can be seen through the 1990s and especially since the death of guitarist Jerry Garcia and the resulting breakup of the band in 1995. The research comes from a variety of disciplines such as law (Kanzer 1992), statistics (Potts and Sommers 1995), business (Barnes 1999), economics (Gazel
and Schwer 1997), and folk studies (McQuail 1994, Roth 1998). Jonathon Epstein and Robert Sardiello (1990) compare the Wharf Rats, a group of recovering alcoholic Deadheads, with traditional Alcoholics Anonymous groups. Richard Tillinghast (1991) discusses Dead history and speculates on how it survives and continues to thrive. The band and its connections to LSD have been analyzed more recently by Robert Millman and Ann Beeder (1994). Nancy Reist (1997) analyzes the mythic and shamanistic qualities of the band. Melissa McCray Pattacini (2000) discusses how Deadheads have adapted to the end of the Grateful Dead. Several book chapters have also been written concerning the Dead since the death of Garcia. Boone (1997) discusses music theory issues of the Dead classic “Dark Star.” Sardiello (1994, 1998) has contributed two book chapters which focus on Deadhead identity and status within the Deadhead subculture as well as the ritualistic aspects of the subculture.

More noticeably, two important anthologies have also appeared since that time. Robert Weiner (1999b) edited the first of these anthologies, containing twenty-two articles on a wide range of topics such as law (Fraser and Black 1999), contradictions and problems in the definition of Deadhead (Pelovitz 1999), musicology (Vennum 1999, Everett 1999), personality traits of Deadheads (McCown and Dulaney 1999), Deadhead speech patterns (Dollar 1999), and even statistical studies of how a song will be played on a certain day (Toutkoushian 1999). Perhaps the most notable name in the academic study of the phenomenon, especially of Deadheads, is Rebecca Adams. At the 1998 meeting of the Southern Sociological Society, Adams (1998) gave and later published a presidential address concerning dialogue with the Deadhead community in order to further sociological thought. Along with Robert Sardiello, she then was the co-editor of
the second anthology mentioned above (Adams and Sardiello 2000). Adams became quite famous in the Grateful Dead world for offering a Deadhead sociology class which included a fieldtrip attending Grateful Dead shows on part of the band’s 1989 summer tour. The chapters in her anthology are primarily written by students in the class studying some sociological or anthropological method or theory as applied to Deadheads and the Grateful Dead phenomenon. They discuss different aspects of the music, religious qualities of the scene, the scene found outside the venue in the parking lots, as well as Deadhead identity. Also of great significance to and help in the academic study of the band is David Dodd and Robert Weiner’s (1997) annotated bibliography of Grateful Dead related material. This reference includes bibliographic entries of every known reference to the Grateful Dead in books, articles (both scholarly and non-scholarly), book chapters, papers, reviews, fan magazines and newsletters. Further contributions to the literature have come from the approximately twenty-five theses and dissertations relating to the Grateful Dead, dating back to 1986 and coming from various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and religion.

It is also worth mentioning here that the scholarly literature on the band and the phenomenon are virtually nothing compared to the vast amount of popular literature available. Thousands of writings concerning the Grateful Dead can be found throughout the pages of newspapers, magazines, and books from across the country and around the world. While references to much of this literature can be found in Dodd and Wiener’s (1997) annotated bibliography, time does not allow for a thorough review of all the sources or even a representative sampling of them, and will therefore not be covered in this section.
One must also consider what I will call the “semi-scholarly” work concerning the band. By “semi-scholarly” I mean the author is or was at some point involved in academia, though the author’s work is not written in an academic style. For instance, Dennis McNally (2002), who holds a Ph.D. in American History and serves as the band’s official publicist and historian has recently published the most extensive and detailed book on the history of the band to date. Mickey Hart (1990, 1991, 1999), one of the band’s drummers for most of its career and now on the board of trustees of the American Folk Life Center at the Library of Congress, has written three books along with Fredric Lieberman, who holds a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology. In the earlier works, *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* (1990) and *Planet Drum* (1991), Hart presents the evolution of the drum from prehistoric times, and also discusses his personal quest to discover the spiritual side of drumming, taking into account his experiences with the Grateful Dead. *Spirit into Sound* (1999), the author’s third collaboration with Lieberman, contains brief ramblings concerning Hart’s feelings on music and drumming interspersed with quotes about music by various figures from Beethoven to Stravinsky, and from Lennon to Einstein and Nietzsche. Most recently, Hart has written *Songcatchers* (2003) with the help of Karen Koystal. The book discusses the efforts of important figures, including himself, in the field recording and preservation of traditional musics, which may otherwise be lost, from around the world. Also of interest at this point is John Rocco’s *Dead Reckonings* (1999). Rocco holds a Ph.D. in English and has compiled various articles from both the popular and academic presses, as well as interviews of and tributes to Jerry Garcia which make up the book.
Grateful Dead Geography and Conclusions

As stated earlier, the Grateful Dead phenomenon lends itself quite well to geographic study. However, not surprisingly, considering the state of music geography in general, no geographic study of the phenomenon has been undertaken. While cultural geography has nearly ignored music, lack of research on the band might also be partially attributed to the problem that Pearson (1987, 418) suggests: “The Grateful Dead are a phenomenon that, by its very nature, is resistant to traditional explanation or conceptualization.” Traditional or not, the Grateful Dead phenomenon and its social, cultural, historical and therefore geographical ties should not be ignored. I intend this thesis not only to introduce the Grateful Dead into the geographic literature, but also to serve as an impetus for future research on the band and the phenomenon, both inside and outside of geography. In this chapter I have reviewed both music geography and previous academic study of the Grateful Dead, demonstrating the phenomenon as a viable and important topic of geographic research. With that, I turn now to the more pressing matter, a geographic look at the Grateful Dead.
CHAPTER 2
CONTEXT: SAN FRANCISCO AND ACID ROCK

Introduction

The 1960s are often viewed as some of the most turbulent times in the history of the United States and in various other locations. Images of war in Vietnam, civil rights demonstrations, and student protests are often conjured up when pondering or discussing the decade. These are often counterposed with more peaceful images of hippies with long hair, flowers, and headbands dancing (often in a daze) or perhaps smoking marijuana. What type of music were they dancing to? One can only imagine rock n roll’s “hallucinogenicized” cousin known as acid rock. Where were they dancing? A good answer, though certainly not the only correct one, is San Francisco. The Bay Region, and specifically cities such as San Francisco and Berkeley, have long been known as perhaps the most progressive part of this country. Much of the counterculture movement of which the hippies and therefore acid rock were a part in the 1960s had roots in San Francisco, especially in the Haight District. In his chapter I discuss the role of San Francisco as a specific place (counterculture hearth?) for acid rock, beginning with a brief overview of the concept of place within the field of geography and the subfield of music geography. I then establish acid rock as place-specific music for San Francisco by means of the social, cultural, political, and musical events taking place in the area.

Place in the Contexts of Geography and Music Geography

Dictionary definitions of the word “place” suggest several meanings: “1. physical environment : space…; 2. an indefinite region or expanse…; 3. a particular region, center of population, or location…” (“Place” 1995, 887). While all of these definitions certainly apply to place within the context of geography, geographers have expanded on this
typical definition of place, often separating it from space and region. For instance, according to Jonathan Smith (1996, 189), “Place denotes the fact that every physical body must occupy a position and in so doing preclude the occupation of the position by some other body.” However, “Place is not simply a location, but a condition” (192). People shape places and places shape people, and, in the process, people become connected, associated, and emotionally attached to places as places become connected and associated with the people of that place. In addition, while people are attached to a place, they are also aware of the attachments between other people and their places. In other words, people associate certain places other than their own with certain groups of people. For example, Hollywood is associated with movie stars and, as in this case, the Haight District of San Francisco is associated with hippies.

Places are also differentiated from each other by means of physical and cultural characteristics, which also help foster the relationship that is built between people and place. Physical characteristics of a place include anything regarding the physical environment of that place such as the weather patterns or the topography. While the idea of environmental determinism is now rejected, the physical environment certainly plays a part in shaping a place, adds to its character, and influences how the people of that place live. It is therefore also important in the process of the attachment between people and place. The cultural characteristics of a place are determined by the people who inhabitate that place and include things such as land use, settlement patterns, and types of dwellings. These characteristics help in the process of people’s connection to a place and are indicative of how the people live in that place, influencing the way in which outsiders view a place and its association with its people (Carney 2003a).
One of the most important and most often associated cultural characteristics of a place is its music (for instance, jazz and New Orleans, bluegrass and Central Appalachia, mariachi and Mexico, just to name a few). As Merriam (1964, 250) states, “it is clear that music is an integral part of culture [and therefore an integral part of the place of that culture] and, like all other aspects of it, is bound to reflect the general and underlying principles and values which animate the culture as a whole.” While music has long been established as an extremely important cultural trait, and certain music genres have long been associated with their places, it was well into the second half of the twentieth century before cultural geographers paid any attention to music at all (see chapter 1 for a review of music geography).

Much of the music geography literature has been concerned with place, such as place-specific music types, how a music genre reflects or symbolizes a place, and how a place serves as a culture hearth for a certain genre of music as it diffuses across space and over time. Carney (2003a) provides an interesting discussion of music and the hierarchy of places. The second definition of place from the dictionary listed above indicates that place is “indefinite,” meaning that places vary in scale and size. This is evident in the varying scales of places often associated with music, such as New Orleans, a city, and jazz, and Beale Street, a road, and Memphis blues. Carney (2003a) discusses a hierarchy of places starting with streets and proceeding through neighborhoods, cities, states, regions, and nations, pointing out examples of places representing each level in the hierarchy and how music is typically identified with places of that level. For instance, states, while normally too large to be associated with any one genre, often are the subject of songs, such as “Illinois, Illinois” and “Georgia On My Mind,” both of which happen to
serve as official state songs, somewhat similar in function to national anthems. Regions, which may be smaller or larger than a state, but are by no means restricted to state boundaries, often are associated with specific music genres, such as conjunto music in the Tejano homeland of South Texas; bluegrass in the central Appalachian region; or blues, along with its simultaneous development and migration up the Mississippi river, and the lower Mississippi Valley.

Individual countries also have a very important place in the hierarchy. Songs such as “The Star-Spangled Banner” and “God Save the Queen” serve as national anthems, with obvious and strong associations with the countries that they serve. Countries, similar to streets, cities, and regions discussed earlier, are also often associated with specific genres of music. For instance, rock ‘n’ roll music is often associated with the United States in general, especially when thinking about the late 1950s and early 1960s. Other prominent examples include reggae and Jamaica, mariachi and Mexico, and salsa and Puerto Rico. While salsa was actually developed outside of the island in New York City, the majority of early salsa musicians were Puerto Rican and the genre is strongly associated with the nation. Carney (2003a) brings to light another interesting aspect of music and place at the level of nation, that of nationalistic and antinationalistic music. This aspect has played a prominent role in western “classical” music with composers such as Dvorak and Shostakovich. Dvorak is well known for incorporating elements of Czech folk music in his works. Folk music elements of his homeland are even present in his ninth (and last) symphony which was actually written in the United States and is titled From the New World. Furthermore, one of the hottest debates in musicology today is whether or not Shostakovich, living in communist Russia for all but
slightly more than the first decade of his life, was writing nationalistic or antinationalistic (dissident) works throughout much of his career. Nationalism and antinationalism are also found in popular music. An obvious example of nationalistic popular music is “God Bless America.” Antinationalism can be found in much of the protest music of the 1960s recorded by artists such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. Some may even view acid rock as antinationalistic. While in general acid rock lyrics were not in protest to anything specific, the hippie counterculture movement (and therefore its music) was certainly a protest against the standard American way of life and how the country was being run. To conclude his article, Carney (2003a, 214) states: “Place-specific music is charged with real and symbolic meanings that may hold significance for both residents and nonresidents of a place [at any scale].” It is important for residents in their sense of identity and attachment to their place. It is important for nonresidents in their perception of that place and its people. This being stated, we can now turn to the specific case of acid rock and San Francisco.

**Setting the Scene: Counterculture Background**

The late 1960s and early 1970s represent one of the most turbulent time periods in the history of the United States. As San Francisco is generally viewed as one of the most progressive cities in this country, it is only expected that at least some of the turbulence would have occurred there, and it was certainly one of the centers of the counterculture movement in this country. Miller (1991, 6) defines the counterculture movement as follows: “The counterculture was a romantic social movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, mainly composed of teenagers and persons in their early twenties, who through their flamboyant lifestyle expressed their alienation from mainstream American life.” It
is often said that the counterculture really began with the appearance of the hippies who “stressed a casual ideology of human love, respect for life, and the experiential tenets of hallucinogenic drug use…[and] who began to appear on the streets of New York and San Francisco about 1965-1966” (Lund and Denisoff 1971, 398). While this may be acceptable for placing a date at the beginning of the counterculture movement in this country, Lund and Denisoff certainly have a limited definition of the hippie and his/her ideals. In addition, it is perhaps inadequate to base the date of the beginning of the counterculture based solely on the appearance of hippies. It is well known (see for instance Miller 1991) that hippies were not alone in their “countercultural” lifestyles.

Another of the groups extremely important in the general movement against the established regime was the New Left, a much more active group which “demanded direct democracy and a dilution of elite power in the United States, as well as a change in America’s role in the world” (Rossinow 2002, 99). While sharing many of the same ideals, the two groups (hippies and the New Left) differed in that the New Left was comprised of outspoken activists, directly involved in the fight. The hippies, on the other hand, also disagreeing with mainstream American life and government policy, were more passive, often choosing to withdraw from society through communal life or perhaps drug use. The New Left movement is traditionally not considered part of the counterculture movement, and therefore Lund and Denisoff’s date may be acceptable after all.

However, the New Left movement was certainly “countercultural” and, in my opinion was as part of the counterculture movement, though a different part than the hippies. We will see later that many people involved in it lived very similar lives to the hippies of the counterculture.
The movement did not become known as the counterculture until Theodore Roszak used the term in his 1969 book, *The Making of A Counter Culture*. However, to establish San Francisco as a place for acid rock, we must go back a bit farther in time to the roots of the counterculture movement in this country. The hippie counterculture evolved somewhat out of the beatnik movement which had become popular around a decade earlier in the 1950s. The McCarthy era policies played a large role in the formation of the beatnik movement which has been defined as “an artistic and literary fad which explored the traditional “road” concepts of the American experience” (Lund and Denisoff 1971). The movement is perhaps best exemplified by Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, first published in 1957. However, the beatnik movement also has roots in the previous bohemian and political movements in this country. Bohemian movements are often associated with certain genres of art and/or music. Bebop, one of the evolutionary steps of jazz, became the genre of a bohemian movement in the 1940s which eventually became the beat movement. The 1930s and the Great Depression led to a political movement on the left. A wave of bohemianism was seen around early jazz and its popularity growth in the 1920s. These movements can in turn be traced at least as far back as the bohemian movements of London and especially Paris in the 1830s and 1840s.

Lund and Denisoff (1971) and Miller (1991) both discuss hippie connection to the beatniks. Beatniks lived out of line with mainstream American culture in many of the same ways as hippies would in the future. Different (from the mainstream) dress, different sexual practices, different music tastes, and marijuana use are all strongly associated with the beatnik movement. Musically, the beatniks generally preferred jazz, though as time went on, folk became very prominent in the lifestyle. Elements of both of
these styles would later appear in San Francisco’s acid rock and played very important roles in the music of the Grateful Dead. Miller (1991, 6) adds the importance of black radicals, such as Malcolm X and W.E.B. Dubois, in the movement as “they refused to compromise with the white and prosperous Establishment.” The African American and, for that matter, any struggle against the Establishment was idealized by the beatniks (and later the hippies), which partially explains their affinity to jazz. By the late 1950s and early 1960s though, folk music had become an important element of the beatnik scene. This happened first in New York, especially Greenwich Village (Lund and Dennisoff 1971), but folk music also became popular on the other coast, where Jerry Garcia took a keen interest in both listening to and playing folk music in and around San Francisco in the early 1960s. Tradition and authenticity were key in the musical tastes of the beatnik movement. They were interested early on in “real” jazz and later in traditional folk. They showed disdain for commercialization of the music and preferred traditionalists over “popularizers” (1971). The appearance of hippies in San Francisco and New York occurred around the same time as the folk music revival lost its steam. Interestingly enough, it was also the same time (mid-1965) when Bob Dylan “went electric” at the Newport Folk Festival in Rhode Island, symbolically ending the folk revival and essentially the beatnik movement, as hippies soon came on the scene. It is generally believed that Dylan’s performance at the festival led to the extreme disappointment of the audience, but it is up for debate why the crowd was really booing (see Jackson 2004).

Of course, in the struggle to decipher the causes of the movement, we must not forget what was happening politically and militarily at the hands of the government during the 1950s and 1960s. Braunstein and Doyle (2002, 8) suggest the movement
“appeared gradually as a ripening of popular discontent over America’s shrill postwar triumphalism.” Although the country was experiencing the most vigorous economic growth it had seen to that point, there was growing frustration among some groups, such as the beatniks, the hippies, and the New Left, with “cold war militarism, anticommunist demagoguery, racial segregation, social regimentation, and rampant, near-orgiastic consumerism” (2002, 8).

Some groups at the time, such as the New Left, aka the “fists” or the “politicals” (Miller 1991), chose to actively fight these problems. Others, the hippies, a.k.a. “heads” or “culturals,” chose to drop out from society and attempt to try their own ideas of how society should work. While the two groups are generally viewed as separate and unique, Miller (1991, 11) points out that some “saw the two groups as more alike than different, because they were both sworn opponents of the established regime; therefore, they were to be considered as fingers on one hand, distinct but sharing a common role.” In addition, Miller (1991, 11) reports that the majority of those involved in the New Left Movement also partook in marijuana usage and casual sex, and many also lived in communes. However, the two groups themselves, while at times working together, generally viewed themselves as very different from each other, and both groups regularly criticized each other. The hippies criticized the New Left for among other things the willingness for armed and violent revolution as well as “losing sight of pleasure” (i.e., engaging in drug use and casual sex strictly as a means of rebellion as opposed to pleasure). On the other side, the New Left criticized hippies for things such as “dropping out when there was so much revolutionary work to be done” (1991, 12-15).
LSD and Acid Rock

One of the major changes in the evolution from the beatnik movement to the hippie movement was the choice of drugs. While the beatniks apparently preferred the use of marijuana over other substances, the hippies, while not refraining from marijuana by any means, added hallucinogens and psychedelic drugs to their lives. Miller (1991, 25) discusses the choice of drugs used by hippies: “Very generally, most hippies approved of such substances as marijuana, hashish, LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, peyote, and morning glory seeds; they were less approving, and often outspokenly critical, of amphetamines, methadrine, DMT, STP, barbiturates, the opiates, and sometimes cocaine.” A hippie’s dope was intended to expand the mind and the soul and increase personal spirituality, hence the disapproval with the uppers and downers listed above. This is not to imply, however, that the second group of drugs listed above was not used. As Davis and Munoz (1968) point out, methadrine was a commonly used drug by hippies, especially by “freaks.” The authors define “freaks” as hippies severely addicted and looking for a fix, as opposed to “heads” who were using mainly hallucinogens in search of higher consciousness.

The most well known psychedelic used by and associated with the hippie movement is of course lysergic acid diethylamide, commonly referred to as LSD or more simply acid, which eventually put the acid in acid rock. To understand why acid became popular in San Francisco and how acid rock grew out of that popularity to become place-specific music for the San Francisco, I will briefly trace the history of the drug and how it found its way not only to the United States, but specifically to San Francisco (see Farber
The Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann, while working for Sandoz Pharmaceuticals, first produced the drug in 1938 trying to produce an analeptic, which is a drug used to stimulate the central nervous system. Hofmann worked on the drug little if any more at all until April 1943, when he accidentally ingested a small amount. Part of his account (Hofmann 1979, 59) follows:

Now I gradually began to enjoy the unprecedented colors and plays of shapes that persisted behind my closed eyes. Kaleidoscopic-like fantastic images surged in on me, alternating, variegated, opening and then closing themselves in circles and spirals, exploding in colored fountains, rearranging and hybridizing themselves in constant flux. It was particularly remarkable how every acoustic perception, such as the sound of a door handle or a passing automobile, became transformed into optical perceptions. Every sound generated a vividly changing image, corresponding in form and color.

It soon became clear to him that he had produced much more than an analeptic, but a substantial hallucinogen as well. The drug soon found its way across the Atlantic and into the United States as Sandoz began shipping it to psychiatrists and psychologists across the country in an attempt to market the drug. By the early 1950s, LSD was being tested on human subjects by the CIA, among others, with government research funds. The results were positive and the drug seemed to have a future as a medication for those with psychological problems. Two men, now infamously connected with LSD and its history, Ken Kesey and Timothy Leary, were both involved in the government research. Kesey, author of One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest, was on the testing end, while Leary, a professor at Harvard, was researching the effects and testing the drug himself. Leary was quite taken with LSD and by the early 1960s was praising it not only for its use in helping the mentally ill, but also as a consciousness-expanding, “life-enhancing, spiritual-
inclining tool” (Farber 2003, 23) for the non-mentally ill. Leary’s endorsement of the
drug as a potential way to better first the user and then eventually society as a whole
continued to grow. Over time however, Leary’s praise of LSD began to clash with
Harvard’s agenda and eventually led to his firing – along with Richard Alpert (later
known as Ram Dass) – in 1963 (Farber 2002).

While Leary was promoting the potential benefits of LSD on the east coast, Ken
Kesey, on the west coast, had first been given LSD by the government at Veterans’
Memorial Hospital in Menlo Park, California, and was now “testing” LSD outside of the
research agenda (Perry 1984, 12). In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Kesey was living on
Perry Lane in Palo Alto, south of San Francisco. The psychedelics he had been testing
soon could be found in his neighborhood, attracting many interested people to the scene,
including a musician named Jerry Garcia, who would later become one of the seminal
figures of acid rock (Miller 1999, 18). Producing the majority of the acid in the San
Francisco area was a chemist living in Berkeley named Augustus Owsley Stanley III,
who later came to be known simply as Bear and served as a Grateful Dead sound
engineer. Farber (2002, 24), however, points out an interesting difference between the
LSD usage philosophies of Leary and Kesey. Leary and his circle were focused on inner
exploration, and focused on set and setting as a means to experience an optimal trip. On
the other hand, Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, Kesey’s “compatriots” which included
Neal Cassady, the famous “Dean Moriarty” character in Jack Kerouac’s On The Road,
took acid “not so much to explore inner space as to re-negotiate social space…[and]
insisted on ‘freaking freely’. They went out adventuring, seeing what the world looked
like while tripping and-critically-what they could do in that world to make it comply or at
least be complicitous with their acid vision.” They felt “you couldn’t control the trip anyway, so you might as well swing with whatever came up” (Perry 1984, 13).

In the summer of 1963, Kesey and the Merry Pranksters were bought out of Perry Lane by a housing developer. Though much of the group moved together to La Honda, this ended one phase of a unique experiment in what was essentially psychedelically fueled communal living. Approximately a year after the move, Kesey and the Pranksters took a cross country bus trip to New York and back. The bus had been painted Day-Glo style, read “Furthur” across the front, and contained a powerful sound system used to blast music and send messages to people on the streets through which the bus passed. Acid was by no means in short supply throughout the trip, and various parts of the trip were filmed under the influence. “The acid ventilated the pretensions of the established order, held it up as just another game that nobody had to play if they found something better to do. Acid seemed to give them something better to do” (Farber 2002, 26).

Soon after the bus trip, back in the Bay Area, Kesey began organizing the now famous acid tests – the first of which occurred on November 27, 1965 – in and around San Francisco. The acid tests, featuring music and light shows, provided those interested with free acid (often via tainted Kool-Aid) and really allowed for the beginning of acid rock as a music genre. The band which Kesey hired for the tests was the Warlocks (of which Jerry Garcia was a member), who actually became the Grateful Dead by the time the first test took place. According to Garcia, the tests allowed his band to be able to play “as long and loud as [they] wanted” (Wenner and Reich 1995, 87), as opposed to trying to please a typical bar crowd with short, fast tunes. When asked about playing under the influence of LSD Garcia responded (1995, 87):
We were improvising cosmically, too. Because being high, each note, you know, is like a whole universe. And each silence. And the quality of the sound and the degree of emotional...when you’re playing and you’re high on acid in these scenes, it is like the most important thing in the world...That was the acid test and the acid test was the prototype for our whole basic trip.

Mickey Hart, Grateful Dead percussionist for much of the band’s career, had this to say about performing under the influence of LSD: “Psychedelic drugs had an incredible effect. It opened you up to a whole new set of musical values. It altered your time perception, your auditory perception, and allowed you to get together as a group without being competitive” (Goldberg 1990, 94). The acid tests, therefore, provided a medium for the creation of a new music genre, soon known as acid rock, in San Francisco. The mind-bending, often swirling, kaleidoscopic music was intended to enhance the LSD experience of the listener, while the musicians themselves were often creating the music under the influence of LSD.

The acid tests were held several times a month and the newly named Grateful Dead were also playing gigs around the San Francisco area outside of the acid test venues. While the Dead were not the first band to record acid-influenced rock (their recording debut came in 1967), they were most likely the earliest pioneers of the genre thanks to the scene in San Francisco and Berkeley due mostly to Kesey, Cassady, and Owsley. Wolfe (1968, 189) certainly believes this: “Through the Dead’s experience with the Pranksters was born the sound known as “acid rock.” Jim Derogatis (1996), while acknowledging the Dead and Kesey’s acid parties, attributes the birth of acid rock to the Beach Boys and the Beatles, who in 1966 both released albums with songs inspired by LSD use. However, the Dead had clearly been playing this genre in San Francisco for at least several months before either of these albums could be recorded. “The mothers of it
all were the Grateful Dead at the Acid Tests...There was something wholly new and
deliriously weird in the Dead’s sound" (Wolfe 1968, 223). Wolfe (189) also tells of the
Beatles’ 1967 “zonked out of their gourds” imitation of Kesey’s bus trip, from which
came the *Magical Mystery Tour* film.

By mid 1966, changes were also occurring in the Haight District of San
Francisco, a neighborhood where many San Francisco State University students reside.
McNally tells us, “All the people who didn’t fit in anywhere else came to San Francisco”
(2002, 169). Here these people could be out of place, or perhaps “in place” together.
Additionally, there was a newly opened psychedelic shop on Haight Street, a new “hip”
(a term coined by the beatniks from which hippie actually originates) clothing store, a
health food store and a new coffeehouse, all of which supported counterculture ideas and
activities (McNally 2002, 142). In September of the same year, several members of the
Grateful Dead actually moved into the Haight District, living together in a house at 710
Ashbury Street, which had already been serving as the band’s office for some time. The
Haight also became the center of LSD activity. Farber (2002, 29) explains, “The Haight-
Ashbury District...became a critical nexus for this acid possibility, in part because of its
decades-old bohemian trajectory, in part because acid was more easily available there
than anywhere else in the world.” Owsley was responsible for much of the acid in the
area.

The acid tests came to an end by late 1966 as Kesey was in legal trouble.
Throughout 1966 and 1967 however, many venues around the Bay Area, most notably
the Avalon Ballroom and the Fillmore Auditorium, began hosting a great number of
dance concerts, sometimes several per week. These concerts featured the music of many
of the emerging bands from around the area such as the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Jefferson Airplane, and Big Brother and the Holding Company (in which Janis Joplin was the lead vocalist). All of these groups were experimenting with new sounds and combining elements of rock, folk, and jazz, all the while developing an acid-inflected sound unique to San Francisco (Goldberg 1990).

At around the same time, the Grateful Dead and several other bands began giving occasional free concerts on the weekends in the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park. The bands often felt more relaxed and more willing to take musical risks because they were playing for free. While the bands viewed this as a gift to the community, it also further developed the San Francisco sound (Goldberg 1990). These free concerts in Golden Gate Park eventually led to the human be-in, which was held January 14, 1967. This gathering featured many of the new acid rock bands, as well as speeches from many important figures in the counterculture movement such as Allen Ginsberg and Timothy Leary. It was this speech in which Leary made his famous comment, now associated with the phenomenon, “turn on, tune in, and drop out.”

Beyond San Francisco

While the Grateful Dead has been mentioned several times in this chapter (they were the purveyors of the genre after all), it is important to remember the other San Francisco bands that contributed to the unique sound that became known as acid rock. The Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Big Brother and the Holding Company, The Charlatans, The Steve Miller Band, Country Joe MacDonald and the Fish, Santana, and Creedence Clearwater Revival all came from the Bay Area. While each of these bands can claim a unique sound, together, with many other bands that never gained
serious recognition, they all forged the unique San Francisco sound of the late 1960s (see figures 2.1 and 2.2 for locations of venues and residences of importance to the acid rock scene).

There were also other acid rock places. Acid rock bands could probably be found in any major city in the late 1960s. However, no other city had a strong acid rock scene like the one in San Francisco, at least not one a city could call its own. While a small scene was present in New York, it was as much and probably more due to the bands from the West Coast than to any psychedelic bands from the region. The most well known venue featuring acid rock in New York was the Fillmore East. However, the Fillmore East was owned by Bill Graham, a business manager turned concert promoter famous for his concerts in San Francisco which often featured many of the San Francisco acid rock bands on the same bill. Graham named the Fillmore East after the Fillmore West, previously known as the Fillmore Auditorium, in San Francisco. The concerts at Graham’s New York venue often featured the bands he knew well from back home such as the Dead and the Jefferson Airplane. In fact, the Dead played the Fillmore East more than forty times between 1968 and 1971. So while there was obviously a taste for acid rock in New York, the city lacked a homegrown scene. Austin, Texas has long been a musical center in the U.S. and also witnessed a fairly large counterculture movement in the mid to late 1960s. Like in New York, the acid rock scene in Austin was nothing like that of San Francisco. One well known band very heavily influenced by LSD did emerge from Austin though, the 13th Floor Elevators.

Acid rock also developed in England. England’s version of the genre however also owes to San Francisco. Pink Floyd is the most well known of the English acid rock
Figure 2.2. Acid Rock Places 2
bands. While the Beatles had produced some LSD influenced music before Pink Floyd, the Beatles cannot be placed in the acid or psychedelic rock genre. But the members of Pink Floyd began playing together in various R&B bands and did not become psychedelically influenced until they met Syd Barrett and actually became Pink Floyd. Nick Mason of Pink Floyd attributes their psychedelic influence to the San Francisco scene: “We were interested in the R&B revival, but we never had the abilities along those lines…In fact, if the Summer of Love and the underground never would have happened, I don’t think we would have passed the starting point” (quoted in Derogatis 1996, 64).

England in a way also produced Jimi Hendrix. Hendrix was born in Seattle, but toured the U.S. playing R&B and became really interested in psychedelics in New York in 1966. In September of that year, he went to London where he became “immersed in the nascent psychedelic rock scene, and…was paired with the Experience” (Derogatis 1996, 94). So it was really in England where Hendrix’s psychedelic influence audible in his music began. Again, though, we see much influence from across the Atlantic. In fact, Hendrix did not like to be placed in the psychedelic genre. He felt his music was more correctly viewed as “a mixture of rock, blues, and jazz” (1996, 96).

**Decline of the Haight and the Legacy of Acid Rock**

The era and the movement which produced acid rock did not last long however. Late in 1966, LSD was declared illegal in California, and in 1967 the drug was banned federally. Law enforcement began a crack down on drug use in the Haight District, especially on the use of LSD and marijuana, including a marijuana bust at the Grateful Dead’s house at 710 Ashbury in October. By the end of 1967, the District was beginning to be inundated with addicts no longer using drugs for the purposes of expanding
consciousness or inciting spirituality, but instead to simply get a fix. “The Death of Hippie” was celebrated in October of that year, and many of the counterculturally minded people left the District, many of them forming and/or moving to communes. Since that time, the memory of the hippie has survived, though much of it through commercial means. Farber (2002, 36-37) explains:

Exotic drug use and such encoded accoutrements of the acid flash as tie-dyed clothes, strobe lights, and psychedelic posters had made their way into the great American shopping mall. Youth culture and the counterculture blurred on network television shows and major label record promotions. Timothy Leary and the Grateful Dead became iconic representations of just another variant of celebrityhood. The structure of the marketplace did consume much of the sublime, raw visions of alternative realities that LSD had flashed inside the minds of individuals.

However, while the Haight and the hippie movement declined, the music continued to thrive and become more successful. Several of the San Francisco bands had records on the charts, Jefferson Airplane’s *Surrealistic Pillow* being the highest (Perry 1984, 237). However, success in the music business implies capital success, which at least ideologically these bands were not necessarily interested in achieving, considering the ideals of the entire counterculture movement. On the other hand though, the success of the records has allowed the bands to spread the music and perhaps spread their original ideals. It has allowed the memory of the hippie movement, though often in a romanticized way, to live on instead of being quickly forgotten as what some see as a mistake of the past. Many of the San Francisco musicians who were part of the original acid rock scene continue to tour and play even today. Though Jerry Garcia passed in 1995, the remaining members of the Grateful Dead have toured together as “The Other Ones” and are now touring as “The Dead.” Some of the original members of the Jefferson Airplane now tour as Jefferson Starship. Santana continues to tour and has
been more popular in the past several years than in his earlier career. Bands such as these continue to represent San Francisco and the acid rock era.

**Conclusions**

The mention of hippies and their counterculture movement brings to mind many ideas such as drugs, flowers, and peace symbols, but the music of the era seems to be one aspect of the phenomenon which is as much, if not more, associated with the movement than anything else. Drawing on a number of musical influences and social ideals, the bands and musicians which emerged from the counterculture created a new genre of music in San Francisco known as acid rock. This chapter has shown how acid rock serves as place-specific music for San Francisco. The importance of place in geographic literature and then more specifically music geography literature was first presented, followed by a brief look at the background of the hippie and the New Left movements taking place most prevalently in San Francisco and New York. Next, a short history of the drug LSD was presented, pointing out how the drug became so prevalent in San Francisco and specifically the Haight District, and how LSD (along with key figures such as Ken Kesey and the Grateful Dead) was essentially responsible for the creation of acid rock. The Grateful Dead were shown as the pioneers of the genre, and finally the decline of the Haight District and hippie movement and the remaining legacy of acid rock was discussed, all together clearly developing acid rock as place-specific music in San Francisco.
CHAPTER 3
THE GRATEFUL DEAD CARNIVAL

Introduction

Mikahil Bakhtin’s concept of the carnivalesque has its roots in the medieval literature concerning carnival (especially that of the French author Francois Rabelais), “which represents the essence of popular culture in its freest, most democratic, most social form. The study of carnival can provide an example of one site where the nonlegitimated voice can find communal expression and establish the potential for legitimation and eventual collective action” (Quantz and O’Connor 1998, 100). In other words, carnival is a tool for the less powerful people in society to run the show for awhile and to express their ideas, at least symbolically. Carnival is also obviously a celebration. Cresswell (1994, 38), one of only a few geographers to have written on the topic, explains,

Through its history, carnival has been a time and place of apparent disorder – a deliberate break from normal life and established forms of behavior…Carnival is a time of revelry and disrespect; a place of dancing, partying, drinking, parades, plays, mock executions, funerals and crownings.

While the carnivals of today, such as Mardi Gras in New Orleans and Carnival in Rio De Janiero, are not exact representations of the medieval carnival, the carnival tradition continues to exist and thrive, as millions descend on both New Orleans and Rio during carnival season just before the beginning of the Christian Lent. The Grateful Dead phenomenon lends itself quite well to study from a carnivalesque point of view. Each concert was certainly a carnivalesque celebration, attended mainly by people with little power in society. In this chapter, I examine the Grateful Dead phenomenon from a perspective of carnival. I first introduce the concept of carnival and Bakhtin’s analysis of
Rabelais’ work. I then apply the phenomenon of the Grateful Dead to these ideas, showing the phenomenon as carnival and exploring the geographical aspects of the Grateful Dead carnival.

**The Carnival Concept**

In *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin analyzes the work of the French author Rabelais, thoroughly discussing the aspects of carnival which are symbolized throughout his work. Since 1968, when Bakhtin’s book was first translated and published in English, the carnivalesque has gained popularity over time as a concept and topic of study, especially in the disciplines of literature and history (Stallybrass and White 1986, 6-7). Even a few geographers have looked at the carnivalesque as a basis for studies (e.g. Jackson 1989, Cresswell 1994, and Waterman 1998).

Carnival is a time when the world is, in a sense, turned upside down. Bakhtin (1984, 10) writes: “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions…[An official feast] was a consecration of inequality. On the contrary, all were considered equal during carnival.” Carnival is a celebration not just for the people, but one which the people give themselves. There is little involvement from the state, allowing the prevailing, everyday social order to be null. “The [Carnival] abundance…was an inclusive utopia, a ‘harvest’ of equality and hence of ‘social justice’, as against class, privilege, and hierarchy (Docker 1994 quoted in Lucas 1999, 80). Thus, carnival provides a second life for the people (Bakhtin 1984, 8), and “becomes a metaphor for a people’s vision of the world and a critique and inversion of established ‘high’ culture” (Cresswell 1994, 39).
Carnival was and still is certainly a participatory event. Bakhtin (1984, 7) writes:

In fact, Carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very ideal embraces all the people.

Burke (1978, 182) also stresses this point. He viewed carnival as basically a very large play in which city streets and squares became the stage, and more importantly, in which the actors and spectators were essentially one and the same.

Carnival is often viewed as a “harmless safety valve through which subordinated groups can let off steam, express their sense of injustice and then return to normal life and the rule of law” (Cresswell 1994, 39). Both Cresswell and Jackson (1989) present this point of view and its proponents. However, this view is not applicable to all carnivals, as the authors point out that carnivals have also led to serious riots and societal changes. This is why it is important, as Cresswell points out, to not treat carnival as just another ritual, as “rituals celebrated the already established truth and sanctioned the established order” (1994, 39). The safety valve idea essentially makes a ritual out of carnival, albeit a ritual of inversion, as carnival in this light actually reinforces the status quo. “Ritualized inversions of the social order were tolerated, even encouraged, because they were acknowledged by everyone to be a temporary respite from the conventional social order to which everything would return in due course” (Jackson 1989, 80). While the social order is inverted during carnival, this serves as an outlet for the people so that the established and “normal” order of things is preserved during other times. In addition, it is important to note again that carnival is somehow sanctioned (or at least allowed) by
those in power, otherwise it would be shut down or not even allowed to begin. “Rituals of inversion provide a license for symbolic struggle which functions to confirm social order” (Cresswell 1994, 39). However, Bakhtin’s original ideas concerning carnival did not take this ritualistic view and did not explain carnival as a safety valve. Cresswell points out that Bakhtin “asserts the importance of understanding medieval culture as a culture of differences” (1994, 39) and argues that with carnival “it becomes impossible to accept as natural the rigidities of established norms” (1994, 38). Bakhtin feels, as stated above, that “carnival is the people’s second life” (1984, 8).

We must not forget that carnival, with all its symbolic overturning of power, is also of course a celebration, a party. “Carnival is a time of revelry and disrespect; a place of dancing, partying, drinking, parades, plays, mock executions, funerals and crowning, which is set aside from normal activity and everyday life” (Cresswell 1994, 38). One need only think of a place like New Orleans during Carnival season to understand this aspect of carnival, where, with perhaps the exception of mock executions, these activities can be found for weeks before the culmination of Carnival on Mardi Gras, and some of these activities can be found abundantly all year round. However, the carnivals of today are significantly different from the carnivals of which Rabelais wrote and Bakhtin analyzed. When we think of carnivals today (other than the pre-Lenten celebration), we tend to picture “festivals” which move from place to place, often shoddy amusement rides, unhealthy but generally tasty food, and nearly impossible games of skill. The medieval carnivals of interest to Bakhtin were feast of fools celebrations and “public collective celebrations of an abundant marketplace overflowing with the bumper crops of harvest time” (Lucas 1999, 79).
Also important to Bakhtin’s ideas concerning carnival are two other concepts. The first is laughter. Laughter here could be taken to mean the literal laughter heard by individuals during carnival or at other times of the year; but what Bakhtin really refers to is folk humor, something generally unexplored up to his time. This folk culture of humor, he says, “has found in [Rabelais’] works its greatest literary expression” (1984, 4). The laughter can be found throughout carnival festivities via “the participation of [clowns,] giants, dwarfs, monsters, and trained animals.” Festivities also included the mimicking of many “serious rituals such as the tribute rendered to the victors at tournaments, the transfer of feudal rights, or the initiation of a knight,” as well as mock elections (1984, 5). Bakhtin (1984, 11) describes the laughter himself as “festive,” “universal,” and “ambivalent.” By this he means (respectively) the laughter is not a reaction to one funny event, but “the laughter of all the people…directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants”, and “it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives.”

Grotesque realism is the other important element of Bakhtinian carnival. Grotesque realism refers to the importance of the lower body and the openings of the body in carnival. The role of the bodily openings becomes more important than say the head in carnival, especially in regards to the defining life acts of birth, sex, and death, and also to food, drink, and defecation. The lower body is emphasized over the head just as the social order is turned upside down. Cresswell (1994, 53) sums this up well:

In carnival, “normal” bodily values are undermined by the celebration of orifices and fat. While normal culture turns the body into a finished product, carnival celebrates the incomplete by emphasizing the openings...Lower regions of the body (particularly the buttocks) are given priority over the head. The celebration of these features in carnival, Bakhtin claims, refers to the importance of everyday life – the toil, the sex
and the defecation rather than the rarefied world of reason and spirit celebrated by ‘high’ culture. The big joke, for Bakhtin, is that wherever high-minded seriousness goes on people are always going to be shitting and sweating, eating and pissing. As metaphors these bodily functions refer to the importance of process. Culture, Bakhtin is arguing, is not the finished, rounded, complete and coherent product that high culture would have us believe. Rather it is in constant flux, living and dying, eating and shitting – laughing. Within carnival Bakhtin highlights the process – the mobility and transience.

Again, here we see Bakhtin’s view of carnival not as a safety valve, as is the view of many of his critics, but as a method of turning the social order around, realizing the innecessity of the established order, and as a second life for the people. Going hand in hand with changing the social order is turning the body “upside down,” placing importance on the lower body and the openings as opposed to the head and mind.

To this point, nearly nothing has explicitly been said of the geographical significance of carnival. Jackson (1989) informs us that there are temporal and spatial elements which are essential to carnival. While the temporal aspect has been well covered, little work has been done concerning the spatiality of carnival. Discussing nineteenth century Britain, around the time of the industrial revolution, Jackson (1989, 82) informs us that leisure and work became more and more separated as industry increased. The “industrial working class began to experience leisure as a separate sphere of life…it was not simply that work and leisure became separate temporal domains, but that leisure time in the industrial city came to be spent outside the workplace,” in a separate space away from the place of employment and just as importantly, the employer. Jackson then goes on to discuss the example of music halls as separate leisure spaces, apart from the workplace and apart from the “legitimate,” higher society theaters, a topic which will arise again later.
As stated earlier, the space of medieval carnival was the space of the city streets and town squares. City streets and squares are often the space for carnival today as well (think especially of the Pre-Lenten Carnival celebrations of New Orleans or Rio de Janeiro). Again pointing out the indistinguishability of actor and spectator, Burke talks of actors/spectators on balconies throwing eggs at the people on the street (Jackson 1989, 80). This immediately brings to mind the bead throwing which occurs mostly from balcony to street or parade float to street and is immensely popular at carnival celebrations in New Orleans.

Street festivals and carnivals today are generally contained within a delineated space. Street festivals often have a section of the roads blocked off so that traffic may not pass through, and the carnival in this case is limited to this very specific space. Others, such as New Orleans Mardi Gras celebrations, while some roads are blocked to auto traffic, do not necessarily confine the carnival participants to a certain space. While there are certain spaces where carnival activity reaches its highest peak for example, Bourbon Street and parade routes in New Orleans, the actor/spectator is not confined to a certain space and is free to roam nearly anywhere he/she pleases, with the general exception of private residences. However, even this was allowed in medieval carnival. Burke mentions several times that participants, often wearing masks, would enter the spaces of private homes in order to dance with women who were often the ones throwing eggs (Jackson 1989, 79-80). Other present day carnivals, those complete with amusement rides, games, and food tend to be completely enclosed spatially by means of fencing or other barricades, and it is certainly safe to say that these often traveling (more carnival geography) carnivals generally, in this society anyway, are capitalist enterprises, and do
not exhibit the typical carnival qualities of upsetting the social order. Even large carnival celebrations such as those in New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro “lack much of the political and subversive power of the original celebrations” (Lucas 1999, 79).

Worth emphasizing here very briefly are the connections between carnival and intoxication. Interestingly, Bakhtin did not consider the connections between carnival and mood or mind altering substances. Marty Roth (1997) however, provides an in-depth look at the connections between the two, and shows that Bakhtin attempted to give carnival a “non-alcoholic essence” (8), while pointing out that “carnival is unthinkable without mood alteration, and no other component of the carnival mixture explains the quality of transformation better than drink and drugs” (5). Grateful Dead shows, from the beginning to the end of the band’s career were of course very well known and stigmatized for the use of illicit substances, most notably marijuana, LSD, and nitrous oxide to a lesser extent in the later years. Drugs and intoxication, as we will see, played a very important part in the carnival that was the Grateful Dead phenomenon.

**The Carnivalesque Grateful Dead**

**The Countercultural Carnival**

And with that, I now turn to the Grateful Dead phenomenon, which can essentially be seen as a carnival. Whether speaking of a single concert, an entire tour, or the whole “trip,” carnival characteristics were prevalent throughout the scene, not to mention a very carnivalesque subculture which the band both reflected and represented, and an incredibly dedicated and carnivalesque fan base. Here I present the Grateful Dead phenomenon as carnival, touching on the carnival characteristics discussed above and stressing the importance of carnivalesque geography and how it applies to the case at
hand. Lucas (1999) has previously presented Dead concerts as carnival; my work includes this and expands upon it.

We can see carnival characteristics from the earliest days of the Grateful Dead, beginning with the counterculture to which the Dead are necessarily attached. While the counterculture cannot be viewed as a carnival event in the way that for instance a Grateful Dead concert can, the hippie counterculture certainly exhibits carnivalistic qualities, as did the Beatniks before them and the New Left contemporaneously. The hippies certainly believed in transforming the existing social order. They generally disagreed with the typical middle-class American values of the time. Carnival laughter of the hippie counterculture was perhaps best represented by their “silence” through essentially dropping out of society and often living communally. Cresswell (1994, 39) states, “Carnival becomes a metaphor for a people’s vision of the world and a critique and inversion of established ‘high’ culture.” Through communal living, the hippies perhaps achieved a sort of super-carnival. The hippie communes were their vision and their critique played out.

The hippies also condoned drug use, especially that of marijuana and psychedelics. This is certainly at odds with the established state and with typical American values of the time. Drug use also can be connected to grotesque realism. The majority of drugs are ingested through bodily holes such as the mouth, nose, or through bodily holes of self-infliction. Certain drugs, namely psychedelics such as LSD, can provide visions of birth and of death which are two important elements of grotesque realism. These visions often occur during the same trip. However, psychedelics are often used to expand consciousness, a drug for the head as opposed to the body.
Therefore grotesque realism is perhaps not entirely applicable to the hippy carnival. However, also closely associated with hippie subculture is casual sex, an obvious example of grotesque realism, with its focus on the lower body, the genitals, and their bodily holes.

The New Left can generally be seen in the same carnivalistic light. The overall lifestyles were similar; however, the New Left was much more active in fighting the establishment (see chapter 2). The carnival laughter of the New Left was perhaps best heard through their cries and fight for social justice and equality. However, the hippies’ essentially apolitical dropout version of carnival interestingly seems to have made a much deeper impression on American culture and history. The carnival spaces of the two groups differed. The hippie movement was of course most strong in the Haight district of San Francisco and in various communes around the country. The space of the New Left tended to be college campuses, most notably Berkeley, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Columbia.

The Carnival of the Acid Tests and the Early Grateful Dead

Turning to the Grateful Dead phenomenon itself, the carnival can be found from the very beginnings of the band. The band’s very first gigs as the Grateful Dead occurred at the acid tests arranged by Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters (see chapter 2). The acid tests abound with carnivalistic qualities. From the discussion above, we see that a “prankster mentality” (Lucas 1999, 82) is an important part of carnival celebrations, and the tests’ organizers certainly exhibited this. The importance of carnival masks has been stressed by Burke (1978). Style of dress and masks or face painting were certainly significant ways in which the participants set themselves apart from the establishment
and “normality.” For instance Paul Foster, one of the Pranksters, liked to wrap himself in gauze to look like a mummy (McNally 2002, 112). Wolfe (1968, 211) describes the look of another Prankster: “Page Browning is the king of facepainters. He becomes a full-fledged Devil with a bright orange face and his eyes become the centers of two great silver stars painted over the orange and his hair is silver with silver dust and he paints his lips silver with silver lipstick.”

The acid tests were held at various locations around the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Portland. Three were also held in Mexico without the Grateful Dead while Kesey was running from the law. Just as their name implies, the tests were essentially experiments in group LSD tripping. This excerpt from Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test* (1968, 211-216), which gives a sense of the mental state with acid via the author’s writing style, describes the carnival madness of the acid tests and the Dead’s music there:

They come piling into Big Nig’s [the host of one of the acid tests], and suddenly acid and the worldcraze were everywhere, the electric organ vibrating through every belly in the place, kids dancing not rock dances, not the frug and the – what? – swim, mother, but dancing ecstasy, leaping, dervishing, throwing their hands over their heads…Roy Seburn’s light washing past every head, Cassady rapping, Paul Foster handing people weird little things out of his Eccentric Bag, old whistles, tin crickets, burnt keys, spectral plastic handles. Everybody’s eyes turn on like lightbulbs, fuses blow, blackness – wowwww! – the things that shake and vibrate and funnel and freak out in this blackness – and then somebody slaps new fuses in and the old hulk of a house shudders back, the wiring writhing and fragmenting like molting snakes, the organs vibro-massage the bellies again, fuses blow, minds scream, heads explode, neighbors call the cops, 200, 300, 400 people from out there drawn into The Movie, into the edge of the pudding at least, a mass closer and higher than any mass in history, it seems most surely…

…Garcia sticks his hand into his electric guitar and the notes come out like a huge orange laugh all blown fuses electric spark leaps in colors upon the glistening sea of faces. It’s a freaking laugh and a half…
...and then the Dead coming in with their immense submarine vibrato vibrating, *garanging*, from the Aleutian rocks to the baja griffin cliffs of the Gulf of California. The Dead’s weird sound! agony in ecstasies! submarine somehow, turbid half the time, tremendously loud but like sitting under a waterfall, at the same time full of sort of ghoul-show vibrato sounds as if each string on their electric guitars is half a block long and twanging in a room full of natural gas, not to mention their great Hammond electric organ, which sounds like a movie house Wurlitzer, a diathermy machine, a Citizens’ Band radio and an Auto-Grind garbage truck at 4 A.M., all coming over the same frequency…

One of the more popularly reported effects by users of LSD is that of synchronization of the senses and minds with others who are also tripping. This relates directly back to the participatory nature of carnival. Nearly everyone at the parties was tripping together, as a group. “The glory of an acid test for the Dead was that it wasn’t a show and they weren’t the night’s entertainment. *Everybody* was the show, and Lord knew everybody was entertaining” (McNally 2002, 114). In a 1969 interview for *Rolling Stone*, Jerry Garcia had this to say concerning the acid tests’ participatory nature (Lydon 1999, 28-29):

Just people being there, and being responsive. Like, there were microphones all over. If you were wandering around there would be a mike you could talk into. And there would be somebody somewhere else in the building at the end of some wire with a tape recorder and a mixing board and earphone listening in on the mikes and all of a sudden something would come in and he’d turn it up because it seemed appropriate at that moment.

What you said might come out a minute later on a tape loop in some other part of the place. So there would be this odd interchange going on, electroneural connections of weird sorts. And it was people, just people, doing it all. Kesey would be writing messages about what he was seeing on an opaque projector and they’d be projected up on the wall, and someone would comment about it on a mike somewhere and that would be singing out of a speaker somewhere else.

…There were no sets, sometimes we’d get up and play for two hours, three hours, sometimes we’d play for ten minutes and all freak out and split. We’d just do it however it would happen. It wasn’t a gig, it was the Acid Tests where anything was OK. Thousands of people, man, all helplessly stoned, all finding themselves in a roomful of other thousands of people, none of whom any of them were afraid of. It was magic, far out, beautiful magic.
Lucas (1999) also emphasizes the importance of the participatory nature of the acid tests. More than just parties, the acid tests were group trips to see where acid could take the group mind, and where it could possibly take society. “The Acid Tests pointed toward the creation of enclaves, social spaces in which visionaries played out new collective games…free space people could create if they cared to” (Farber 2002, 26). Quoting Docker (1994), Carnival “is like life itself, unpredictable, unsatisfactory, problematic: the participant struggles in the think crowd to retain a sense of free will; and carnival liberty and equality are only to be enjoyed in the intoxication of madness, desire only in the presence of danger” (quoted in Lucas 1999, 82). Though only at times unsatisfactory and problematic, this statement essentially reflects the carnivalesque nature of the acid tests and the entire Grateful Dead phenomenon.

By late 1966 however, LSD was declared illegal in California, and it was soon outlawed in the entire country. While acid was still not difficult to come by, the acid tests came to an end in late 1966, as Kesey was in legal trouble for marijuana and unlawful flight. In fact, Halloween night 1966 saw a state-sanctioned Acid Test Graduation that Kesey gave as part of his sentence where he was supposed to preach about a life beyond acid and the dangers of the drug. So while Kesey and the Pranksters’ carnival came to a halt, the Grateful Dead, at some point so much a part of the acid test carnival, continued to thrive as its own carnival. While playing many gigs around the Bay Area, much of the band moved into a house at 710 Ashbury in September of 1966, right in the heart of the place of hippies, the Haight district in San Francisco. Now they were actually living in hippie carnival space, not just providing a soundtrack.
At least three venues, namely the Avalon Ballroom, the Carousel Ballroom, and the Fillmore Auditorium, were the sites of many dance concerts at the time, sometimes hosting several per week. The Dead were on the bill for many of these shows. These gigs were by no means as chaotic as the acid tests; however, the carnival elements were still there. The participants gathered together to dance and to get stoned in the spirit of the countercultural ideals against the establishment. The carnival space at these shows was basically limited to the confines of the music venue.

Interestingly enough, Jackson (1989) discusses music halls of late nineteenth century Britain while discussing carnival and the importance of the control of space, and his discussion parallels mine. In these halls, the people were much closer to being in control than in the “legitimate” theatres of the time, where the participatory nature of carnival was not present and the audience and performers were clearly segregated and non-interactive. The music hall audiences however “were free to smoke and drink, eat and talk, even at the height of the performance…[and] engaged in an active dialogue with the players. They expressed their approval or disapproval with gusto, joining in the choruses of songs or pelting the performers with whatever they had to hand according to their mood” (1989, 86-87). The same general principles applied to any hall the Grateful Dead were playing. Smoking, drinking, and especially drug use was accepted and maybe encouraged. Talking, interestingly, was not prohibited (listen to some audience recordings of Grateful Dead shows for evidence of this), but actually generally discouraged by many Deadheads (Dollar 1999, 95-96). Walking around the venue was allowed. The Dead played many general admission shows, where the audience was free
to move about the venue and to dance where they please. Some chose to dance in the halls, outside of the concert space.

Around the same time, the band began playing for free in the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park. Not only a gift to the counterculture community, these concerts also represented the “free” ideology of the hippies. And, whether intentional or not, they can be seen as a statement against the capitalist establishment. Here the audience was not confined to the space of a hall. Instead they were free to move about the area, representing a perhaps purer version of carnival.

On March 3, 1968, the Dead played a free show on two flatbed trucks in the middle of Haight Street. Here we have not only a carnival atmosphere, but the authentic carnival space as well. The band and the audience were literally in the street playing, dancing, and carnivalizing. The Haight, a place for the out of place to feel in place, had been transformed into a carnival space. Something special certainly occurred between the band and the crowd that day. Phil Lesh, the Dead’s bassist, referred to that show as the “highest performance – the highest relationship between us and the audience – but it wasn’t anything like an audience, man, it was like an outdoors acid test with more people” (quoted in McNally 2002, 252). The band even performed the song “Dancin’ In the Streets” that day, a song celebrating the topic at hand.

By this time, however, the Haight district carnival was on the decline. As mentioned earlier, LSD was declared illegal in California in late 1966 and across the nation in 1967. And over time, the police presence and drug busts increased as the area became more and more a haven for drug addicts who, whether or not they still held any of the original ideals, were looking for a fix more than anything else. Even the Dead’s
residence at 710 Ashbury was busted. Many of those still interested in the counterculture movements moved away from the area, including the Dead, most of whom moved to Marin County.

Although remnants still remain today, the counterculture movements had significantly declined by the early to mid 1970s, and their popularity did not make a comeback. The Grateful Dead, however, managed to keep those ideals alive throughout their career and were one of very few bands to do this, certainly the most significant. From the late 1960s to the mid 1980s, the popularity of the band and the carnival of the phenomenon grew slowly but steadily. Interestingly, with one exception in 1987, the band’s studio records were never chart-toppers by any means, and what made the band popular were their live shows. Generally playing without a setlist and incorporating as much improvisation as most jazz musicians, the Grateful Dead were famous for never playing the same set twice and never playing the same song exactly the same way twice. In addition, the band and the audience had a very special reciprocal relationship, which perhaps has not been equaled in the popular music world. I now turn to a discussion of those who attended the concerts, especially Deadheads (devoted fans of the band), and their carnival.

The Deadheads’ Carnival

The fans of the band, many of which considered themselves Deadheads, came together at Grateful Dead shows with a sense of community and communal expression with at least one common ideal, appreciation of the music of the Grateful Dead (see Pelovitz 1999 for an interesting discussion of Deadhead identity and conflicts within that identity, and Wilgoren 1999 for a look at the community of the Grateful Dead). A party
atmosphere surrounded the band’s concerts unlike any other touring act in music history. The carnival took place not only during the show, but also before and after in the parking lots. Dancing, drinking, and drug use were certainly popular behavior patterns by those in attendance, and could be found both outside and inside the show. The marketplace of medieval carnival was also represented by parking lot vendors, who often lived on tour by selling t-shirts, jewelry, and food.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Grateful Dead phenomenon was the Deadheads who actually followed the band from city to city and show to show for parts of a tour, an entire tour, or many tours. In this light, the Dead phenomenon could be seen as a traveling carnival, journeying across the United States and occasionally across the Atlantic to Europe. Where the band went, the carnival was there. I feel that much of the appeal of the band (from an academic standpoint anyway) would be lost without the traveling carnival aspect.

So where did these Deadheads come from and why were they so devoted to this band? As it has been shown, the Dead shared a special relationship with its audiences, unlike that of other rock bands. Every Grateful Dead show and every experience was different. The shows gave the audience a certain sense of freedom within the carnival space not found in the outside world. These things kept the Heads coming back to show after show, sometimes living on tour.

I have shown previously that the connection shared between the Dead and its fans goes back to the earliest days of the band, and was perhaps at its most strongest (certainly in a carnival sense) at the acid tests and perhaps also at the Haight Street show on March 3, 1968. Even after the madness of the acid tests, however, the band was able to hold a
closer than normal relationship with the fans for its entire career. The relationship was not as close as that of the acid tests, and it would in fact decline in the band’s later years. However, the relationship always existed as it and the feeling of community it spawned was another big draw of the Deadheads to shows (see Pelovitz 1999 and Wilgoren 1999).

Deadheads have been around essentially as long as the band has. Some became Heads as early as, and thanks to the spirit of, the Prankster’s Acid Tests, while some waited until the 1990s to “get on the bus.” And of course, many of the new Deadheads in the later years of the band’s career were not even born when the Dead began performing. A devoted following was apparently noticed by 1971. The band released a live album entitled simply *Grateful Dead* in 1971 which included on the back cover a request for Deadheads to write to the band in order to stay informed of what was happening with the band.

**Deadhead Carnival and the Second Decade of the Dead**

Lucas (1999), when discussing the carnival of the Grateful Dead, breaks the history of the band into three parts which last approximately ten years each. While the band was always changing and developing by means of musical styles, band members, size of the entire organization, or various other things, the middle of the decades (i.e., 1965, 1975, etc.) seemed to bring significant transition. In 1965 the band formed and started playing. 1975 marked the middle of approximately a year and a half of hiatus as the various band members decided to take a break and work on various side projects. In the mid 1980s, Garcia’s use of hard drugs, especially heroin, became public, and the guitarist actually slipped into a diabetic coma for several days in 1986. In 1995, of course, the death of Garcia led to the breakup of the Grateful Dead.
I have already discussed the carnival of much of the first of Lucas’ period of Dead history. Concerning the rest of that first period, the band focused on an incredible amount of touring in the early 1970s. While the musical styles and the band’s choice of drugs may have changed, the carnival atmosphere, including the sense of closeness between the band and its fans remained. Of course, thanks to the extensive touring, the fan base began to spread geographically as well. The Heads were no longer just based in the Bay Area, but could be found around the country (Adams 2000, 28), as the band became very popular in the Northeast, especially around New York. With the exception of the Bay Area, the Dead were playing many more shows in the Northeast than anywhere else in the country.

After the hiatus, the band began performing regularly again in 1976, and did so until Garcia’s illness in 1986. This makes up the Lucas’ second period of Dead history. Though the Deadheads had been present from the get-go and there was a significant following in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Deadhead scene seemed to grow considerably in this second period. McNally (2002, 386) blames this partially on the conservatism ushered in by Reagan. By the early to mid 1980s many Heads were following the band around the country, often living on tour, camping outside the shows and vending in the parking lot to make money along the way. The Grateful Dead provided them a carnival space. While that space was essentially confined to the venue at hand and not in the streets, the previously discussed elements of carnival remained. The strong relationship between the band and the Heads remained intact. They seemed to feed off of each other, with reports of energy being transferred between the band and fans being quite common at Dead shows. For instance, Carr tells us, “At a Dead show, there
was often a palpable sense in the audience of symbiosis with the band. Members of the band admit that they also felt the two-way flow of energy” (1999, 207). Carr goes on to quote Mickey Hart, as I will, “From the stage you can feel it happening – group mind, entrainment, find your own word for it…you can feel the energy roaring off them” (Hart 1990, 230). Mary Goodenough (1999, 178) also discusses this energy, especially noting its connection to dancing. She also further demonstrates, probably unintentionally, the carnival quality of a Dead show:

Another extraordinary feature of a Grateful Dead performance was that virtually everyone danced. For some, dance and freedom of movement comprised an even more important part of the ritual than the performance on stage. Speakers were set up in the hallways so that those who needed more space to dance could at least hear, if not see, the music being performed. The energy that emerged from an audience where everyone danced was an incredible phenomenon in and of itself. This movement of energy was what the band responded to most dramatically and what gave the music a life of its own. When the magic…happened, it was hosted into being by all energies participating in the ritual together. Grateful Dead then became living myth, something everyone present was a part of. Everyone moved synchronously with each other, and with the music, and not only knew but experienced the unity of all things. This did not happen at every show, but there was generally a consensus among Deadheads when the magic was present.

In this quote we see the necessity of the group experience with the Grateful Dead. To reinforce the point, this is what started with the acid tests and continued throughout the band’s career. And though the magic of which Goodenough speaks was sometimes hard to come by, especially in the later years of the Dead’s career, it was enough to keep the Heads coming back and looking for more.

Goodenough makes use of the word ritual in the above quote. Grateful Dead shows were rituals for Deadheads, and even religious experiences for some. Phil Lesh, the Dead’s bass player, is known to have stated, “Everywhere we play is church” (McNally 2002, 388). One small group, known as the spinners due to their dancing
styles, actually organized a religion which they called “The Church of Unlimited Devotion” (see Hartley 2000). Goodenough (1999) also compares, as have several other authors, Grateful Dead shows to the rituals of traditional societies (see Reist 1997, 1999 and Lucas 1999). Goodenough, however, is the only of these authors to point out the importance of sacred space. Upon entering the venue, a Deadhead might have chosen to set up a sacred space for himself. It was this space in which he or she experienced the rite of a Grateful Dead show. Within this space, the Deadhead prepared for the show, perhaps through meditation, drumming, or drugs. “The pre-show definition of sacred space was both jovial and holy. Everyone did what they wanted as long as it didn’t impinge on someone else’s sacred space” (1999, 177).

Another frequent report of Deadheads was that of a death and rebirth experience during the show, often but not always with the help of psychedelic drugs. This death and rebirth often occurred halfway through the second set during the parts of the show referred to as “Drums” and “Space.” It resembled shamanic rites of traditional societies where psychedelics were also common in these types of rituals. Furthermore, this experience is representative of the importance of the grotesque life acts of carnival (Goodenough 1999, Reist 1997, and Lucas 1999). Lucas also goes on to discuss the imagery of the band. The most popular Grateful Dead symbol is that of skeletons. Skeletons are featured on several of the band’s album covers, and on countless t-shirts, posters, and bumper stickers. The skeletons always seem to be alive, blending together a sense of life and death, which again connects back to the grotesque realism of carnival (see Lucas 1999 for more discussion of album art and other imagery connected to the band).
Again, it is important and interesting to realize that grotesque realism does not necessarily fully apply to the Grateful Dead phenomenon. While the life acts as discussed above represent grotesque realism within the phenomenon, the typical carnival ties between grotesque realism and intoxication are different. Drug use, at least hallucinogen use within the phenomenon was intended to heighten the experience by opening new doors of perception and consciousness. However, hippies’ rules about drug use were not adhered to by the band and some of its fans for very long. In fact, by the early 1970s much of the band was using cocaine. This shift in drug choice was also reflected by a shift in musical style to a more folk and country influenced sound. Grotesque realism from this intoxication point of view therefore applied more to the phenomenon as time went on. Drugs and alcohol were often used strictly for pleasure or for a fix, especially after the counterculture movement had slowed down. Garcia himself, of course, was no stranger to grotesque realism in this sense of the concept as he suffered from, among other things, nicotine and heroin addictions, diseases which eventually played a part in his death.

In order to take part in the rituals of Dead concerts, the Deadheads had to move from place to place, show to show. For some this was intentionally and truly a religious pilgrimage, traveling from sacred place to sacred place. For others not necessarily seeking religion, a yearning for more of that collective magic and group experience that occurred at some Grateful Dead shows kept them moving from concert to concert. Even these fans however exhibited religious qualities (see Sutton 1999). Cresswell (1997, 361-62) discusses relations between nomadic mobility and carnival, and his thoughts can be applied to the Deadhead situation. It is important to note the difference between a simple
traveler, a migrant, and a nomad. The traveler is more privileged than the other two groups. The migrant and the nomad, less privileged, are therefore perhaps forced to be moving, and may lead a life in which movement is closer to the norm than settling in a single place. A migrant has a sense of home and being away from it, and perhaps a desire to return to it. The nomad does not have a sense of home and “has no place in which meaning and identity can rest…there is no place but the place of movement itself.”

Deadheads fall into all three of these types of “movers”. It is probably safe to say that the majority of fans at any one show would fall into the traveler category. As Jennings (2000) points out, while the media generally gave a negative portrayal of Deadheads, the majority did not fit this description. “Most of them are not social dropouts; they continue to fill roles that are acceptable to the mainstream” (Adams 1992 quoted in Jennings 2000, 205). These travelers may have taken a weekend to catch a show or two, or perhaps a week off of work to catch several days’ worth of tour. Into the migrant category, I would place Heads who might tour regularly, but have some sort of home base to return and live in while not on tour. During the tour, they may vend in the parking lots to make money. While not on tour, they may find temporary jobs near their home. And some Heads would fall into the nomad category. Nomadic Deadheads would have toured regularly, with no real home to return to between tours. In the off time, they may have tried to find temporary jobs or perhaps begin traveling to catch the next tour. Maybe some of these nomadic Heads had no real home in the first place, as the occasional story of children being born on tour and living on tour for at least their childhood sometimes surfaces.

There is a sense of carnival in these types of travel lifestyles as well. Drawing on Cresswell, one way in which order is created and sustained is, of course, through the
control of space. Nomadic behavior essentially violates this control of space and therefore the established order. “Mobility, fluidity, and dynamic flow [therefore] present a constant state of transgression…Carnival is essentially mobile refusal of the strict spaces of official culture” (1997, 367). So, even in their travels, the Deadhead phenomenon is carnivalistic. Interestingly, Cresswell also points out the mixed feelings the culture group in power has towards “marginalized others,” in this case, nomadic groups. At times they are viewed as deviants, at other times they are viewed as romanticized heroes free from society (1997, 378). This is certainly true of the Deadheads. I have previously mentioned the general negative light shed on Deadheads by the media (but see also Paterline 1999). On the other hand, however, traveling Deadheads are often thought of as torchbearers of the ideals of the 1960s, who have essentially unchained themselves from the established society. They are free to travel and resist “normality,” proving through a carnival lifestyle the essential carnival characteristic that the established order does not have to exist in the way that it does.

Besides the extreme devotion and love for the band, there is also a certain pull and attraction to the road in general for many Deadheads. “We wanted that tour hit – the rush of being out on the highway, a million mind miles from the workaday world, with adventure waiting at every dip and turn in the road” (Jackson 1999, 48). Here we find not only an affinity for the road, but the sense of relief in the spatial separation of work and leisure, leading us back to the work of Jackson (1989, 163) (see earlier in this chapter). He discusses the writing of the Beat authors such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. Through their writing styles they convey a sense of constant motion and of “dissatisfaction with the humdrum world of conventional morality.” Cresswell (1993)
has also written about Kerouac and *On the Road* specifically. *On the Road* is probably the most important work to come from the Beat era. It has served as inspiration for countless readers, including Garcia, to take to the road, or at least take to something different from the established norm. Cresswell presents the motion and mobility of the characters as what is really carnivalesque resistance to the established norms of being settled and living in one place. He shows “the road is associated with innocence, holiness and purity; the city with madness, nonsense, and confusion. Mobility symbolizes freedom from a materialistic world, dominated by the pursuit of money and bourgeois respectability” (Jackson 1989, 163).

Cresswell (1993) also discusses extensively the paradox of this mobility as both resistance and as reinforcement of the “American Dream,” as there is certainly a sense of fascination with the road in the typical American psyche. So, the mobile carnival that was the Grateful Dead phenomenon, while certainly taking a stand against the establishment, was also somehow, if unintentionally, reinforcing it. This point in turn does reflect a typical viewpoint of carnival; i.e., the safety valve theory in which carnival actually serves to reinforce the status quo by allowing the subordinate group to have a sense of control for a time. This paradox can also be seen in the Dead as a band. Obviously from the beginning there was a sense of carnival surrounding the band, and they can certainly be seen as resistance against the established norms. But the Grateful Dead also at the same time were a representation of all things Americana. For instance, the music of the Dead, both original and cover tunes, incorporated nearly all the elements of music from the United States created before them. Many of the symbols associated with the band, most notably the famous “Steal Your Face” symbol, featured red, white,
and blue coloring. And of course, they drew fans on the road with their concerts, and not through selling them albums to listen to at home. The Grateful Dead and the phenomenon surrounding it carnivalistically resisted the establishment, while at the same time, in a sense, served it.

What to say of what occurred once the pilgrimage reached its destination (the venue, the sacred space) and before the show began? The Grateful Dead parking lot scene was, of course, well known for its “tailgate” atmosphere. The parking lot before and after the show was the place for reunions, conversations, listening to and trading tapes, music, dancing, drumming, drugs, and to attempt to get a ticket for the show. It was also well known as a place for vendors to sell their often handmade goods. Many of the vendors supported their tour habits this way, selling clothes, jewelry, food, instruments, or drugs (though obviously not so openly in this last case). Sheptoski (2000) points out that most of the vendors were not selling for profit, but only to get to the next city on tour. “I was using vending to stay on the road…to support my concert experience so we could have food and go to more shows. The money was for living on the road” (parking lot vendor quoted on 163). Vending occurred throughout the parking lot, both before and after shows, but was highly concentrated in one area of the lot which became known as “Shakedown Street” (named after a Grateful Dead song of the same title). Vendors tended to be some of the first to arrive in the lot and therefore were usually parked close to each other. This is the area that would become Shakedown Street as many vendors “set up shop” right outside of their cars. Other vendors chose to walk around in order to sell their goods (Sheptoski 2000, 162).
This space of the marketplace was another important element in Bakhtin’s concept of carnival. While Bakhtin actually analyzes the language of the marketplace, we also see the importance of the market as a place of the people, where people, not the state or some sort of sanctioned seller, bought and sold goods from and to other people. Shakedown Street was the Deadheads open market-place, where they were able to freely buy, sell, or trade goods among themselves without interference from the authorities, which of course adds even more to the overall group experience. So here we have vendors selling to get to the next show, the next carnival. We have essentially carnival reinforcing and reproducing carnival.

So where did the carnival end? For those who only attended a show every now and then, each show can be seen as an individual carnival event. On a larger scale each tour could be seen as a carnival event. However, we see at least some Heads who, during tours anyway, seem to be constantly living in a carnival world. Carnival behavior allows them to make it to the next carnival. They are also essentially living on the road, a carnivalistic act in itself. For these people, carnival is life. However, can the entire life be carnival? We recall that carnival is intended to upend the social order and that the temporal aspect is very important. Carnival is a period of time – not everlasting – when societal standing and rank are ignored. If this ignorance continues, then at some point it must become the norm. Can carnival still occur if the normality which carnival is protesting becomes unestablished? On the other hand, are the societal norms really being changed at all when such a small percentage of the population is living in constant carnival?
Community Impact and Dangers of the Grateful Dead Carnival

We must not forget the already existing communities which had to deal with the incoming carnival when the Grateful Dead came to town. This became an increasingly important issue as the size of the crowds attending Dead shows became huge in the late 1980s through the end of the band’s career. In addition, at this time in the band’s history, hundreds, if not thousands, of fans would show up without tickets giving the host community even more to complain about. Brent Paterline (2000) discusses the often negative community reaction to the influx of Deadheads during concert runs by looking at the number of arrests and newspaper coverage of the shows. Many communities certainly felt their space had been transgressed by the huge carnival. Besides the traffic problems, they feared that the drug use would spill over into and spread through their community. There were also many complaints of camping, littering, fornication, and urination on private property, which was certainly a transgression of space by these nomads. And of course, communities were unacceptable of the lifestyle of the Heads, not only in the way they dressed, looked, or smelled, but probably more importantly the fact that they were willing to follow a rock band around the country instead of contributing something to society. “To them, Deadheads were freaks who ignored America’s values of monetary success and status. They were seen as a threat to the American middle-class way of life and to the general norms of a community” (Paterline 2000, 185). In the view of the host communities, the Deadheads were, in the words of Cresswell, out of place and (in my words) in their (the community’s) space. Because of the size of the crowds, the space delineated for the show (the carnival) was not enough, and private space was transgressed. But of course, this is the nature of carnival.
Another aspect of carnival applicable to the Grateful Dead phenomenon and not mentioned by Bakhtin – the first being the connections between carnival and intoxication discussed earlier – is the negative consequences which can result from carnival celebrations. Hilda Hollis (2001) discusses this “Other Side of Carnival” in detail. “The group party of carnival becomes problematic when its joyful relativity destroys the individual” (2001, 228). As carnival is a celebration of and for those not in power, it is individuals of this group who are also at risk to the dangers of carnival (2001). This is the first time that I place any attention on the individual when discussing carnival, as in general the concept requires a group atmosphere and a group mindset. As an individual Deadhead, the potential dangers of this carnival were many. Drug overdoses were a serious possibility, though bad trips a more common one. Living what is commonly viewed as a deviant life drew many problems of its own. For one thing, as previously stated, many communities were not exactly appreciative of the Deadheads being in town. The Heads were also stigmatized by the police in many of those communities. For instance, police in Landover, Maryland and Hamilton, Ontario reportedly used “cultural” profiling and pulled over cars obviously belonging to Deadheads for no apparent reason other than the fact they were part of the Deadhead community (Ritzer 2000, 259).

More significantly, the Fall 1989 tour made apparent the danger of the possibility of death in this carnival. Two Deadheads, Adam Katz and Patrick Shanahan died during this tour. Adam Katz, whose death occurred by trauma, was found outside the Meadowlands Arena in New Jersey during a show. His death remains a mystery, though it is generally assumed that he was beaten by a security guard and left in the street. Patrick Shanahan was beaten to death by police outside the Forum in Los Angeles after
experiencing a bad trip (McNally 2002, 574-75). Of course, the band was not immune to these dangers as it suffered several carnival casualties over the years, including three keyboard players and Garcia himself.

**The Tapers’ Carnival**

On a lighter note, I wish to cover one more aspect of the phenomenon which demonstrates the closeness of the band and its audience. As every show was a different experience, the band was well known for graciously allowing the fans to tape concerts. These tapes could be traded, but were absolutely not to be sold. This tradition continues today, now in the digital age, as many internet sites offer Grateful Dead shows for free download. It’s impossible to say exactly when the first audience recording of a Grateful Dead show was made, but audience tapes can be found dating back to at least 1967. The second decade of the band’s career saw a large increase in the number of tapers capturing every moment of every show. The band certainly noticed and in the mid 1980s set up a designated taper’s section at every show which was located behind the soundboard. Tapers could order special tickets to get into this section and this continued until the band’s demise. The tapers had been given their own delineated carnival space. Adding to the carnival fun was the ability to tape rock concerts, something rarely, if ever, allowed before this.

**Breakdown of the Grateful Dead Carnival**

However, nothing lasts forever, and this is where we can perhaps think of the Grateful Dead carnival breaking down and coming to an end, instead of the never-ending carnival discussed above. The carnivalesque sense of the Grateful Dead tours began to erode as the phenomenon of the band grew ever larger. The band managed to record a
top ten hit in 1987 called “Touch of Grey.” Though the song had appeared in set lists as early as the Fall 1982 tour, the recorded version and subsequent live performances took on new meaning as the lines “I will survive/I will get by” sung by Garcia soon after his diabetic coma tugged at the hearts of the Deadheads. After this hit, the entire scene became huge. Because of the amount of fans, many venues would no longer allow the Dead to play, and they were forced to play the largest venues. Some venues also began to outlaw camping and vending from the parking lots, and for the Fall 1989 tour, the band actually asked the Deadheads to not camp and vend in the lots. Negative community reaction as discussed earlier often led to an increased police presence. All of these things indicate an increase in the presence of the state and the establishment, directly at odds with the carnival aspects of the phenomenon. The state was attempting (though fairly unsuccessfully) to limit the carnival space strictly to the inside of the venue. What was once their space was now being controlled by the authorities.

Along with the larger venues came an increased distance between the band and the audience. By the late 1980s, the shows featured large video screens to enhance the view of those far away. As Lucas (1999, 84) explains, this further eroded the carnival nature by increasing the sense of space between the musicians and the fans:

…they had a distancing effect that drove an interminable wedge between the performances of the past and those of the present….The earlier experience of the performance highlighted its dynamic nature as a live performance; in contrast, the video experience created a confounding spatial effect clearly different from the closeness of the carnival experience, thereby reminding audience members that there was a stage, and they were not on it.

Additionally, as the shows became larger, they became more corporate. Venues employed licensed corporate vendors, interested certainly in profit as opposed to
Deadhead ideals. Even the Grateful Dead made huge amounts of money in the last years of the group (see Lucas 1999, 86), compromising their own ideals. In turn, this led to greatly increased ticket prices, making it extremely tough for those on tour to even get into the shows.

Perhaps the final tour in the summer of 1995 was proof enough that the carnival needed to end or be subject to greater control, thereby further destroying the carnival atmosphere anyway. This last tour was rife with problems. Besides the fact that the band was by no means performing at its best by this time, Garcia received a death threat during this tour and the band actually performed a show with the house lights on for the duration. A large group of Deadheads camping outside a show (not at the venue) near St Louis was injured when a pavilion collapsed during a rainstorm. In Noblesville, Indiana, just days before the St. Louis tragedy, several thousand ticketless fans ripped down the fence. The police actually used tear-gas to control the crowd and the next day’s show had to be cancelled (Lucas 1999, 80). Within a month after this ill-fated tour, Garcia would die of heart failure in a rehab facility.

**Conclusion**

If Garcia had survived and the band continued to tour, the erosion of the Grateful Dead carnival would have only continued, probably by means of increased policing and limiting of that carnival space as order can be achieved and maintained more effectively through the control of space. Later shows would have taken place by necessity in stadium size venues, “with their concrete walls, institutional forms of crowd control, and overhead costs that would have made it more and more difficult for the free floating people of the open marketplace to gather and foster the carnival consciousness” (Lucas
1999, 87) which had surrounded the scene for so long. In this chapter I have introduced the concept of carnival, focusing especially on the work of Bakhtin and geographers such as Cresswell and Jackson. I then showed the Grateful Dead phenomenon as carnival, emphasizing the special relationship the band had with its fans. I stressed the importance of the reciprocal and participatory nature of carnival and of the Grateful Dead. I next discussed Deadheads, their devotion to the band, and their carnival lifestyles, touching on the religious qualities of the scene as well as Deadhead mobility and the traveling carnival of the phenomenon. I looked at the importance of taping to the scene, and finally showed the erosion of the Grateful Dead carnival as the scene became perhaps too large. Throughout the chapter, I stressed the carnivalesque geography and the importance of carnival space both to the concept in general and to specifically to the Grateful Dead phenomenon.
CHAPTER 4  
TOUR GEOGRAPHY

Introduction

One of the most prevalent and unique aspects of the Grateful Dead phenomenon was the great amount of touring the band undertook over its three decade career. While the band’s studio albums saw only fair sales with one exception, and were by no means the stuff of Top-40 Radio, Grateful Dead concerts were the focus of the band and its following over the years. Concerts regularly sold out around the country and by the final years of the band, theirs were the most profitable of rock tours in the country. A love and desire of musical (and other types of) freedom, exploration, and experimentation allowed the band to tour year after year, performing a unique show and providing a unique experience every time they took the stage, as well as drawing the Deadheads to the show over and over again. In this chapter, I discuss Grateful Dead tour geography. I examine and map various aspects of the band’s tours throughout their career in order to show the phenomenon as an example of spatial diffusion (though in a qualitative manner) and how the tours changed over time. Throughout the chapter I refer to dates in the mm/dd/yy form as that is the typical form used to refer to Dead shows among Deadheads.

Basic Spatial and Grateful Dead Diffusion

A popular method of studying the spatial aspects of a given phenomenon is through the analysis of the diffusion, i.e., the spread throughout space and time, of that phenomenon. This certainly includes the Grateful Dead phenomenon. The first concert appearance by the Grateful Dead (using the Grateful Dead name) occurred on 12/4/65 at a small venue called Big Nig’s House in San Jose, California. This was the second acid test, and Big Nig’s House was simply that, a house, and not a true music venue. The final
show occurred on 7/9/95 at Soldier Field in Chicago, IL. Soldier Field is a large stadium seating around 67,000 for football games, and many more for rock concerts. In this simple example of the beginning and the end of the band’s career, we can see implicitly not only the spread of the Grateful Dead phenomenon through space and time, but also the growing significance of the phenomenon by means of the venue size (i.e., from small to huge), and therefore spatial diffusion is applicable here.

Hägerstrand is the figure essentially responsible for spatial diffusion theory, and diffusion studies have widely been used in the work of geographers as well as in other fields (see Morrill et al. 1988). There are three possible processes of spatial diffusion: contagious, hierarchical, or relocation. In contagious diffusion, phenomena spread across space like a ripple in water moving through continuous space. Hierarchial diffusion occurs when phenomena originate in larger places or places more central to the phenomenon and spread to smaller or “less important” places. The phenomena will probably appear in several of the large places before it appears in any of the smaller places. For instance, a clothing style may be developed in New York and become popular there. It may soon catch on in other cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, or Miami before moving into the smaller communities and markets. The third possible diffusion process is that of relocation where the phenomena spread to different places with no apparent pattern. Of course very few phenomena diffuse strictly in any one of these methods. Instead, it is more likely that some combination of the three, with one method being prominent over the others, occurs with almost any phenomenon.

As stated earlier, much geographic work is available concerning diffusion, including research in the field of music geography. For instance, Carney (1994d)
researched the diffusion of country music radio stations across the United States, and
Glasgow (1994) has published an article concerning the diffusion of jazz music, focusing
epecially on its move from New Orleans north to Chicago. However, little if any
published work seems to be available concerning diffusion by means of examining tour
dates of a given act. The Grateful Dead lends itself well to this type of study, as they
were one of the longest touring acts of all time, and spent a large portion of each year on
the road, playing over 2,300 concerts (perhaps closer to 2,350) throughout their thirty
year (1965-1995) career (see figure 4.1). The Grateful Dead phenomenon, based on tour
dates anyway, presents elements of all three diffusion processes.

In the previous chapter, I adopted Lucas’ (1999) periods of Grateful Dead history,
which basically split Dead history into three periods lasting approximately ten years each.
However, for this chapter, I will divide the band’s history into different time periods
more appropriate for examining the spatiality of the band’s tours. Here the tour dates,
which are comprehensively available from several sources such as www.deadbase.com
and www.deadlists.com, are split into four main time periods. The first period, 1965-
1969, focuses on the initial rise of the Dead and consists mainly of venues first around
the San Francisco Bay Region, and then spreading around the west coast. Also during
this period, the band became popular in the cultural center of the United States, New
York City, and many dates in and around New York were played during this time. The
Grateful Dead had relatively limited exposure throughout the center of the country at this
time. 1970-1972 makes up the second time period and includes tours outside of the
country and off the continent, with appearances in Hawaii, Canada, and several trips to
Europe, most notably in 1972. The third period consists of the years 1973-1987. By this
time, the Grateful Dead had become a well established act and were touring regularly. However, the band took a hiatus from November 1974 to October 1976 (although four shows were performed in 1975), and touring was also halted for much of the second half
of 1986 due to Garcia's diabetic coma. An ever growing cult-like fan base, the
Deadheads, became more and more noticeable during this period, and many of them
followed the band from city to city and tour to tour. Again, there are several tours
outside of the U.S. in this period, including a run of three shows in Egypt in front of the
Great Pyramids in September 1978, one of which accompanied a lunar eclipse to add to
the spectacle. The fourth and final period ranges from 1988-1995. In this case, pre and
post “Touch of Grey” are likely better terms then 1987 and 1988. The song “Touch of
Grey,” though composed in the early 1980s, was not recorded until 1987 when it
appeared on the album “In the Dark.” “Touch of Grey” managed to become a hit single,
reaching number nine on the Billboard Charts on July 6, 1987 and was the only top ten
single of the band’s career. This in itself further justifies tour dates as a means to study
Grateful Dead diffusion, as opposed to record sales or other means, in that it clearly
demonstrates the band was not popular for its studio albums, but instead for its always
unique live shows. With a hit single however, the band’s fan base quite quickly grew
much larger, and this is reflected not in the number of tour dates or geographical spread
of the cities visited, but instead in the larger venues which were now required to handle
larger crowds.

I will now examine each of these periods individually in more detail. For my
analysis, I use a set of tour dates generously provided to me by Kevin Weil (2004) of
www.deadlists.com. I removed some of the shows which appeared to be strictly studio
dates as well as dates in which there were two entries and it was verified that only one
show was played. I then converted the remaining data into files usable for mapping and
GIS software.
**Period 1: 1965 – 1969**

The band that would eventually become the initial lineup of the Grateful Dead had been playing gigs since late 1964 calling themselves the Warlocks. However, in November 1965, Phil Lesh, the Warlock’s and the Dead’s bass player for the entire career of both bands, discovered a record released by another group called the Warlocks. In fact, there were at least two other bands named the Warlocks. One featured Lou Reed and John Cale, while the other (probably the one of Lesh’s unfortunate discovery) featured members of the future ZZ Top. It is often believed the name the Grateful Dead is connected with the Tibetan Book of the Dead. However it seems that after some deliberation, a try at randomly opening a dictionary yielded the band its new name, the Grateful Dead. Garcia is quoted in *Rolling Stone* (quoted in Lydon 1999, 26):

“One day we were over at Phil’s house smoking DMT. He had a big Oxford dictionary, opened it, and there was ‘grateful dead,’ those words juxtaposed. It was one of those moments, y’know, like everything else on the page went blank, diffuse, just sorta oozed away, and there was GRATEFUL DEAD, big black lettered edged all around in gold, man, blasting out at me, such a stunning combination. So I said, ‘How about Grateful Dead?’ and that was it.”

The band “had connected with a motif that twined itself throughout human history...[and is] found in almost every culture since the ancient Egyptians” (McNally 2001, 100). Specifically, a grateful dead is a folk song or folk tale in which the hero agrees to pay all the money he has for a proper burial for a corpse which is being denied a burial due to debts he owed in life. Later on in his travels someone comes along and aids the hero in an impossible task. This someone turns out to be the man whose corpse was being ill-treated (Brightman 1998, 81 and McNally 2001, 101).
It was around this time also that Ken Kesey and his group of Merry Pranksters began organizing the now famous acid tests and asked the Dead to play at them. The second acid test actually was the first gig for the newly named Grateful Dead. It took place on 12/4/65 in Big Nig’s (a friend of Kesey) living room. And so began that “long, strange trip” that was and remains to be the Grateful Dead phenomenon. The Dead continued to play the acid tests as well as many gigs around the Bay area. At this point, we can see contagious and relocation diffusion patterns (see figure 4.2), though contagious is perhaps the more appropriate diagnosis within the Bay Area. The band was based in San Francisco, and of course word of mouth helps diffusion as one person may tell several people about the band, and those people in turn tell several people, and so on. And so the diffusion occurs outward from the center, i.e. contagious, as the band plays more and more around the area. If we think strictly about the actual spatial locations of the gigs though, we see essentially relocation diffusion as the band (obviously) had to play where they were booked and where the venue happened to be, and not in various locations in concentric circles around San Francisco.

It was not long though, only about three months, when obvious hierarchical diffusion takes place as seen in the band’s first out of town shows (figure 4.2). In January of 1966, the band played an acid test in Portland. This show, however, is more an example of relocation diffusion, as the test was put on by the Pranksters and most likely would not have occurred without them. In February that year though, the Dead did make their first trip as a band to southern California, to that musical mecca known as Los Angeles. We see a spatial gap from San Francisco to Los Angeles where there were no shows played, demonstrating the hierarchical diffusion as they played another major city
as opposed to playing shows along the way and then eventually getting to Los Angeles (figure 4.2). Here they played several shows and held a few acid tests with the Pranksters, and being generally unimpressed with the music and music business scenes in Los Angeles, returned home and mostly played shows around the Bay Area for the rest of the year. They did manage to make it quite far out of town for one week in the summer for a few shows in Vancouver, but returned rather dejected after rather dismal shows and soon fired their sound man (though he was later rehired), Augustus Owsley Stanley III, or “Bear,” who also happened to be San Francisco’s most well known LSD chemist (McNally 2002, 154). Again, hierarchical diffusion is at work here as the shows did not occur “contagiously” all the way to Vancouver. Other than one show in Sacramento in December, the rest of 1966 saw the Dead staying and playing close to home.

The first half of 1967 was about the same. The great majority of shows took place within the Bay Area. The band had begun playing the free Golden Gate Park shows and they played the Human Be-In in early January as the Haight scene was beginning to erode, all of which has been discussed in previous chapters.
through the year, the band took its first cross country trip (and certainly it’s longest so far) and played its first gigs in New York City. Again, hierarchical diffusion is obvious here. By this point, the Dead had played in five large cities, but virtually nowhere else outside of the Bay Area. Two of those cities were of course the most important musical cities in the U.S.

After the Monterey Pop festival in mid-June, the band found itself heading north again to play shows in Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland. After a few home shows, the band crossed the country again, this time to play Toronto and Montreal before landing in New York again. Again hierarchical diffusion is at work here as we see the band playing more and more major cities, but major cities only (see figure 4.3). There are also some examples of contagious diffusion seen in the various shows played just outside the major cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. On the way back they played two shows in Detroit and one in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a significant university town (this is important to note as students made up a good deal of the band’s fan base). The rest of the year would see a majority of shows centered around the Bay Area with a couple trips
to Los Angeles, three shows at Lake Tahoe and three shows in Denver – their first trip to Colorado – the state which contains one of the band’s and the Head’s favorite venues as we will see later. The Dead closed out the year back on the East Coast with shows in New York and its first Boston appearances.

As we can see from figures 4.2 and 4.3, the majority of the Dead’s shows up to that point had been on either the West Coast or the East Coast. The band really had not traveled to the interior of the country yet with the exception of a few cities such as Denver, Detroit, or Toronto. The first half of 1968 would not prove too much different. A tour of the Northwest early in the year included Portland and Seattle as well as a couple new stops for the Dead, namely Eugene and Ashland, Oregon, and in both places the Dead played on the college campuses. In March the band played the famous show in the middle of Haight Street (see chapter 3). In April and May, the band was back on the East Coast and in New York, but on the way stopped to play in Miami and Philadelphia, and played one show in Virginia Beach before heading back to California. The band played two shows in St Louis in May, one in Phoenix in June, and hit San Diego for the first time in August. Late November saw the first real tour, albeit a short one, of interior U.S. cities. The band stuck to the more populated side of the country, playing in Columbus, Athens, and Cincinnati, Ohio; Chicago; Detroit; Philadelphia; and Louisville, Kentucky in about two weeks time. Interestingly, the show in Columbus was not well attended, and the audience was apparently made up of mostly students from Athens. The show in Athens was not originally on the schedule but was arranged and played the day after the Columbus show (McNally 2002, 281). The year ended with a show in Houston
on 12/28/68, the band’s second stop in south Florida in the town of Hallandale on the twenty-ninth, and a New Year’s show in San Francisco.

In 1969, the phenomenon continued to spread. The year started off close to home, but by the end of January, the band had begun a second tour of the Midwest. This time around they played Chicago, Minneapolis, Omaha, Kansas City, and St. Louis, and then headed east for Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, as well as of course, New York. Other new cities in the first half of 1969 away from the coast included Las Vegas; Tucson; Salt Lake City; Boulder; Lafayette, Indiana; and Worcester, Massachusetts. The Dead played on college campuses in all of these towns except for Las Vegas. The second half of the year saw first time gigs in Colorado Springs; Atlanta; smaller towns such as St. Helens, Washington and Squamish, British Columbia; Baton Rouge; Dallas; Hollywood, Florida and a disappointing stop at the Woodstock festival. The year ended with a New Year’s run of three shows in Boston.

To summarize this first period of Dead touring history, we see the band’s beginnings in San Francisco, and see many gigs around town and around the Bay Area as the sound contagiously diffused through the region. Next we see hierarchical diffusion as the great majority of the band’s shows during these first years took place in or around major cities, most notably San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, which had become a home away from home for the band. This all of course depends on scale as well. By this I mean that if we, for instance, look strictly at the spatial makeup of the shows around San Francisco at this time, and look at them in a large scale, we find an essentially random distribution as the venues happen to be located in an essentially random pattern (figure 2.2 shows many of the San Francisco venues frequently played by
the Dead). However, if we pull back and look at the dates over the entire country, we find hierarchical diffusion with clusters of shows in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. We also see contagious diffusion around these cities as many of the neighboring communities also were host to Grateful Dead shows. Interestingly, looking at all concert locations for the first period (figure 4.4) we find that hierarchical diffusion has taken place across much of the country. In fact, the pattern seen here is basically the same pattern as we see when looking at all the tour dates. Empty areas on the map such as parts of the south and the upper plains would remain virtually empty for the Dead’s entire career. We can however see parts of the interior of the country fill in if we compare figure 4.3 with figure 4.4a and b. Figure 4.4c shows that in the first period, the band’s shows were most concentrated around San Francisco and New York, the band’s home and the country’s largest population center.

It is also interesting to note the often geographically non-sensical tour dates. During this period, the band was often short on money and was taking gigs almost anywhere they could find them. So we often see instances of ridiculous distances between shows on consecutive nights and what we might call “one-stop” tours. For instance, on the way back west from an East Coast tour in 1969, the band played Boston one night, Houston the next, and in San Francisco the evening after Houston. Another fine example of this was mentioned earlier when discussing 1968. The band played in Houston on the twenty-eighth of December, then a date in south Florida on the twenty-ninth, and San Francisco on New Year’s Eve. McNally (2002, 286) implies that the band was often flying to play the dates on the other side of the country as early as the late

Source: Weil, 2004
1960s. While this certainly cuts down on the time required for travel between gigs, it is safe to assume that this does not cut down on the costs of traveling; and the spatial gaps between certain concerts such as those mentioned above are incredibly large for any touring act in such a small amount of time.

**Period 2: 1970 – 1972**

The second period of Dead history begins with 1970. I begin the second period here because the Dead first left the continent in 1970. After some shows in early January in New York, California, and Oregon, the band played in Honolulu, Hawaii later in the month, and they returned there for several more shows in June of that year. The next gigs were in New Orleans, where the band was busted for marijuana. Not surprisingly, many of the shows were still in New York and in San Francisco, often at the Fillmore East and West. However, gigs were played in Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Austin, Texas for the first time. They played one show at a rural farm in Poynette, Wisconsin. In May, the band toured the Northeast with several gigs around New York state, Massachusetts, and Connecticut as well as playing again in St Louis and Philadelphia. This tour was made up of almost entirely college campus gigs. Canada was the site of another tour, which also included Janis Joplin, The Band, and Buddy Guy, among others, as it rolled through Toronto, Winnipeg, and Calgary.

The second half of the year was essentially the same thing. The band’s centers were certainly San Francisco and New York, but they continued to play gigs and occasionally tour outside of these areas. Though it is not known for sure, the Dead are believed to have played the Mississippi River Festival on the campus of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville in July of 1970 (see Weil 2004). The band spent quite a bit of
time on the East Coast the rest of the year. Playing many smaller cities around the New York City area, which, spatially speaking, are similar to the Bay Area gigs not actually in San Francisco. Some of the cities included were Port Chester, Stony Brook, Island Park, and Brooklyn, New York; and Wayne and Edison, New Jersey. End of the year gigs were in California, and New Year’s Eve was in San Francisco. It’s fairly obvious from the above that the Dead were playing a large number of shows. 1970 turned out to be their busiest touring year playing at least 120 shows (McNally 2002, 383), and perhaps closer to 150 shows (Weil 2004).

In 1971, the Grateful Dead phenomenon continued to diffuse. A March tour of the Midwest included for the first time East Lansing, Michigan, Madison, Wisconsin, Iowa City, Iowa, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, further demonstrating the importance of the student fans in at least the first three cases. April brought a tour of the Northeast, including shows several shows in Pennsylvania away from the major metropolises of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and the first trek to Maine with a gig in Bangor. The band played just one gig in June of 1971 when they decided on a whim to play a festival in Paris. However, the festival rained out and the Dead threw an impromptu party and played in Hérouville, just outside of Paris. The second half of the year found the Dead playing all familiar cities with the exception of Syracuse, New York and Albuquerque, New Mexico. The year ended with shows in San Francisco, as was becoming a Grateful Dead tradition. Overall, 1971 was a much less intense touring year for the band, playing approximately 80 shows. They did not play much during the summer as Garcia recorded a solo album and they had caught their manager (who at the time was Mickey Hart’s father, Lenny) stealing money from the band, which soon led to Mickey Hart’s excusing
himself from the band. The keyboard player, Ron “Pigpen” McKernan had also become
quite ill, and the band had to rehearse a new keyboard player and added a female vocalist
in the fall.

In 1972, the Dead played just two shows before a week-long run in New York in
early March. From here, the band flew to Europe for their first and most famous tour east
of the Atlantic. For a month and a half the Dead toured Western Europe hitting cities in
England, Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (figure 4.5).
As usual, the remaining dates of 1972 favor the West Coast and the Northeast, especially
the New York City Area. There was a Midwest tour in October and November which ran
through St Louis, Nashville, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, Detroit,
Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Wichita, and several dates around Texas. December found
the band back in California to end the year in San Francisco.

![Figure 4.5. Locations and Sequence of Grateful Dead Concerts, Europe 1972](image-url)
The end of 1972 also marks the end of my delineation of the second period of the band’s touring history. By this point, the phenomenon had diffused and the band had played for audiences in most of the regions of this country, as well as in Hawaii and Europe. However, we can see that at least two areas of the U.S. continue to be almost completely neglected by the band’s tours, namely the South and the Upper Plains. This trend would continue throughout the life of the band as both of these regions would see fewer shows than the rest of the country. And, as we can see already, the band still seems to favor playing the West Coast and the Northeast. Again, there are large clusters in and around San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles to a smaller extent, another trend which would continue (figure 4.6). We still can find some rather inefficient bookings from a geographical point of view. For instance, while on what was really a tour of the northeast in May of 1970, the band played in Worcester, MA on the ninth, Atlanta on the tenth, New York on the eleventh, Kirkwood, MO (a suburb of St. Louis) on the fourteenth, and New York again on the fifteenth.

![Map of Grateful Dead Concert Sites, 1965 – 1972](image)

**Figure 4.6. Locations and Quantity of Grateful Dead Concerts, 1965 – 1972**
(excluding Hawaii and Europe)

The third period begins in 1973 and by this time specific tours start to become more obvious. There are fewer concert dates in general than the late 1960s and certainly 1970, and a quick look at the dates reveals groups of several weeks of shows and then some time off. The Dead were by now a very well established and well known act, and had managed to make enough money to not have to be playing anywhere they could; the tour dates reflect this. The tour dates make a little more sense geographically speaking, and the band was not hopping around the country as often or on as many “one-stop” tours. For instance, the first show of 1973 came close to home in Palo Alto and, whether intentional or not, can be seen as a warmup show for the year. The band began a Midwest tour about a week later, playing eight shows over about two weeks. After two weeks off, the band embarked on a two week tour of the northeast. While in the future tours would become even more specific in this sense, this tendency is certainly visible by this point. This is not quite so true for Bay Area shows. This was home for the Dead, and we do see the occasional “one-stop” tour. For instance, they played a show in San Francisco at the end of May. Two weeks later they performed two shows across the country at the same venue in Washington, D.C., and two weeks later began a northwest tour. While this was a “one-stop” run, the band took two weeks (instead of one or two days) on either side of the gigs to recover and prepare for the next shows.

The same general trend continued in 1974. The touring started quite a bit later in the year than it had in the past. The Dead played three shows in February and one in March close to home, but did not set out on tour until May. This was a very short tour but included two new places, Reno, Nevada and Missoula, Montana (the only Montana
show of the band’s career). After some touring in the Midwest and towards the East Coast, the band headed back to Europe, for a less memorable experience than in 1972. Then, after five San Francisco shows in October, the band went on hiatus. Four shows were played in 1975, but the band did not begin touring again until June of 1976. The first tour consisted of smaller than usual theaters for the band (McNally 2002, 493), but after this, things were essentially back to the way they had been before the hiatus.

Tour dates from 1977 indicate very specifically a spring and a fall tour, with local dates before, between, and after the tours. The spring tour covered the Northeast, a few Midwest cities, and a few Southeastern cities such as Tuscaloosa (the band’s first Alabama gig). The fall tour featured Northwest and Southwest dates, a few gigs through the Lower Plains, the band’s second and final Baton Rouge show, more Midwest shows, and ended back in the Northeast in Binghamton, New York after a short jaunt to Canada.

Little difference was found in 1978. In August however, the band played its first run of shows at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Morrison, Colorado, a venue both the band and the Deadheads would come to adore. Red Rocks is a naturally formed amphitheatre in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains with giant red sandstone formations on either side of the theatre. Soon thereafter, the band traveled to Egypt to play at the foot of the pyramids. The third show in Egypt even came with a complete lunar eclipse, which certainly added to the mystical group aspect of the show. The only other gig of geographical significance this year was in Jackson, Mississippi which occurred in December, and serves as the Dead’s one and only show in Mississippi.

The band continued to tour relentlessly in 1979. The only difference this year, other than the earlier than normal start for a Dead tour, is that the band avoided the South
completely. The southernmost show outside of California took place in Charlotte, North Carolina. Some gigs in the Southeast did make it to the 1980 touring schedule, perhaps to make up for the year before. In addition, the Dead played twenty-five shows beginning the last week of September and ending on Halloween. Fifteen of these shows were played in San Francisco, two in New Orleans, and eight in New York. These shows featured an acoustic set by the Dead before the standard two electric sets. This was the first time the Dead had played acoustic sets since 1970. There were essentially three spring tours in 1981. A short tour of Europe was sandwiched by two tours of the Northeast. Summer and fall tours covered the Midwest, as well as some Lower Plains and Southwest dates. They embarked on a longer European tour in September. The next year they followed essentially the same pattern, minus European dates. There were several tours covering much of the country, but in general avoiding the Southeast and especially the High Plains. The band did play a show in Jamaica in 1982 though, which, geographically speaking, was the only abnormal date.

The tour dates were certainly beginning to become a pattern. For the next few years, the Dead often began the touring year by playing a few shows around California before heading out on spring tour, usually to the Northeast. Late spring and early summer featured a few California shows followed by a summer tour normally featuring many Midwest cities, along with the occasional Southeastern or Lower Plains cities. Northwestern and Southwestern cities were usually played on the way out or on the way home from these tours. Fall tour generally took place in the East again, definitely favoring the Northeast over the Southeast (see figure 4.7). These of course are general trends and are not found exactly this way every year. The 1986 touring year flowed
normally until Garcia fell into a diabetic coma in July. The band cancelled the rest of its shows for the year except for the traditional Bay Area New Year’s Run.
The band scored their first top ten hit with the single “Touch of Grey” in 1987, making it an interesting year. The song hit number nine on the Billboard Charts on July sixth of that year. And while the song had been written and played in concert since 1982, it was not recorded until this point. With its lines “I will get by/I will survive,” the song took on a whole new meaning after Garcia’s brush with death. A top ten single also brought a lot more people onto the scene. However, this is not reflected in 1987’s tour dates. They present the typical Dead touring pattern, but it would not be long before this impact of so many new people was felt.

As the third period comes to a close, we can see that even through breaks and serious medical issues, the band always came back and continued to tour for a substantial portion of each year. Throughout this third period, we see better organized tours and by the mid 1980s, there are specific fall, summer, and spring tours, usually each focusing on the same portion of the country respectively. California gigs were played before, between, and after these tours. The diffusion is essentially complete. The phenomenon would grow in a sense of size, but not in a geographic sense. In this period the Upper Plains and the Southeast portions of the country still see very few shows compared to the rest of the country. The trend carried over from before and remained until the end of the Grateful Dead touring.

**Period 4: 1988 – 1995**

Unlike the previous sections, I will merely summarize these years as the tour geography, at least spatially speaking, remained basically the same. As mentioned
previously, after “Touch of Grey” was released, that hit single made what was already a large scene, quite a bit bigger. While we do not see an immediate jump from say small theatres to stadiums in 1988, we do see a gradual shift towards larger venues throughout the period, as we had throughout much of the 1980s. For instance, the band’s final run at Red Rocks came in 1987; it simply could no longer handle the ever increasing Grateful Dead crowds. Another favorite venue of the band and the fans was Alpine Valley Music Theatre in Wisconsin. The Grateful Dead did not play here again after the summer 1989 shows. Instead the band was playing venues such as the Sam Boyd Silver Bowl in Las Vegas and Soldier Field in Chicago. Because ticket demand was so high, many ticketless fans tended to show up looking to find a ticket or sometimes just to party in the parking lot. This became such a problem that the band actually asked that parking lot camping and vending be stopped for the fall 1989 tour. The entire thing was becoming too big.

The touring pattern remained similar to that of the 1980s. Each year saw some warm up shows close to home early in the year plus the now typical spring, summer, and fall tours. Spring and fall tours tended to be in the east, while summer tour dates were often concentrated in the Midwest. The last dates of the year were always close to home as well. The South and the Upper Plains regions of the U.S. were of course under represented. The Dead toured Europe one last time in October of 1990. While there had not been a tour of Europe since 1981, there was apparently a growth of the phenomenon somewhat similar to that of the 1980s in the U.S., but on a smaller scale. Tillinghast (1991) reports a parking lot scene in London very similar to the parking lot scenes in the U.S. Both Madison Square Garden and Boston Garden each saw week long runs during the fall tours of most of the 1990s. Rarely played earlier in the band’s career, Las Vegas
became a regularly tour stop in the 1990s, thanks in part due to the 32,000 seat Sam Boyd Silver Bowl, which held at least twice that many when the field was general admission for concerts. It might be noted that even the Jerry Garcia Band (Garcia’s longtime side project), used to playing small theatres and even club size venues, was playing arenas by the early 1990s (McNally 2002, 590). The Grateful Dead ended their touring career as a band on July 9, 1995 at Soldier Field, another huge football venue, in Chicago at the end of a rather dismal summer tour that year (see chapter 3), bringing the final period of Grateful Dead touring history to a close.

Discussion

I have shown the changes in the touring patterns of the Grateful Dead, and I will now briefly discuss some of these patterns. One important adjustment which took place over the band’s career was the transformation from playing nearly anywhere that would host them to an almost formulaic touring pattern. In the early days, they were a local band playing around town where they could find gigs. By the end of their career, they were popular music and counterculture legends with a huge following, part of which literally followed them wherever they played. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the band was often playing dates which made no sense geographically speaking. Jumping halfway across the country for a show and coming back home for a show the next night is not exactly spatially efficient. As time went on though, the tours began to make more sense spatially and sequentially. However, throughout the band’s career, the tour dates certainly favored certain parts of the country and basically neglected other parts (see figures 4.1, 4.8, 4.9).
The Dead played at least once in each U.S. state except for Delaware, Arkansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. We can see that there are definite concentrations along the West Coast and the East Coast. We can also see that in the center of the country, the shows are more infrequent. Finally, the Upper Plains region and the Southeast are nearly untouched. All of these patterns make sense however. Of course, California has a high concentration of shows. California was home for the band.
They began playing and built a reputation in San Francisco. The cluster around Los Angeles is explained by the fact that Los Angeles is one of the biggest population centers in the country, one of the most important musical centers in the country, and fairly close to home for the band. The Dead played the Northeast more than anywhere outside of San Francisco. New York City was of course a common place for gigs - second only to San Francisco for the Dead - because, like Los Angeles, there is a huge population, and it is an important musical city. In the band’s early days, New York was also the countercultural center on the East Coast. It’s only natural that the band would favor this area in the beginning, and it is not surprising that they continued to favor it. Even outside of New York City, the entire Northeast is more populated than much of the rest of the country, which leads to more demand, more venues, and thus more gigs.

It would be unfair to say the Dead avoided the Midwest, but there were certainly fewer shows there than on either coast. First, this can be explained by less population. In addition, the Midwest is often thought of, correctly or incorrectly, as being more conservative than either coast, a factor which certainly could influence an act such as the Grateful Dead, so tied to the counterculture movement, to be less likely to play there. In addition, perhaps Midwest venues frowned on booking the band for the same reasons. The Southeast could be seen in the same light, perhaps even more, and an even smaller population certainly did not attract more shows. Furthermore, Garcia had taken his first trip to the South in the summer of 1964. He was shocked by the civil rights issues, especially segregation, and called the trip “creepy” (McNally 2002, 71). Perhaps this too had something to do with the Dead’s lack of gigs in the South. The northern states across the middle of the country saw even fewer shows. Three of these states – North and South
Dakota and Wyoming — saw no shows at all, while Montana and Idaho each hosted the Dead on just one occasion. While five shows were played in Nebraska, it can be seen in the same light as these shows occurred in eastern Nebraska, close to the Iowa border. These states were generally avoided because there is simply very little population in this part of the country. There is also a pocket of no shows from Missouri down to the Gulf Coast and from the Mississippi River on the east to the western borders of Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Again, there is a rather small population here. Much of the area is rural, and many of its citizens are poor, and the area is an important part of the South.

A quantification based on population of the last decade of Grateful Dead tours generally reinforces the above discussion concerning areas which hosted few or in some cases zero shows. Figure 4.10 shows the number of concerts from 1985 to 1995 per 100,000 people (based on 1990 population figures) in each state classified by standard deviations away from the mean. Displaying these numbers in this manner indicates graphically which states were quantitatively over or under-represented by the number of

Figure 4.10. Number of Grateful Dead Concerts per 100,000 People in Each State Displayed by Standard Deviations Above or Below the Mean, 1985 – 1995
times the Dead played there. California is of course over-represented. Again, this was home for the band, and in this final decade the band played approximately one-third of its shows here. Much of the Northeast is also over-represented. From the above discussion, this is also not surprising. New York was essentially a second home for the band, and this is the most densely populated region in the country. The South and the Upper Plains are generally under-represented, again as expected. Very few and in some cases no shows were played in many of these states. Although the Dead played in the Midwest quite a bit more than in the South or Upper Plains, the majority of the Midwest is also under-represented. Illinois is an interesting case. The Dead played in or around Chicago at total of twenty-seven times in this time period. However, the population of Chicago and the rest of the state is great enough that this still amounts to an under-representation.

The quantification also brings to light a few surprises. For example, Georgia is as over-represented as most of the Northeast. Atlanta is often viewed as the main cultural and economic node of the Southeast, a region the Dead typically avoided. However, Atlanta was a fairly regular stop with twenty-four shows played there between 1985 and 1995. This was perhaps to make up for the fact that the Dead were playing almost nowhere else in the region. Indiana, Wisconsin, Colorado, and especially Nevada are also surprisingly over-represented. The majority of shows in each of these states all happened at the same venues. Deer Creek Music Amphitheatre outside Indianapolis; Alpine Valley Music Theatre near East Troy, Wisconsin; Red Rocks Amphitheatre near Morrison, Colorado; and the Sam Boyd Silver Bowl outside Las Vegas were all popular stops on the Dead tour. These venues are all set in rural areas and were favorites of both the Dead and the Heads. Red Rocks of course is in a mountain setting, and the Silver
Bowl lies in the desert, allowing both the concert-goers and performers at least a sense of a closer connection to nature, an important ideal of much of the counterculture movement as well as the Deadhead phenomenon.

**Conclusions**

As shown above, the Grateful Dead were a band based on live performances as opposed to studio albums, a characteristic rarely seen in the rock world. Throughout their career, they spent much of the year on the road, often playing over eighty dates a year. In the earliest years, they played around the Bay Area a great majority of the time. This is, of course, to be expected and can be seen as contagious diffusion. It was not too long however before the band was playing regularly across the country in and around New York, and soon the Dead were playing gigs in many major cities in the U.S. and a few in Canada. This can be seen as hierarchical diffusion as the Grateful Dead were playing in just major cities. They did not start in San Francisco and slowly make their way to New York, playing everywhere along the way. By the early 1970s, the phenomenon was beginning to diffuse on a global scale as the band played its first European shows in 1972. By the mid 1970s, the phenomenon had diffused essentially as far as it would go. Definite tour patterns, both temporal and geographic, were established by the early 1980s, and thanks to a hit single in 1987, the Grateful Dead scene became much larger, perhaps too large. As venue size and the number of ticketless fans in the parking lots increased, so did the problems on tour (see chapter 3). Perhaps the Grateful Dead tours would have ended soon enough even if Garcia had not passed away. In this chapter, I have discussed the tour geography of the Grateful Dead, mapped certain aspects of it, and shown it as an example of diffusion. I split the band’s history into four parts in order to
simplify my explanation. I analyzed the dates of each period, including a quantification of the last decade of Grateful Dead concerts, and finally offered a few ideas about the prevalent patterns.
CHAPTER 5
LYRIC GEOGRAPHY

Introduction

One of the most significant aspects of popular music is, of course, the lyrics. Lyrics allow a connection, even if only a perceived one, to form between the audience and perform. Lyrics may have obvious meanings or may be more open to interpretation. They partially construct a song as well as contribute to the popular consumption of that song. From a geographic point of view, lyrics often help connect the song to a certain place, act as a cartographic guide by drawing an imaginary map with the lyrics, or act as examples of human-environment interaction. While many listeners may claim that lyrics are not important or that they pay no attention to them, the importance of lyrics can not be ignored. The lyrics of the music that individuals choose to listen to is somehow often reflective of the life they lead and the way they view the world around them. Even from a band such as the Grateful Dead, well known for their long improvisational jams, the lyrics are an essential means of the important connection between the audience and the band as well as a source of inspiration for many of the fans. In this final chapter, I briefly discuss the lyrics of the Grateful Dead and the geography to be explored within them.

Geography and Lyrics

As pointed out earlier in this work, there is a rather small volume of work concerning music in the field of cultural geography compared to the other sub-sections of the discipline. Obviously then, smaller yet is the volume of literature concerning the geography of popular music lyrics. Of course, lyrics are such a major element of popular music that is at times impossible and should be unacceptable to ignore them when doing
popular music geography research. All too often, the lyrics reflect the lyricist’s views of places or of the world and society, or perhaps are marketed at certain demographic groups, all of these things being inherently tied to geography. While much of the music geography literature does in fact bring lyrics into the picture for some purpose, little work has been done focused intently on lyrics. However, John Connell and Chris Gibson (2003) have recently devoted an entire book chapter to the topic, focusing on lyrical evocations of place and space, such as urban and rural landscapes and the road. Other examples include Arthur Krim’s (1998) discussion of “Get Your Kicks on Route 66!,” a discussion of Jimmy Buffett lyrics focusing especially on the song “Margaritaville” by Dawn Bowen (1997), and Pamela Moss’ (1992) views of class and gender in Bruce Springsteen lyrics.

**Geography and Grateful Dead Lyrics**

Grateful Dead lyrics tend to be thought provoking and open to personal interpretation. They are always intriguing and full of both subtle and obvious references to an incredibly varied amount of literature, music, and history (see Dodd 2004 for an excellent ongoing online annotation project of the Dead’s lyrics). The lyrics tell stories, offer wisdom and advice, and are able to captivate the interested listener. In this manner, the Dead’s lyrics offer the listener something extra to consider, a trait rarely found in rock lyrics which are often written for capitalistic purposes as much as anything else. Interestingly, many of the lyrics were not written by band members themselves. The majority of Grateful Dead lyrics were written by Robert Hunter, a friend of the band since the beginning, and a friend of Garcia’s from before that. John Perry Barlow, a longtime friend of Bob Weir (rhythm guitarist and vocalist for the band), also contributed
many songs. Not surprisingly, we find many geographic elements within the lyrics, and many of the songs captivate the geographic imagination. The lyrical geography, of both a physical and a human nature, helps to shape these songs into what they are and how they are perceived.

Mobility and movement were a prevailing theme in some of the Grateful Dead’s lyrics. More than simply “tour songs,” these lyrics of mobility were partially inspired by the Beat phenomenon, and its obsession with movement and the sense of freedom which arises from that movement and mobility. For example, in the song “Jack Straw” (Hunter 1999) we find two men apparently running from the law after a murder. The lyrics map the path of the two fugitives. The song mentions that Jack Straw is from Wichita. However, it is not clear if the murder was committed there or if they are running from there. It also appears the murder was perhaps committed over some sort of game of gambling as Jack Straw claims, “We used to play for silver/Now we play for life.” In the song, the fugitives run through Texas; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Cheyenne, Wyoming; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and are on their way to Tucson, Arizona (the order of which sounds like some of the early Dead tours). Before they reach Tucson though, Jack Straw also kills his fellow fugitive. The song ends with Jack about “Half a mile from Tucson/By the morning light.” The mobility theme is not only exemplified here by their movement from place to place, but we also hear one of the men pushing the other, “Keep on rolling/You’re moving much too slow” (see also Palm 1999).

The Dead were of course fans of the mobility heroes of the counterculture such as Jack Kerouac, and not only fans but friends of other ones like Kesey and Neal Cassady. It almost seems natural then that mobility and road themes would be incorporated in the
lyrics of the band. The Dead classic “The Other One” (Garcia et al. 1967), one of the few lyrics actually written by the band, demonstrates this in an autobiographical manner:

Spanish lady come to me, she lays on me this rose.
It rainbow spirals round and round,
It trembles and explodes
It left a smoking crater of my mind,
I like to blow away.
But the heat came round and busted me
For smilin’ on a cloudy day
Comin’, comin’, comin’ around, comin’ around, comin’ around in a circle
Comin’, comin’, comin’ around, comin’ around, in a circle,
Comin’, comin’, comin’ around, comin’ around, in a circle.
Escapin’ through the lily fields
I came across an empty space
It trembled and exploded
Left a bus stop in its place
The bus came by and I got on
That's when it all began
There was cowboy Neal
At the wheel
Of a bus to never-ever land

In the song the narrator joins the mobile tradition by getting on the famous Prankster bus driven by Cassady himself. Where it is heading (never-ever land) does not seem so important as the mobility itself, being on the road. We can also see quite obviously the influence of LSD throughout these verses. LSD was of course the drug of choice for the band in the early days (without which the Grateful Dead probably would not exist, and certainly not as we know them), and the high is of course often referred to as a trip, which implies mobility in itself. In these lyrics, we again find more than just a simple tour song. In fact, much of the history of the connections between LSD, acid rock, and specifically the Grateful Dead are wrapped up in the final six lines of the song. The phrase “The bus came by and I got on” is often heard when Deadheads discuss how long they have followed or been fans of the band.
“Black Throated Wind” (Barlow 2003) is another song serving up images of the road, though in a less romantic sense. Here we find a hitchhiker who has apparently recently left a bad relationship and is unable to find a ride. The song mentions St. Louis as the city of blues and that the narrator has been there. However, we are not sure if he was passing through or if the relationship gone bad was based here. The first three verses (without the chorus) read:

Bringing me down,
I'm running aground
Blind in the light of the interstate cars.
Passing me by,
The busses and semis,
Plunging like stones from a slingshot on Mars.

But I'm here by the road,
Bound to the load
That I picked up in ten thousand cafes and bars.
Alone with the rush of the drivers who won't pick me up,
The highway, the moon, the clouds, and the stars.

I left St. Louis, the City of Blues,
In the midst of a storm I'd rather forget.
I tried to pretend it came to an end
Cause you weren't the woman I thought I once met.

In the end, the narrator actually decides there is no point in carrying his pain around and decides to return home and to commit to his ex-lover:

What's to be found, racing around,
You carry your pain wherever you go.
Full of the blues and trying to lose
You ain't gonna learn what you don't want to know.

So I give you my eyes, and all of their lies
Please help them to learn as well as to see
Capture a glance and make it a dance
Of looking at you looking at me.
Goin' back home that's what I'm gonna do
Turnin' around,
That's what I'm gonna do

The song’s ending forms an interesting paradox with the on-the-road ideals of the band. The narrator decides to turn back and return home, an almost anti-mobility action in contrast with the mobility as resistance and carnival theme that was an important element of the scene and was discussed briefly in chapter 3.

One of the Grateful Dead’s most well known songs is “Truckin’” (Hunter 1999), and it would not be complete to talk about mobility in the band’s lyrics without mentioning this tune. The narrator of the song does not seem to be completely content regardless of where he is, but he always has the urge to “keep truckin’ on.” The song mentions many of the cities through which the narrator passes, such as Chicago, New York, Detroit, Dallas, and Houston, which all look the same to him: “…it’s all on the same street/Your typical city involved in a typical daydream.” The narrator even gets busted in New Orleans – as the Dead did shortly before the song was written – before deciding to head home. Even home, however, is only a break to “patch my bones” in order to get back on the road.

As mentioned earlier, lyrics are often used to evoke images of place and examples of this can be found in the Dead’s library. “Mexicali Blues” (Barlow 2003) is one such song which incites the geographical imagination. In the lyrics, we find the narrator in Mexicali, Mexico having left Bakersfield, California, and not really sure why he did so. Again we find mobility, but in addition the song brings to mind a “gringo’s” romanticized view of Mexico and its borderlands with the U.S.: small villages, pueblo housing, roadside perhaps open-air bars in the midst of a warm and dry desert landscape,
where the narrator finds himself drinking, cavorting with rather young Mexican women, and eventually murdering an officer of the law, which results in the gallows. The Grateful Dead, or at least Bob Weir, seemed to have a certain fascination with cowboy and borderland songs represented not only by “Mexicali Blues,” but by several cover tunes such as Marty Robbins’ “El Paso” and John Phillips’ “Me and My Uncle” (see Huefe 2003 for an in depth look at borderland songs).

“Salt Lake City” (Barlow 2003) serves as another example of place evocation by means of the lyrics. The song was only played by the Dead one time, but has been performed extensively by Bob Weir’s side bands. The tune obviously sends the listeners mind to Salt Lake City, as the lyrics, unless I am mistaken in my interpretation, mock the city and it strong religious ties:

It was a paradise for lizards when young Brigham saw it first
He said, "I've seen some nasty deserts, Lord, but this one here's the worst."
Then the Lord called down to Brigham, said, "I got a great idea -- I want a mighty city and I think I want it here."

Salt Lake City, that town of righteousness and fame
Salt Lake City, don't sound like much but hell, what's in a name?
Nobody ever sings about it,
But Lord I be goin' there just the same.

Salt Lake City, where it's so easy keepin' straight.
Salt Lake City, really makes Des Moines look second-rate.
Ain't makin' no big deal about it,
But I hear the Mormon girls are really great.

Salt Lake City, hey, dig that tabernacle choir.
Salt Lake City, yeah, they're bound to take you higher.
There ain't no two ways about it...
Yes Lord, they really light my fire.

Well, Brigham kicked a prairie dog and muttered in his beard
He said, "You've put me through some changes, Lord, but this one's really weird."
The Lord just laughed at Brigham, said, "You'd better get to work -- The next time I check in here, I want Paradise on Earth."
Salt Lake City, where Brigham made the desert bloom,
Salt Lake City, put a color TV in every room,
And they got them crazy little Mormon chicks
Yes I'll be goin' there really soon.

Salt Lake City, hey feel that magic in the air ...

Grateful Dead lyrics also often evoked thoughts of and images of the U.S. The Grateful Dead incorporated elements of American genres in their songs and as a band were a piece of Americana themselves (paradoxical as it may be). The most obvious example of this is the song “U.S. Blues” (Hunter 1999). Uncle Sam himself narrates this song. He’s wearing of course red, white, and blue and has “Been hidin’ out/in a rock and roll band.” He invites the listener to “Shake the hand/that shook the hand / Of PT Barnum/and Charlie Chan,” two institutions of Americana themselves. Uncle Sam also demonstrates his patriotism asking the listener to “Wave that flag/Wave it high and wide.”

Another element of Americana that can be seen in the song “Jack Straw” (Hunter 1999) is that of trains. Trains and train imagery play an important part of this country’s history. There seems to be a certain fascination with trains in the American psyche. This is also connected to the mobility theme as trains allowed for greater freedom of movement. The two fugitives in the song are hopping trains to keep on the run:

Catch the Detroit Lightning
Out of Santa Fe
Great Northern out of Cheyenne
From sea to shining sea

Gotta get to Tulsa
First train we can ride
Got to settle one old score
And one small point of pride...
Adding further to the Americana imagery, the fugitives left Texas on the “Fourth day of July” while “The eagles filled the sky.”

In chapter 3, I offered a discussion of carnivalistic aspects of the Grateful Dead. In general, Grateful Dead lyrics were busy telling stories, as we’ve seen above, and had nothing to do with the counterculture movement or what was going on around the band or around the world at the time. They generally did not celebrate the carnival that was the Grateful Dead phenomenon. However, here is one example which, intentionally or not, does bring the carnivalistic elements into play. Titled “The Music Never Stopped” (Barlow 2003), at times it seems to be describing the band itself (omitting the first two verses):

There's a band out on the highway.
They're high-steppin' into town.
They're a rainbow full of sound.
It's fireworks, calliopes and clowns --

Everybody's dancing.
Come on, children. Come on, children,
Come on clap your hands.

Sun went down in honey.
Moon came up in wine.
Stars were spinnin' dizzy,
Lord, the band kept us so busy
We forgot about the time.

They're a band beyond description
Like Jehovah's favorite choir.
People joinin' hand in hand
While the music plays the band.
Lord, they're setting us on fire.

Crazy rooster crowin' midnight.
Balls of lightning roll along.
Old men sing about their dreams.
Women laugh and children scream,
And the band keeps playin' on.
Keep on dancin' through to daylight.
Greet the morning air with song.
No one's noticed, but the band's all packed and gone.
Was it ever here at all?

But they keep on dancing.
C'mon, children. C'mon, children,
Come on clap your hands.

Well, the cool breeze came on Tuesday,
And the corn's a bumper crop.
The fields are full of dancing,
Full of singing and romancing,
'Cause the music never stopped.

These lyrics abound with carnival imagery. There are fireworks, calliopes, clowns, and everybody’s dancing. As Carr (1999, 207) points out there is also a sense of the group experience so vital to carnival in the lines “People joinin’ hand in hand/While the music plays the band.” The agricultural aspect of medieval carnival is brought to mind in the last verse as “the corn’s a bumper crop,” and the dancers have taken to the fields, a new carnival space (see chapter 3). Even the rooster has joined in the carnival fun, upsetting the normal order of things by crowing at midnight instead of dawn.

The Grateful Dead were, in the beginning anyway, an essentially apolitical band by choice as was much of the hippie counterculture. However, this began to change in the 1980s, interestingly enough during the Reagan administration. For instance, Hunter and Garcia wrote a tune called “Standing On the Moon” (Hunter 1999). Here we find the narrator on the moon looking down at the Earth. He points out some objects of physical geography such as the Gulf of Mexico and the coast of California. More importantly politically speaking though, he also points out problems areas of war and human rights issues such as Southeast Asia and Latin America. The words for the most obviously
political song in the band’s repertoire, “Throwing Stones” (Barlow 2003), were penned by Barlow in 1982. Concerned with the violence of the world, as well as the environment, drugs, guns, and corporate greed, among other things, the lines “A peaceful place or so it looks from space/A closer look reveals the human race” ring true.

**Conclusion**

Lyrics are a vital part of popular music, including the music of the Grateful Dead. A song’s words help to form a connection between the audience and the performer. Lyrics often contain many geographic elements and are suitable for geographic analysis. The Grateful Dead’s lyrics are no exception, and in my opinion, as I have shown, are more suitable for scholarly study than the majority of rock lyrics. In this chapter I have briefly explored and discussed the geography and geographic concepts which can be found in the lyrics of the Dead. I focused on lyrics dealing first with the concept of mobility, a concept which was and still is important to the entire phenomenon. I also discussed lyrics dealing with place evocation, images of Americana, the carnivalistic aspect of the phenomenon, and the political and protest qualities some of the lyrics took on in the later years of the band.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusion

The Grateful Dead hold and will continue to hold a unique position in the musical, cultural, and social history of the United States. Not only does much of their music bend the lines of genre, making it hard to categorize as something besides Grateful Dead music, but “the Grateful Dead are a phenomenon that, by its very nature, is resistant to traditional explanation or conceptualization” (Pearson 1987, 418). This may explain an overall general lack of interest on the phenomenon as a research topic. Of course, we must not forget the lessening yet lingering bias against popular culture in general, and of course the band and its fans were not always portrayed in the best light by the media coverage of the phenomenon. It is true that other musical acts have been touring for well over thirty years, and some spend more time on the road every year than the Grateful Dead did. However, there was never a more unique touring scene for such a long period of time than that which surrounded the band. The band managed to carry on some of the countercultural ideals for thirty years, bringing a carnival atmosphere and mentality wherever they played. They often drew sold out crowds to every venue, inspiring many of their fans, be they travelers, pilgrims, migrants, or nomads, to follow them around the country. In addition, they were able to create a very original yet still very American style of music. A unique phenomenon such as this is certainly worthy of study from many disciplines, including cultural geography as I have offered here for the first time.

In this thesis, I began by presenting reviews of the history and literature of music geography as well as that of the academic study of the Grateful Dead, noting that no work in geography is available concerning the band. The band has some connections with the
beatnik movement but stronger ties to the hippie movement, and the importance of LSD to the initial rise of the Dead is of the utmost. Without figures like Neal Cassady and Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters and the acid test parties they put together, the band may have never taken shape, and certainly not in the way we know them. Of course San Francisco was the center of all this hippie and LSD activity, and just so happened to be the home of the Grateful Dead and the birthplace of acid rock. In chapter 2 I discussed the background and the context of the band by showing acid rock as place music representing San Francisco. I then presented the carnival of the Grateful Dead phenomenon. The entire phenomenon presents many carnivalistic aspects. Established social order is certainly brought into question within the phenomenon, and throughout its life it seemed almost as much an experiment with the group mind and experience as it did a touring rock and roll act. Carnival spectators, of course, are also participants, and I highlighted the importance of this at Grateful Dead shows, especially at the early Acid Tests. I emphasized the importance of the spatial aspects of carnival, and I presented some of the religious aspects of the scene and touched upon Deadhead mobility and movement and the carnival and geography associated with those concepts. In chapter 4, I discussed the tour geography of the Grateful Dead. The band is of course more famous for touring than selling records, and this serves as another one of the ways that the audience and this band were able to maintain a seemingly closer than normal relationship compared to other musical acts in general. I presented the tour dates as an example of spatial diffusion. I mapped certain aspects of the dates, as well as discussed some of the spatial and temporal patterns to be found in the dates. In the final chapter, I presented some of the multitude of things geographic to be found in the lyrics of the Grateful Dead.
Mobility is a theme to be found in many of the band’s songs and I discussed this. In addition, I presented certain lyrics which evoke various places, some which evoke Americana imagery, some which support the carnivalistic elements of the band and the Deadheads, as well as lyrics which were used as a political or protest vehicle, something the band avoided until the 1980s.

**Further Research**

As with nearly any study, this work leaves much room for, opens doors for, and hopefully encourages further study of the Grateful Dead and its phenomenon from a music geography point of view. There is an incredible amount of geography left to be explored in the Grateful Dead phenomenon. One area of possible exploration is a study of landscape impact. Everywhere the Grateful Dead played, the Deadheads followed. What kind of mark did they leave on the landscape? How did they transform the landscape while they were there? Heads were well known for camping in the venue parking lots, and what looked like small cities of tents were built the day of the show and stayed as long as the Dead did. When the Dead moved on, the city packed up and left to “keep truckin’ on” to the next show. However did the Heads leave any sort of longer lasting or even permanent mark on the landscapes through which they traversed?

More broadly, a study could be undertaken of human-environment interaction of the Grateful Dead phenomenon. The Dead were, especially in the second half of their career, active environmentalists. Songs such as “Throwing Stones” discussed in chapter 5 certainly portray the environmentalism of the band. Members of the band have even testified before Congress concerning rainforest preservation, and environmental groups such as Greenpeace often setup booths at Grateful Dead concerts (Reist 1997).
addition, the band set up the Rex Foundation in the 1980s, and Phil Lesh (the Dead’s bassist) started the Unbroken Chain Foundation in 1997. Both of these groups support environmental conservation and improvement among other things. Human interaction could be explored via the characters in the lyrics. A landscape impact study discussed earlier could also be incorporated here. In addition, one could study the nature and society dichotomy discussed previously by Latour (1993, 1999) and Sluyter (2002). It is probably a safe bet to assume that a majority of Deadheads feel a greater connection between nature and society than the typical modernist view of the dichotomization of the two.

One could perhaps look at Deadheads and their perceptions of space and place. Do they see it differently from non-Deadheads? Does following the band around alter their perceived spaces and places? Do they view the carnival space inside the show different from the space on the road? One could also examine the virtual space of Deadheads on the internet, which has emerged as one of the most popular ways of keeping the scene alive since the demise of the band. Both Adams (2000) and McCray Pattacini (2000) have discussed the importance of cyberspace in the Deadhead community, and this could be studied from a geographic perspective.

Next, what about the possibility of exploring the musical space? The Grateful Dead certainly did. Some of this perhaps borderlines with musicology, but it certainly incorporates geographic ideas, even if imagined geographies. Shaughn O’Donnell (1999) presents Dead songs as containers. The container is entered, the song is played, and the container is exited. Outside the containers there may be silence, tuning, or “noodling” before entering the next container. There may also be jamming to guide the band from
one song or one container to another. Either way, the area outside the containers is “uncharted territory,” unexplored and unrehearsed. This again brings the theme of mobility back into the picture as the band moves from song to song. One might also explore the imagined geography of a typical Grateful Dead show. From the mid 1970s on, the Dead typically played two sets a night. The first set was more song based. There was relatively little jamming compared to the second set, and the songs were often shorter. The first set kept the listener at home, made him/her comfortable to prepare for the journey ahead. Silence and tuning were often heard between containers of the first set. The second set, with its normally longer songs and more improvisational jamming, took the listener out on a journey into unknown territory between songs. Often, all second set containers were connected by jams. The middle of the second set featured a duet by the two percussionists, followed by a completely free form improvisational jam by Garcia and Weir eventually joined by the other non-drummers. It is this middle section where the listener is as far away from home as he or she will get. Soon the drummers would rejoin and a familiar song would emerge bringing the listener back home and back to his or her place of comfort. It was often during the drums and space section and especially when a song returned that Deadheads would experience the most significant parts of the trip if had they chosen to ingest a psychedelic. In chapter 3, I briefly discussed the death and rebirth phenomenon often told by Deadheads. This tended to occur at this point in the show, being reborn as the first song was born out of the space section.

Finally, any of the topics I presented in this thesis could be expanded upon and, for anyone interested, could be turned into a thesis or dissertation by itself. More could
certainly be said about San Francisco and Acid Rock, especially if one pays more
attention to the numerous other bands of the genre which emerged from San Francisco
about the same time as the Dead. One could dig a little deeper into the carnival aspects
of the phenomenon and find even more connections. Tour dates could be analyzed more
closely, and the catalog of songs performed by the Grateful Dead is so huge that finding
lyrical geography there is quite simple. This thesis serves as only an introduction to the
geographic study of the Grateful Dead, and I hope there is more to follow.
REFERENCES


Adams, Rebecca and Robert Sardiello, eds. 2000. Deadhead Social Science: You Ain’t Gonna Learn What You Don’t Want To Know. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.


VITA

The author was born August 14, 1978, and grew up in Springfield, Illinois. He attended Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville where he earned undergraduate degrees in music and geography in 2001. He began his graduate studies at LSU later that year interested in pursuing research in the mapping sciences, especially GIS and Remote Sensing, never expecting to combine elements of both of his previous degrees.