

**Study Questions: Holton, “Sordid Hipsters of America”**

1. During the 1950s, why did *modernity* seem linked to *homogeneity*? How had the former seemed to produce the latter?
2. What does Holton mean by the “folds of heterogeneity”? Why is this an apt metaphor to describe the “cultural space” the Beats inhabited?
3. Why did no political movement emerge after the war into which the dissatisfied could channel their alienation, doing so perhaps in a united front? Why had the events of the 1930s and 1940s limited the scope of political dissent?
4. Why was dissent more cultural and individually-based during the 1950s?
5. What is “*It*”? (p 14) What is “the closed room”? (p 15) How do these impressionistic terms shed light on what dissenters found alienating about mainstream American culture?

6. Why did the Beats come to identify with the “garbage pail” and the “social dregs”? How, in a way, was this their way of “walking away from *it*” or escaping the “closed room”?
  
7. What role did Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* play in drawing out a new subculture from the “folds of heterogeneity”? Why was hearing the poem a “moment of recognition”? (p 19)
  
8. Why was escaping the “closed room” seen primarily as a *male* problem? How did female rebels adjust to the male dominated world of rebellion?
  
9. What groups became models for men looking to find alternatives to mainstream American society? Why was their admiration of “outsiders” often naïve or even racist?
  
10. What is an “anomic”? Why did the Beats seek to establish a “sense of community” with them? What possibilities did their presence in society suggest?