

# **The emergence of an ecological self in the 1960s American cultural revolution**

*A study of Beat poetry and countercultural music*

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## **Abstract**

The relationship between humanity and nature is at the basis of our current environmental issues because the way in which humans perceive and relate to the natural world allows either to protect and care for it or to exploit and destroy it. The thesis aims to explore the relationship between humans and nature, as expressed during the 1960s American cultural revolution. My premise is that during the American countercultural movement, the human self experienced a transition from an isolated to an expanded sense of self from which the modern ecological self later emerged. Accordingly, I propose to trace this transition by analyzing the cultural narratives expressed by the Beat poets and counterculture musicians from the 1950s to the 1970s.

The 1960s was a time of great transition from a social, cultural, and political perspective when Western society underwent unprecedented changes that significantly impacted history. It was a time of massive economic development, significant technological advances, but it was also affected by war, inequality, social unrest, and pollution. In this context, a group of people opposed to mainstream thinking and created a countercultural mobilization that contributed to a change in the perceptions of human identity and human-nature relationships, culminating with the environmental movements of the 1970s.

The study reveals five main cultural narratives that assisted the emergence of an ecological self, namely: the idea of individualism, the rejection of materialism and technology, the search for an alternative spiritual system, the use of mind-expanding substances, and the awareness of ecological damage. Those narratives were expressed distinctly in the poems and songs, suggesting a change in perception over time due to the particular social context of each generation.

The narratives found in the poems focus on the idea of the interconnectedness of all matter, the fascination with alternative spiritual systems, and the experimentation with psychedelic substances. The Beat poems dwell on the subject of individualism, subjective experience, changing the individual before changing society, and feature an escapist perspective on existence rather than social engagement.

The songs, however, explore the awareness of human-made environmental damage and express an ecological consciousness in a less individualistic manner. They become more preoccupied with social criticism and cultural change.

However, the findings reveal that, during the three decades, the relationship between humanity and nature became increasingly more important for a significant number of people. The perception of human identity changed from an egotistical self to an ecological self and later contributed to the emergence of the first environmental movements.

**Keywords:** ecological consciousness, ecological self, counterculture, the Beat generation, psychedelics, Eastern philosophy

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# **I. The ecological self**

## **Introduction**

The overarching aim of this thesis is to find out to what extent the emergence of an ecological self in the modern Western culture can be traced back to the 1960s American cultural revolution. The thesis identifies the cultural narratives that contributed to an environmental awakening at the time and describes the forms in which this awakening was expressed in Beat poetry and countercultural music.

My hypothesis is that, inspired by previous Romantic and Transcendentalist ideas, the American countercultural movement of the 1960s was the birthplace of an expanded sense of self - as opposed to the anthropocentric sense of self - from which the modern ecological self later emerged. Accordingly, during the 1960s counterculture, the relationship between humanity and nature underwent a transformation evident in the artistic expression of Beat poets and counterculture musicians.

My second objective is to analyze a selection of Beat poems and counterculture songs from an ecocritical perspective to identify the seeds of an ecological self in the artistic expression of the most influential artists of the countercultural movement. Hopefully, the findings of the study will shed new light on how the members of the counterculture conceptualized their relationship with nature and uncover the roots and manifestations of a worldview that constructs the natural world as part of humankind. The resulting insights might serve as an example for our current environmental issues and show the importance of the relationship between the individual self and the natural world.

The modern relationship between the human self and nature has been conceived either in a holistic manner with humans and nature as part of an interconnected whole, as in the Gaia hypothesis (Lovelock 2016) and deep ecological thinking (Naess 2008); or in an atomistic manner with humans as separate from nature, as in the anthropocentric philosophy. A number of authors have argued that humans were much closer to nature in the pre-industrialized era than they are in the present day (Eliade 1964, Campbell 1983, Melson 2001, Morris 1998, Shepard 1996, Merchant 2005) and that the Scientific and Industrial Revolution led to a split between humans and their natural environment

(Franklin 1999, Cronon 1995). This separation allowed for the development of individualism as a philosophy, the desire for human progress, and the inquiry into the natural world in order to explain its laws by rational means (Selby 2002). In the West, the Enlightenment movement helped set in motion the development of science and medicine, technological progress, and economic development that further contributed to enhanced wealth and a higher quality of life for the average person (Pinker 2019). However, it also contributed to economic inequality and legitimized environmental destruction. Many authors claim that the rationalistic and scientific philosophies that underpin modern technological and economic progress have also completely separated humans from nature and allowed for the domination of the natural world by humans (Capra 1982, Plumwood 2002, Selby 2002, Collard and Contrucci 1988, Pepper 1993).

The perception of the separation of humanity and nature is still the dominant view of the human self in Western cultures. However, there seems to be a change of perspective from one of separation and domination, to one that regards humans as part of nature and attributes it an intrinsic value independent of its ability to be useful for humankind. Society is working to establish a new co-evolutionary and sustainable relationship with the natural world. I believe it is this perspective that reemerged in 1960s America, in what was called the counterculture movement (Roszak 1969).

The 1960s was a time of great transition from a social, cultural, and political perspective. Human society went through unprecedented changes that shifted the course of history significantly. Rapid economic development ignited by significant technological advances led to an increase in the human population, mass communications, and globalization. Human culture began to outgrow the institutions and doctrines that served it in the past. At the same time, some groups of people began to analyze the beliefs, values, and assumptions which underpinned this modern view of reality (Besthorn 2002). One of the most influential groups of people to examine the status quo and search for an alternative was that which formed the countercultural movement in the 1960s United States. The period was a turbulent one marked by political, economic, and socio-cultural changes which have been broadly documented (Roszak 1969, Echols 2002, Gair 2007, Strumse 2007, Pinker 2011, Kessler 2014, Moffatt 2020). I contend that it was also a time when a change occurred in the psychology of a group of social rebels regarding their

sense of self. It is this changed, extended and ecological perception of the self that has subsequently influenced Western thought to the present day.

The American counterculture of the 1960s articulated its beliefs and values through the attitudes of the people who formed it, through their protests and mass demonstrations, their appearance and artistic expressions, and impacted society at large. My argument is that for the people that formed the countercultural movement, under the influence of previous Romantic ideas, the anthropocentric self began a process of expansion from an isolated ego to a more inclusive form of itself that would initially incorporate other humans and eventually nature, finally giving birth to an ecological self (Strumse 2007).

The notion of an ecological self was prominent in the work of Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in the early 1970s. The philosopher captured the perspectives that emerged during the 1960s regarding human-nature relations and created the “deep ecology” school of thought, centered around the idea of an ecological self. Thus, deep ecology thinking expands the notion of the individual self to include a profound interconnection with all living beings, both humans and the whole of nature. Since the person is formed in their connection with other individuals and with their environment, and as an integral part of a larger system, they cannot exist independently of the whole. Thus, individual development involves a process of widening one’s sense of self and identifying with others - family, friends, communities, the human species - and then beyond humanity, with the non-human world. In this way, the natural world cannot be easily discarded as detached from humanity because the loss of nature would be a loss of self and a change in self-identity (Besthorn 2002). Thus, the ecological self is conceptualized as a human self that is deeply connected with and a part of nature, not disassociated from it (Madsen 2016).

The emergence of an ecological consciousness was therefore a gradual process and is still in the making. However, it started first with the growing concern of a group of people for historically disadvantaged members of society, as seen during the Civil rights movements, women’s liberation and anti-war protests, and eventually evolved to include the concern for the natural world, as expressed during the environmental movements.

As a result, the first Earth Day, an unprecedented movement held in 1970 in the United States, brought together almost 20 million Americans to show their concern for the environment (Rome 2003). The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in 1972 in Sweden and was the first time that representatives of multiple governments united to discuss the state of the global environment (Hays 1981). Since then, the variety of multilateral environmental agreements has increased to cover most aspects of environmental protection, such as the burning of fossil fuels, the trade in endangered species, the loss of animal habitats, the management of hazardous waste, and pollution, among others (Elliot 2007).

### **Research questions**

Using available literature on the subject, and primary sources (poems, songs) this thesis analyzes the social and cultural contexts as well as the previous influences that made possible the appearance of an ecological self. Subsequently, an ecocritical content analysis of a selection of nature-related Beat poems and counterculture songs will be conducted, in order to identify and describe the main narratives that contributed to the emergence of an ecological consciousness.

In line with the above, the overarching research question for the thesis is:

What types of narratives reflected, and contributed to, the emergence of an ecological self during the 1960s American cultural revolution?

To answer this question, I will focus on poetry and song lyrics which were representative for the American counterculture. In doing so, I propose the following two secondary questions:

In what way do the narratives of Beat poetry and countercultural songs reflect the paradigm change in the perception of human identity from an egotistical self to an ecological self?

What were the cultural and psychological sources of the ecological consciousness expressed in Beat poems and countercultural songs?

## **Theory and methodology**

In the following chapters, I will follow the idea of an evolution of the human sense of self from an isolated ego to an expanded social self and eventually to an ecological self. This idea was initially inspired by *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, in which Erich Neumann proposes that individual consciousness undergoes the same stages of development as human consciousness as a whole (Neumann 1970). That is, the development of an individual from birth to maturity can be extrapolated to form a model of the development of human consciousness throughout history. Neumann's model assumes a creative evolution of the self from the unconscious life of nature when the self is contained and is part of the whole of the natural world, to a rise in consciousness, when the self becomes aware of itself and begins to differentiate from nature to become independent of and distinct from it (Neumann 1970). However, within this stage, humans still have an innate desire to return to the state of nature where everything is connected and exists in perfect unity. Through magical beliefs, religious rituals, or transcendental practices, such states can be occasionally experienced by modern humans (Neumann 1970). Following Neumann's idea that the evolution of the self goes through a process of differentiation from nature and a desire to return to the natural world, I have based my hypothesis and research question on the theory of psychological development of the human self proposed by transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber.

Wilber describes the process of psychological development of an individual as starting from an unconscious state in early childhood and continuing with a series of expansions of the self from primary identifications with the body to more complex identifications with the environment. The concept of identification present in the model refers to a sense of similarity and commonality but not of being identical with some other entity. Through the process of identification, one's sense of self can be expanded to include another being, but it will still remain physically separate (Strumse 2007). Every new stage of expansion contains all the previous stages but no longer identifies with any one of the former levels; they all become integrated into a higher holistic order. For example, as the individual self becomes aware of his body and, consequently, his separation from the environment, he realizes his ability to act upon such an environment. The result is a self that identifies with the body as distinct from its surroundings. As

further stages of development occur (the appearance of verbal skills alongside the ability to anticipate events and to plan and delay gratification), the self reaches the higher levels of cognitive development and becomes an integrated and autonomous entity (Wilber 1979). So far, the model is similar to other theories of psychological development but, inspired by both Eastern and Western mystery traditions, Wilber proposes the existence of even higher levels of development. Those higher levels of consciousness are described as an experience of a final integration, in which the world process is experienced similar to one's own existence. This stage is seen as a complete integration in which the individual identifies with all things and events, even though these are understood as separate from the self. Wilber's model of human development appears to be almost identical with the most expansive state of deep ecology's "ecological self" (Strumse 2007). Wilber then proposes that the model of psychological growth and development of the individual human is a miniature reflection of universal human evolution and has the same goal: to advance the individual and humanity to even higher-order unities and integrations (Wilber 2014). Following Wilber's model, I intend to look at the cultural changes that marked the countercultural period as changes in the self and consciousness of the countercultural rebels, from an isolated ego to an expansive self.

In order to search for the markers of change during the 1960s counterculture, I intend to identify the ways in which people expressed themselves during that period. A suitable medium for this is to look at the narratives that predominated at the time. A narrative approach to identifying meaning seems a more appropriate method for looking at the cultural values and beliefs that prevailed during the 1960s counterculture. Unlike a scientific empirical approach, the study of narratives explains human experiences focusing on particularities in a realistic and authentic manner (Bruner 1990).

Humans organize their experience and the memory of their actions mainly through narratives, images and myths (Bruner 1991). Narratives are a way of presenting or understanding a situation or series of events that reflects and promotes a particular point of view or set of values. They are conventional forms, transmitted culturally, both orally and in written forms, through which humans try to express or extract meaning (Merriam-Webster 2021). Since they are cultural products, narratives are a way through which the human mind works collectively to express shared ideas within a specific social context.

Narratives provide the means for forming different meanings that deviate from the conventional norms and propagate this meaning to others (Bruner 1991). At the center of narratives stands the self because narratives are not self-less - they are expressed through the perspective of an individual that speaks for himself/herself or an entire group. Narratives suggest hidden meanings that may not be available through quantitative research methods and provide access to subjective experience and conceptions of self and identity, allowing for an alternative way of studying cultural phenomena (Smith 2000).

In order to analyze the narratives which were dominant in the 1960s counterculture, I have chosen a selection of poems written in the 1950s and 1960s by Beat poets and a selection of songs written in the 1960s and 1970s by the most influential artists associated with the counterculture.

Poetry has a longstanding history in human culture, and its role has been to express personal human experience and connect individuals to specific parts of culture. Through the use of poetry, among other forms of expression, the Beat poets of the 1950s challenged American society's conventionality; they were concerned with human rights struggles, humanity's relation to nature, and helped in the creation of a counterculture that pursued alternative ways of living (Wills 2009). Through their poetry, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Michael McClure, and other Beat poets reflected and influenced the social, cultural, and political concerns of the members of the counterculture. Their poems were a form of expressing the pressing social issues of the time and can be considered an image of the central narratives of the counterculture.

Similarly, music lyrics are also a form of narrative exposition, but they differ in presentation (Lidawan 2016). Music is an effective way to communicate to large groups of people, and the lyrics attached to the music play a significant role in shaping this communication (Ransom 2015). The popular songs appreciated by a group of people express universally understood meanings and embody experiences and feelings shared by the group through the combined effect of both music and lyrics (Mihalcea and Strapparava 2012). The lyrics articulate complex narrative meanings due to their being embedded in a broader social and cultural context (Negus 2012).

Music played an essential role in communicating ideas and emotions between counterculture members of the 1960s and offered people access to a common social



narrative that articulated a new identity. It helped express ideas of protest against racism, violence, environmental degradation, and other social issues. At the time, the music of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Jefferson Airplane, Joan Baez, and many others, was widely understood as representing and embodying a countercultural attitude toward the world. During the counterculture there was an explosion of music concerts and festivals, the number of musicians and record labels grew considerably, and music became an extremely popular medium for communication among young people.

In order to analyze the poems and songs, I will use a combination of research methods ranging from narrative analysis to thematic analysis, informed by ecocritical theory, as described below.

Narrative analysis is an approach to the analysis of qualitative data that emphasizes the stories that people use to account for their experiences, as well as to understand and create meaning in their lives (Bryman 2012). The narrative perspective permits a holistic approach to discourse that preserves both the context and the particularity of the message while focusing on the text's meaning as the result of socially shared modes of thinking and actions (Riessman 2005). Considering that narratives organize different pieces of information and themes to construct a message, I will begin the analysis of narratives by conducting a thematic examination of the texts to identify the main concepts and themes from the selected sample.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns of meaning (or themes) within data and interpreting various aspects of the research topic (Braun and Clarke 2006). It is a good research approach when the researcher is trying to find out something about people's views, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values from a set of qualitative data – for example, interview transcripts, survey responses, diaries, newspapers, and mass media. The method is flexible and can be adapted to many different kinds of research and sample data, and so the application of thematic analysis to poems and music lyrics seems appropriate for studying the meanings that arise in such texts.

There are different approaches to consider when conducting research using thematic analysis, including an inductive or a deductive approach. An inductive approach involves allowing the data to determine the themes of the study, and a deductive approach

consists of tackling data with some preconceived themes expected to be reflected in the text, based on theory or existing knowledge (Caulfield 2019). Although I will consider the themes that emerge from the sample, my focus will be on predetermined themes when analyzing the data, namely themes related to nature and the human relationship to the natural world.

The sample of data can also be approached through a semantic or a latent approach. The semantic approach involves analyzing the explicit content of the data, and the latent approach consists of reading into the subtext and assumptions underlying the data. For my study, I will use the latent approach, looking at the underlying ideas, patterns, and assumptions used and considering the social and cultural context in which the authors produced their work (Caulfield 2019).

The first step in conducting a thematic analysis of a text is familiarization with the sample, which I will do by thoroughly reading the texts and examining the social and cultural context in which the text was produced (Caulfield 2019).

The coding process follows as the second step, and it usually refers to highlighting sections of the text – phrases or sentences – establishing labels or “codes” to describe their content. In the present study, the codes will be represented by markers of interest, mostly predetermined from the literature review (Caulfield 2019) and related to the emergence of ecological consciousness. The markers will be grouped into themes and the themes into overarching narratives. After determining the list of narratives and their corresponding themes, I will name and define them by formulating what each theme means and figuring out how it helps answer the research questions (Caulfield 2019). For example, in the song “Big Yellow Taxi” by Joni Mitchell (1970), I can identify a theme that expresses the awareness of human-made ecological damage: “Hey, farmer, farmer / Put away the DDT now / Give me spots on my apples / But leave me the birds and the bees”; and a theme that expresses a rejection of materialism: “They took all the trees / Put ’em in a tree museum / And they charged the people / A dollar and a half just to see ’em.” The two themes might indicate a connection between the two concepts, such as the perception that a focus on materialism causes environmental degradation.

Ecocriticism, also known as environmental criticism or “green” criticism, is a literary theory that explores how nature and the natural world are imagined through

literary texts. The ecocritical study of a literary text is concerned with bringing out the role of nature, representation of nature, and natural elements in the many types of literature produced worldwide. It focuses on the different aspects of the human relationship to nature, such as how human beings use nature for their own ends, the importance of natural resources for society, or the evolution of human civilization along with nature (Barry 1995). Ecocriticism also investigates the concept of nature itself and the human perception of the natural world. The theory is situated at the intersection between environment and culture and navigates between the idea that nature is culturally constructed and the idea that nature actually exists in reality independent of human perception. The theory assumes that human culture is connected to the natural world, affecting it and being affected by it, and evaluates the way humans represent, interact with and construct the environment (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996). When discussing the role of ecocriticism, Lawrence Buell classifies the environmental crisis as a “crisis of the imagination the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imaging nature and humanity’s relation to it” (Buell 1995: 2).

Thus, taking an ecocritical approach to a text means asking questions about perceptions and cultural attitudes towards nature, such as: “How is nature represented in this text?”; “How are issues of environmental disaster and crises reflected in the text?”; “How is nature’s relationship to humans reflected in the text?”; etc. (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996).

### **Structure of the thesis**

In the first chapter I propose to describe the social, political and economic context in which the American cultural revolution of the 1960s took place in order to create a general overview of American society at that time. By portraying the key events of the decade and drawing on past events that influenced and culminated in that period I wish to illustrate how the American 1960s revolution as a movement has contributed to Western environmentalism in general. My main objective throughout the chapter will be to show that a massive change in the values and attitudes of the individuals took place in the 1960s. The expansion of social consciousness, which found its representation in

various forms of artistic expression, eventually led to the emergence of an ecological consciousness in the American culture and later on in the entire Western world.

In the second chapter, I will focus on the ideas found in the Romantic and Transcendentalist philosophies that inspired the reemergence of the ecological self during the counterculture movement of the 1960s. My assumption throughout this chapter will be that the seeds of an ecological self expressed by the Transcendentalists at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century influenced the ecological self articulated during the counterculture movement of the 1960s. By presenting the similarities, differences and links between Transcendentalism and the 20<sup>th</sup> century counterculture I intend to show how the ideas related to an ecological consciousness that appeared during 19<sup>th</sup> century Transcendentalism were reinvented and reimagined during the counterculture period. By doing so, I propose to determine the evolution and modification of environmental ideas over time.

In the third chapter I will analyze a sample of poems written by Beat poets in the 1950s and 1960s to demonstrate the presence of an ecological self in Beat literature and identify the form in which it was expressed. The examination of the poems will be based on the core narratives regarding an ecological consciousness extracted from the literature review. They will guide the analysis of the poems, as I will identify which ones appear most often and how they are connected in the analyzed texts.

In the fourth chapter, I will examine popular songs of the counterculture, for example: “Big Yellow Taxi” by Joni Mitchell, “Rocky Mountain High” by John Denver, “Don't Go Near the Water” by The Beach Boys, and many others. Using the same method as in the previous chapter, I will analyze the songs focusing on ideas and narratives identified in the literature review that demonstrate the presence of an ecological consciousness.

In the fifth and final chapter I will discuss the results of the study and the limitations of my research.

The chapters that follow will hopefully yield new insights on how the 1960s countercultural movement represented a momentous change in the intellectual and emotional history of humankind through the emergence of an ecological self which created the foundation for later environmental movements.

## **II. The American cultural revolution – From a social self to an ecological self**

In this chapter, I propose to describe the social, political, and economic context in which the American cultural revolution of the 1960s took place. By drawing on past events that influenced and culminated during that period, and portraying the critical events of the decade, I wish to illustrate what the American cultural revolution of the 1960s represented for American culture and subsequently for Western environmentalism.

My main objective is to show that in the 1960s, a massive change in the values and attitudes of individuals and, above that, an expansion of the social consciousness took place. This expansion led to the emergence of an ecological consciousness in American culture and, later on, in the entire Western world.

### **The counterculture**

The standard definition of ‘counterculture’ refers to a culture whose values and norms of behavior differ substantially from those of the established society and are sometimes diametrically opposed to mainstream culture (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary 2020). A countercultural movement expresses the contrasting attitudes and aspirations of a subset of the population during a defined period, triggering dramatic cultural changes in the entire society when they reach critical mass. Throughout history, there have been numerous examples of countercultural movements, such as the Enlightenment (Goffman and Joy 2005) and Romanticism (Forward 2014), that greatly influenced Western society. Similarly, the counterculture of the 1960s was an anti-establishment cultural phenomenon that developed throughout much of the Western world between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s.

The 1960s were unique in human history because cultural change happened very rapidly, and people’s attitudes were challenged across the Western world at an unprecedentedly fast pace. It was one of the most turbulent and disruptive periods in world history, marked on the one hand by economic affluence and a high standard of living and on the other hand by social movements, war, protests, and the emergence of an unprecedented gap between generations. Even though, the countercultural movement

was experienced across the Western world, for reasons of space, the focus of the thesis will be on the distinctive American counterculture.

In order to make sense of the changes in the consciousness of people during that period, it is essential to acknowledge the economic and political as well as the socio-cultural climate and its influence on people's attitudes and behavior. The most visible changes happened in the 1960s, but they were set in motion by previous events and ideas that cumulated over time and made the counterculture occur. Also, even though the ideas that emerged during the counterculture spread throughout the entire American culture, the counterculture itself comprised a small percentage of the population (Berger 1981).

### **The social and political climate of the 1960s**

At the beginning of the 1960s, the United States had the highest mass standard of living in world history due to the solid post-war economy of the 1940s and 1950s. After the shortages of many consumer products experienced during the war, demand increased significantly when the war ended victoriously. People were looking to settle down, take a job, buy a home and a car, and start a family (Marx 2011). American corporations were prepared to meet domestic and foreign demand for products, as the factories successfully converted from producing war equipment to producing automobiles and electronics (Moffatt 2020). The collapsed economic infrastructure of foreign competitors such as Japan and Germany created space for American businesses to thrive and increase their wealth. Business entered a period marked by consolidation when firms merged to create massive, diversified corporations. A housing boom, stimulated in part by easily affordable mortgages for returning servicemen, added to the expansion. The workforce was also changing, with the service sector surpassing the production sector and white-collar jobs outnumbering blue-collar ones (Moffatt 2020).

At the same time, due to the increased emphasis on security and welfare worldwide, government aid offered to families, and economic affluence, young couples were eager to have babies (Elliott 2020). From 1941 to 1961, more than 65 million children were born in the United States - a massive spike in the number of births compared to the war period but also to the post 1960s period (Colby and Ortman 2014). The phenomenon is referred to as the 'baby boom,' and it significantly increased the number

of consumers, which led to even more economic growth and more Americans joining the middle class (Moffatt 2020).

People became more educated as the college and university sector was expanding and as young people had the time and wealth to pursue academic studies. They lived close to one another on and around campuses, with considerably more freedom than they had experienced at home. Many of these college students had high, disposable incomes, allowing them to buy music records, travel, experiment with drugs, and take on other activities not necessarily permitted by parents. They also had more leisure time than was the case for earlier generations, where a much higher percentage of the graduating population would move straight into full-time work (Gair 2007).

Also, beginning with the 1950s, large numbers of Americans were purchasing televisions and watching popular shows. Developments in print and recording technology made it possible for the appearance of mass-market magazines and the emergence of the music industry. The means of communication changed dramatically in just a few years, and the flow of information became more rapid and widespread. Artists became popular faster and easier and sold more records than ever before. Developments in radio technology meant that teenagers could listen to music in their rooms rather than participating in shared familial experiences around the radio or television (Gair 2007).

The economic affluence changed business patterns, the relationship between businesses and the population, the way of life for the young, as well as the popular culture and artistic development. However, the Cold War was ongoing, and the American people's economic affluence came with a price. The events that happened during the Cold War changed people's perspectives on human being's role in the world. The United States and The Soviet Union were the main actors of the war. Both used espionage, psychological warfare, propaganda campaigns, embargoes, and political and military interference in the internal affairs of less powerful nations. Apart from the political struggle for global influence, there was also a conflict of ideologies between capitalist America and the communist Soviet Union and their allies. Mistakes and blatant lies at the highest levels<sup>1</sup> of government and dangerous political maneuvers (Kessler 2014) began to erode trust in the American government.

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<sup>1</sup> Bay of Pigs Invasion of Cuba in 1961 and 1960 U-2 incident

The Cuban Missile Crisis, for example, brought the world closer to nuclear war than ever before, and had potentially catastrophic consequences for the entire world. Starting with the Cuban Missile Crisis, nuclear weapons finally got discredited as people began to realize that the weapons' destructive capacity was of a magnitude different than anything seen before and that they violated any conception of proportionality in the waging of war (Pinker 2011). The consequences of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 made people aware that nuclear bombs' radiation could cause cancer for decades after the actual explosion and damage the atmosphere and the soil (Pinker 2011). The Cuban Missile Crisis instilled a sense of fear of irresponsible political and military leaders destroying the world in a nuclear cataclysm (Gair 2007) and helped mobilize anti-nuclear protests. It introduced a sense of a generation gap as the young began to feel less confident in their parents' abilities to control the world or protect them from danger (Gair 2007).

On top of that, the long, costly and divisive Vietnam War (1955-1975), probably the most famous Cold War-era proxy war, contributed to the dissatisfaction of Americans with their government's politics. Although Americans' involvement in the Vietnam War was required to defend freedom and democracy throughout the world, many soon realized that this presumed defence of liberty was a deception (Strumse 2007). The governmental control of individual behavior, primarily in the form of the draft, was intensely protested (Strumse 2007). The purpose of the war didn't make sense anymore, and people wanted to live a good and peaceful life instead of dying in battle. The fear of nuclear disaster and the strong dissatisfaction with the United States involvement in the Vietnam War set off a series of protests that grew in proportion over the decade and eventually became the Peace Movement.

Although the protests against the war were set off by events happening at the time, the psychological qualities necessary for such an endeavor were triggered by earlier developments in Western society (Pinker 2011). Even since the 18th century, famous writers were deconstructing the concept of honor, equating war with murder, ridiculing Europe's history of violence, and taking the viewpoints of soldiers and conquered peoples. The stories born from these experiences made the tragedy and uselessness of the war common knowledge. They encouraged their audiences to empathize with the



suffering of others by placing themselves in the shoes of the storyteller. These exercises in taking different perspectives helped expand people's circle of sympathy and, after that, the circle of rights. People began to understand that other living things, no matter how distant or different, should be safe from harm and mistreatment (Pinker 2011). Likewise, in the 1960s, the events of the war found expression in the popular culture. This time their propagation was rapid, helped by television and radio broadcasting, as well as newspapers and magazines. People could see what others were going through and sympathize with them and their stories (Pinker 2011).

This imaginative expansion helped set in motion the Civil rights movement that had been growing since the Second World War (Gair 2007). The race riots of the 1960s grew out of job discrimination, housing practices, and deindustrialization that dated back to the forties and fifties (Echols 2002). The protests started to significantly impact the late 1950s because, as many Americans now had televisions, the stories that before could be limited to a story of only local interest were transmitted into homes across the nation. At the same time, the social discourse of freedom and democracy that was dominant in America's external policies during the Cold War context didn't match the police brutality and atrocities of the Jim Crow system that were happening at home (Echols 2002). Students joined the movement as they started to feel morally worried about being privileged in a world of suffering and so they put themselves on the side of the oppressed. This student rebellion resulted in mainstream culture starting to take individual rights more seriously, strengthening the Civil rights movement (Berman 1996).

The Peace and the Civil rights movements prepared the stage for debating other issues that challenged the status quo and found an appropriate climate for expression in the 1960s. With the invention of the contraceptive pill, the road towards a sexual revolution was open. The pill gave women vastly increased control over their sexual-reproductive lives and helped change the experience and meaning of sex both inside and outside of marriage (Bailey 1997). During the sexual revolution of the 1960s, some people started to tell the truth about their sexual histories, their secret desires, and the ways they had been pretending to conform to societal norms. It was a controversial movement, but one of its outcomes was the perceived liberty of thought and expression it brought and a break from rigid repressive rules (Allyn 2000). It represented another

challenge against the status quo and added to the social transformation that was ongoing at that time.

### **The youth of the 1960s**

During the 1960s, the young became increasingly interested in social and political issues and more preoccupied with finding a meaning for living, since they now had the time and resources to do so. But they found themselves working in jobs that lacked substance, making useless or harmful products, or servicing bureaucratic structures. Most Americans' jobs were mindless, exhausting, tedious, and servile, something to be endured while real life was reserved for leisure time (Reich 1970). As Theodore Roszak wrote in *The Making of a Counterculture*, the society of the 1960s became one where all human activities - political, economic, and cultural - were put in the hands of specially trained experts that controlled even the most personal aspects of life like sexual behavior, child-rearing, mental health, recreation, etc. (Roszak 1969: 7). He used the term 'technocracy' to describe the society of that time, a society "in which those who govern justify themselves by appealing to technical experts who, in turn, justify themselves by appealing to scientific forms of knowledge" (Roszak 1969: 8). Together with all the other issues of the decade, this mode of organizing society was questioned by the young in the 1960s.

The youth acted against the technocratic structure of society and the norms of passivity exhibited by the older generation, which experienced economic collapse in the thirties, grand disorder and exhaustion after the war, the search for security and relaxation thereafter, overwhelming newfound prosperity, and nuclear terror (Roszak 1969). The adult generation saw science as a benefactor of society because it was closely related to the idea of technological progress that promised security and affluence (Roszak 1969). But in the 1960s, the youth noticed that science and technology also generated their characteristic problems, and they wanted to focus more on a sense of community rather than upon technical and scientific values. The insistence on scientific and objective knowledge that became the only method to achieve prosperity and happiness didn't make sense anymore in the affluent society where people felt alienated and separated from the world. Focused on discovering the world through objective means and specific analysis,

people began to lose the means to see the world as a whole in its overall splendor (Roszak 1969).

The young of the 1960s were experiencing a sense of a loss of self, which was one of the main issues that set off the counterculture. The education system was not prepared to face the demands of the changing society. The young were educated in a way that stripped them of their imagination, creativity, and personal dreams and shaped them in a manner suitable for an industrial society. Work life and personal life became separated, and none were felt as complete. Some people practically become their professions, roles or occupations, and were becoming strangers to themselves. Many young people no longer understood the system under which they lived because the structure became obsolete, and they have become powerless (Roszak 1969). The immense force of the increasingly complex technical system, set in motion by progress and economic development, made people aware of its dominating influence on their lives, decisions, and liberties. Some individuals began to search for ways to escape from, or influence the system (Reich 1970).

Thus, the emerging consciousness was the product of two interacting forces: the promise of the life that was made to young Americans by all of the affluence, technology, liberation, and ideals, and the threat to that promise made by boring jobs, the Vietnam War and the possibility of a nuclear cataclysm. A new perspective on life set the difference between the old and the new generation. Older people were inclined to think of work, injustice, and war as part of the human condition. The younger generation, which saw what the promised land looked like and tasted liberation and prosperity, could not so easily accept a dull corporate job, inequality, or a miserable death in war (Reich 1970). Young people saw a significant discrepancy between what could be and what was and felt personally betrayed by their leaders and parents. The insecurity they felt in regards to their life was one split between the possibilities of an almost utopian future, powered by advances in science and technology, human creativity and innovation, and the ongoing war, the political conflicts the State pursued, the danger of the nuclear bomb as well as the impersonal life and jobs that would await them at the end of adolescence (Reich 1970). This insecurity and anxiety about the future made the young generation of the 1960s willing to take risks and live their own life and experiences in the present with not much

thought for consequences (Echols 2002). In one interview, Janis Joplin, when asked if she was concerned with the abuse she put her voice through when she sang, replied that you could “destroy your now by worrying about tomorrow. We look back at our parents and see how they gave up and compromised and wound up with very little. So, the kids want a lot of something now rather than a little of hardly anything spread over seventy years.” (Echols 2002: 23).

The tensions and contradictions that built up during the post-war period could no longer be contained. The dissatisfaction with the unfulfilling and dull life that awaited after graduation made the youth take a different approach to life. They avoided at all costs settling down and following the same path as their parents (Echols 2002). As they were later called, the ‘baby boomers’ shared a sense of solidarity as if their generation were an ethnic group or a nation, a phenomenon never seen before between peers. They outnumbered the older generation, and with the help of the new electronic media - radio and television - they could acknowledge the strength of their numbers. The ‘baby boomers’ were the first generation to grow up with television, which allowed them to know that their peers were sharing the same experiences. This shared knowledge gave rise to a horizontal web of solidarity that cut across the vertical bonds to parents and authorities that had formerly isolated young people from one another and forced them to listen to their elders (Pinker 2011). Also, as the student population tripled between 1950 and 1970 in the US, lecture halls became crowded, and students experienced feelings of impersonality on campus. The ever-increasing gap between the students and the distant world of their professors and deans made it easier for the students to picture themselves as a distinct generation, and move towards political radicalism instead of the left-wing caution expressed by their teachers (Berman 1996). They directed their interest towards changing society, perhaps at first for their own sake in order to escape an unpromising future, but later on for the sake of humankind.

At the same time, the sense of loneliness and alienation the young generation felt from their parents and the system made them look for a community and alternative ways of living. With no appealing prospects to look to after leaving college or their parents’ home, the youth of the 1960s sought to create a community of those that thought in a similar way where they would feel like they belonged. As there were no previous reliable

models, the young began to experiment (Reich 1970), and in the process, they triggered a shift in the perception of life and an expansion of consciousness.

## **Alternative ways of living**

### *Psychedelics*

One of the areas of experimentation used by the young generation was experimentation with drugs. The counterculture of the 1960s is often associated with the consumption of psychedelics, like LSD, mescaline, psilocybin, and other chemical substances used for altering one's consciousness. Such substances entered into mass consumption in the late 1950s and were most popular during the 1960s.

Psychedelics are psychoactive substances that have remarkable idiosyncratic effects on the consciousness of the self and the environment, as well as changes in perception, emotion, and cognition (Zamberlan and Sanz 2018). Early research reported a range of effects of psychedelic chemicals on volunteers, such as depersonalization, loss of ego boundaries, distorted body image, synesthesia, emotional lability, distortion of the sense of time, hallucinations, and a sense of omniscience (Pollan 2018). Research conducted during the 1950s reported drugs' positive impact on treating patients with mental and emotional disorders and in tackling depression and anxiety of patients with life-threatening diseases (Pollan 2018). Studies conducted at Johns Hopkins University discovered that in many cases, the psilocybin experience led to lasting changes in the personalities of the subjects, such as an increase in the trait of 'openness to experience' (Dyck 2008). However, psychedelic substances were also reported to have adverse effects on the users and cause episodes of so-called 'bad trips.' At the beginning of the 1960s, after the spread of illicit LSD outside the research labs, some people showed up in emergency rooms with acute symptoms of paranoia, mania, catatonia, and anxiety. Some were having panic reactions, but others were having genuine psychotic breaks and were admitted to hospitals or psychiatric facilities (Pollan 2018). The adverse effects of the drugs were gaining increased coverage, and both scientists and the media focused on the risks and dangers of psychedelics, which led to a "full-on moral panic" (Pollan 2018). As a result, at the end of the 1960s, the research programs on psychedelics were canceled,

LSD was withdrawn from circulation, and - together with the other mind-altering substances - became illegal.

Nonetheless, many research studies and accounts of the effects of some psychedelics on humans mention increased plasticity of the mind and the discovery of new and more constructive stories about the self, which also embraced the environment (Pollan 2018). In his book *How to Change Your Mind*, Michael Pollan describes his own experiences with psychedelics as getting into a state of ego dissolution, having the realization that the entire planet is connected, like one living organism, and that people are all one interconnected being (Pollan 2018). Also, in the psychedelic literature of the 1960s, there are references to “a new level of connectedness outside of one’s individuated or isolated, self” and an ecological awareness that exists through the “recognition of the human capacity to destroy our planet” and also through “one’s ability to appreciate the beauty of the natural world (Dickins 2013).” With the dissolution of the ego, the mind could experience new and unexpected patterns of thinking and new types of relationships, generating an expansion of consciousness.

Discovery of individual identity has been one of the greatest achievements of Enlightenment humanism. However, there has been a price of this discovery, namely a sense of separation from others and nature. The consciousness of the self can lead to outstanding intellectual and artistic achievement, but also to destructive forms of selfishness and many types of unhappiness (Pollan 2018). Through their influence on human thought and perceptions, psychedelic chemicals, specifically LSD, had the effect of dissolving almost everything with which they came into contact, beginning with the self and ego, society’s various structures of authority, and subsequently the lines between every imaginable category: self and other, subject and object, the spiritual and the material. In the absence of the ego, the gap between the self and the world closed down, allowing the user to feel less separate and more connected, part of some larger entity (Pollan 2018). One study conducted by a team of psychologists at the Imperial College of London showed that after the use of psychedelics people’s attitudes towards nature shifted, as they felt less separate from the environment and perceived being closer to nature (Nour 2017).

To sum up: The use of mind-altering drugs has been controversial until this very day. There is, however, evidence showing how some psychedelics might have contributed to an entire generation breaking away from an old thought system and seeing the world from a different perspective (Sams 2009). If the expansion of social consciousness meant expanding beyond oneself to an increasingly large circle of people and the natural environment, maybe the effects of mind-altering substances had a dual - both positive and creative, but also destructive - role to play.

### *Eastern philosophy*

The youth of the 1960s also found meaning in alternative spiritual and religious philosophies. There was a strong influence on the young by the Eastern religions - mainly Buddhism and Hinduism - that were absorbed as a distinct and quite opposed system of beliefs to the prevalent one in those days. The Eastern religions came with their tradition of gentle, peaceful, and thoroughly civilized contemplativeness. They questioned the validity of the scientific world view and the superiority of rationality and technology, but they did so in a quiet and measured tone, almost with tenderness (Roszak 1969). The Eastern traditions did not reject analysis and debate, rather it asserted that they must contribute to actual profound experience (Roszak 1969). They viewed the world and all living beings as interconnected, including humans. These philosophies resonated with the young of the 1960s, and even though they might not have been adopted in their truest and purest form, parts of them were incorporated into the counterculture. The young generation found in Eastern philosophies an alternative to society's competitive requirements and conformities and a way to pursue different ways of thinking (Roszak 1969).

However, Eastern philosophies were embraced in a simplified way by the young of the 1960s that extracted from them only some of the teachings, which conformed and merged with the spirit of the time. The amorality and detachment of Zen were translated into ideas of "everything goes" at the artistic and social levels and the permissiveness of experimentation without limits, be it with sex or drugs (Roszak 1969). The true essence of the traditions could not be introduced in their complete form in Western culture because the two modes of seeing the world are fundamentally different. One was based on rationality, and the other was focused on irrationality as a way to experience life. As

Arthur Koestler concluded after a voyage to the East, the deliberate irrationality of the East is not a direct antidote for the excessive rationality of the West, though a hybridization of the two might be beneficial (Koestler 1960). Eastern philosophies were introduced into Western society in a hybridized form that merged with the prevalent values and ideas of the time. But even if the generation of the 1960s misunderstood the philosophy and applied it in a vulgarized way, the main idea of the traditions remained present in the radical critique of the conventional scientific conception of man and nature. Even if they took it with superficial understanding, their instinct was healthy, and by popularizing it, they helped the few minds who understood it more deeply to speak out in criticism of the dominant culture and the positivistic and dichotomous way of looking at the world (Roszak 1969).

The rational and technological society in which the counterculture generation lived, lacked the spirituality of religion - that aspect of life that could not be explained through words. With the earlier rejection of the corrupted religious establishment, Western society lost mystery and magical ritual in the process - the bonds of social life, the inarticulate conventions, and motivations that hold together the collective fabric of society. It is the ritual not imposed from a higher order but one in which the people participate willingly to free the imagination and explore self-expression, and to enrich life by experiences of awe and splendor. Mystery was once that which was sacred and taught man wise limitations, but with the appearance of scientific skepticism, the mysterious came to be either a puzzle to be solved or a guilty secret to be exposed (Roszak 1969: 262).

The young of the 1960s became fascinated with magic and ritual, tribal wisdom, and psychedelic experience in an attempt to resurrect the lost spirituality of the past (Roszak 1969) and their connection with the natural world. Drawing on the increased expansion of the self that started to be felt in the 1960s, and on the culture of political activism - inspired in part by the civil rights and antiwar movements - thousands of citizens became involved with environmental politics (Geary 2020). The concern for the environment was based on the spread of an ecological consciousness that viewed the natural world as a biological and geological system that acted as a whole. People started to acknowledge that humans bore responsibility for the impact of their daily lives on the



natural world and began to fear that human disruption of the Earth's ecosystems threatened the survival of the planet (Geary 2020).

### **The environmental movement**

This growing ecological consciousness was accompanied by the progress of science and technology and a change in research methodology that became more holistic and interdisciplinary. New scientific tools allowed the study of the effects human activity on ecosystems. The Cartesian paradigm began to crack and make way for a new paradigm that viewed the Earth and humans as interconnected elements of the same whole.

In this context, in 1962, Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a bestseller book considered by many historians as the indicator for the beginning of the modern American environmental movement. The book warned Americans about the adverse environmental effects of DDT, a potent insecticide that had been used in American agriculture starting in World War II, and it raised concerns that the unchecked growth of industry would threaten human health and destroy animal life. *Silent Spring* sent an ecological message, namely that humans were endangering their natural environment and needed to find some way of protecting themselves from the hazards of industrial society (Geary 2020).

Before the 1960s, American environmentalism was dominated by small, limited, and conservative organizations, like the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club, focused mainly on wilderness preservation. But in the 1960s, environmentalism was transformed into a mass movement that included in its membership a diverse range of people from old-style nature lovers to radical anti-capitalist activists. They concerned themselves not just with wilderness preservation but also with matters related to quality of life, the effects of consumerism, and pollution (Collomb 2012). The movement yielded results both at a social and political level. Membership in former conservationist organizations multiplied seven-fold during the 1960s, and between 1963 and 1968, almost three hundred conservation and beautification measures were signed, supported by more than \$12 billion in government funds. In 1964 the Wilderness Act came into force and permanently set aside certain federal lands from commercial and economic development to preserve them in their natural state (Geary 2020). The federal government also passed laws that would serve as significant precedents for future legislative action on pollution issues, like

the Clean Air Acts of 1963 and 1967, the Clean Water Act of 1960, and the Water Quality Act of 1965 (Geary 2020). Towards the end of the decade, the environmental movement grew considerably, aided by the widespread publicizing of a series of ecological crises, such as the 1969 blowout of an oil well platform off the coast of Santa Barbara, which contaminated picturesque California beaches with oil, and in the same year, the bursting into flames of the Cuyahoga River following toxic contamination. In the early 1970s, Congress passed important legislation to control pollution and establish national environmental quality standards. Even if the Reagan administration led to a partial stalemate of the environmental agenda, the American public still overwhelmingly supported environmental goals (Geary 2020).

The popularity of the environmental causes became evident in 1970. In that year, the first Earth Day was organized on 22 April to focus the public's attention on threats to the environment. In New York City, 100,000 people filled the Fifth Avenue to show their support for protecting the Earth. Organizers estimated that fifteen hundred colleges and ten thousand schools took part in Earth Day, and Time magazine estimated that about twenty million Americans participated in the event in some fashion (Geary 2020).

The change of perspective towards the natural world was also aided by one significant event at the end of the 1960s: The Moon landing. The Moon landing was a great technological and historical event and one of the most important events in the 20th century (Bindas 2019). The mission achieved something far more important than its creators had planned when, after televising several photos of the lifeless Moon's surface, on their orbit around the Moon, the astronauts captured the image that became known as the 'Earthrise.' One of the astronauts on the mission remarked at the time that the Earth appeared as a "grand oasis in the big vastness of space" (Poole 2008). In just a few days, the full-color image would be reproduced throughout the world, and the response would be overwhelming. The astronauts themselves were struck by what psychologists labeled the "overview effect," namely a "profound reaction to viewing the Earth from outside its atmosphere" (Yaden 2016).

Earthrise helped redirect many people's gaze away from the Moon and back toward the Earth in a new way. The harshness of space combined with the gray and dead surface of the Moon, was contrasted by an image of a strikingly blue, living planet

suspended in an ocean of darkness. Even though the mission had the purpose of exploring the Moon, the Earthrise photo turned the emphasis back to Earth. This picture, combined with the 1972 Blue Marble photo, challenged the Cartesian view of the universe and made the Earth a unique living planet, so eccentric, so exceptional, that it became the only thing worth attending to in the first place (Lazier 2011). The astronaut Joseph Allen put it best: “With all the arguments, pro and con, for going to the Moon, no one suggested that we should do it to look at the Earth. But that may in fact be the one important reason.” (Launius 2006). Looking at the Earth as flat, as was usually the case, people assumed it is infinite in dimension and resources. Still, by looking at it as round, as the photo sent from space accomplished, the Earth appeared as a finite capsule that had to be managed carefully (Pollan 2018). Those images helped change people’s view of planet Earth as they began to see it as a great and delicate organism that connected all beings. This helped develop their ecological consciousness even more.

The American society of the 1960s experienced a societal shift from traditional social values, order, and control, towards humanism and anti-institutionalism (Strumse 2007). The feelings of alienation from themselves and the world that people experienced gave rise to dissatisfaction with society’s natural order, and people searched for an alternative mode of living. Through protests and manifestations, they created a voice for their generation, and with the help of television and radio, they made that voice heard across the nation. The counterculture of the 1960s was motivated by revolutionary innovation, reform, and liberation, and was based on an expanded awareness of the needs of society as a whole (as in the civil rights and women’s liberation movements and the sexual revolution), of all of humanity (as in the peace movement) and the regional ecosystem and biosphere (as in the ecology movement) (Metzner 2009). This vision attracted the young people of the counterculture by building a better, more inclusive, and peaceful society and realized that that is not primarily a social task but a psychic one. Additionally, what made the movement first and foremost a cultural phenomenon rather than merely a political one was the fact that it reached beyond the surface and the ideology to the level of consciousness, looking to transform the human’s most profound sense of self, the other and the environment (Roszak 1969). The current paradigm was starting to shift. The dualistic ‘man versus nature’ view of the world was changing into a more

holistic one, that treated human beings as part of the natural world and the great web of interconnectedness.

### **The artists of the counterculture**

In the context of a societal shift, music played a major role in shaping the counterculture's characteristics and was the medium through which the young expressed their feelings and attitudes. Through the nature of the music of that time, we can now understand the spirit of the 1960s (Heilbrunner 2016). Music has crucially mobilized and supported the development of social activism and protests (civil rights and anti-war protests, environmental protests) through the lyrics of some of the artists that became icons of the counterculture (Kahn 2012).

The folk revival of the 1960s and the increased popularity of rock music came alongside the environmental movement within a period of intense social engagement. As a result, many influential artists wrote and recorded their songs with either a direct or implied ecological conscience. Artists like Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Joni Mitchell, John Denver, and the Beach Boys are just some of the acts that recorded both social protest songs and environmental-focused ones.

Perhaps the counterculture's earliest environmental song was "What Have They Done to The Rain," written by folk singer Malvina Reynolds in 1962 and later adopted by Joan Baez and The Searchers. In 1965 Tom Lehrer wrote the song "Pollution" with lyrics such as "Don't drink the water and don't breathe the air." In 1970 Joni Mitchell released "Big Yellow Taxi" considered to be one of the greatest environmentalist songs ever written, and Marvin Gaye's "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)" (1971) became one of popular music's most touching anthems for the environment. John Denver, a country and folk singer, often sang about the wilderness of Colorado with popular songs such as "Rocky Mountain High" (1972) and "Take Me Home, Country Roads" (1971). One of the most environmentally aware bands, The Beach Boys, made strong statements with the songs "Don't Go Near the Water" (1971) and "A Day in The Life of a Tree" (1971).

There was a noticeable increase in protest songs in the 1960s, and within that climate, more and more artists embraced themes related to environmental and ecological consciousness. The study of such compositions can show the listeners' interests and

concerns, and the impact such ideas had on the broader culture. For this reason, I propose to analyze the lyrics of songs written during the counterculture period in chapter V.

Because many of the artists that I will study claimed to be directly influenced by the Beats of the 1950s, in chapter IV I will also focus on the poetry of the most influential Beat poets, namely Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Michael McClure. The Beats saw modern society as joyless and futile, and thus reached for both withdrawal and protest. They were concerned with spiritual and social liberation, were opposed to the military-industrial society, respected the land, indigenous people, and contributed significantly to the evolution of rhythm and blues into rock and roll as a high art form (Ginsberg 1982). The Beats were also deeply involved in environmental reactions. They were concerned with the spread of ecological consciousness and their poetry was considered “the first literary wing of the environmental movement” (Meltzer 2001: 185). The Beat movement's social engagement continued long after the movement had faded and had lasting effects, influencing numerous artists and thinkers of the 1960s and beyond.

## **Summary**

The American countercultural revolution of the 1960s began in an environment of economic affluence in a post-war society that looked with hope to the future and with trust in the human achievements of the time. The newly achieved social security and welfare made families more prone to settle down and lead a middle-class life, raise children, and enjoy the perks of technological and scientific advances. At the same time, and in contrast with this stability, the country was shaken by the Cold war, the nuclear crisis, the Vietnam war, and the culmination of social, civil and racial unrest that had been boiling for decades. Society was struggling with a series of dualities: what was promised to all was not delivered to all, not in America, and especially not around the world, and the life that was advertised as the perfect life was not in fact satisfactory. In a post-scarcity society, people - especially young people - had different needs, desires, and expectations that the prevailing social order could not provide. This made them feel alienated from themselves and the older generation.

As a reaction to modernity's failures, and aided by the appearance of psychedelic chemicals and Eastern philosophy ideas, their concerns were expanding. They began to focus more on what they wanted and what the others wanted and needed as well. The Civil rights movement, the Peace Movement, and later on the Women's rights movement and the Gay liberation movement were the expression of an expansion of the social consciousness, first of a tiny part of society and subsequently of its majority. This enlarged social self continued to expand, and besides the categories of historically disadvantaged people, it included natural surroundings and eventually the whole planet. The image of planet Earth and humans' place in the world changed from a dualistic "man versus nature" perspective to a more holistic one, where all living beings, humans included, were connected, and the Earth was one great organism containing it all. This could be seen as the birth of an ecological consciousness at the societal level that has evolved since then, and that can be seen in its altered form in the present day.

Before I analyze the songs and poetry of the 1960s, I will first look for the less obvious roots of the countercultural ideas in the 19th century work of the so called Transcendentalist writers - the precursors of the ecological thinking of the 20th century.

### **III. From Transcendentalism to the Counterculture**

In this chapter I propose to analyze the American Transcendentalist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and compare it to the 1960s American counterculture in order to find the connections between the two movements with regards to an expansion of the social self. By comparing Transcendentalism to the counterculture, I intend to identify common ideas and the way those ideas were reinvented and reimagined during the 1960s counterculture and create the foundation for the main cultural narratives related to an ecological consciousness.

Transcendentalism was the philosophical and social movement developed in America in the 19th century in reaction to rationalism and as a critique of contemporary society's unthinking conformity (Goodman 2019). The movement emphasized the intuitive and spiritual above the empirical. It was based on a belief in the innate goodness of humanity, the supremacy of intuition over logic (Britannica 2017), and the essential unity of all creation. The Transcendentalist philosophy taught that divinity pervaded all

nature and humanity and urged that each person find “an original relation to the universe” (Goodman 2019).

My premise is that the seeds of the ecological self as expressed by the Transcendentalists at the beginning of the 19th century influenced the ecological self articulated during the counterculture of the 1960s. Cultural change is not the result of sudden new ideas but old ideas being taken seriously by increasing numbers of people (Schiff 1973). I will further on follow this line of thought with regards to the transformation of the Transcendentalist ideas into the 1960s countercultural ideas revolving around the expansion of the self.

My objective is to present the similarities, differences, and links between Transcendentalism and the 20th-century counterculture and to show how the ideas related to an ecological consciousness that appeared during the 19th-century Transcendentalism underwent a creative comeback during the American counterculture. I will also examine the Beat movement as a link between Transcendentalism and the 1960s counterculture, for the Beats were the precursors of the counterculture and influenced its emergence.

### **The Transcendentalist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Transcendentalism was the peculiar American manifestation of the Romantic Movement (Smith 1973). Romanticism and its appearance were usually presented as a reaction to the Enlightenment and its focus on reason and logic as the only way to discern truth and solve all of humanity’s problems. Although the Age of Enlightenment contributed significantly to the advances of Western society, its excessive focus on rationalism and scientific thinking and its discarding of human issues related to the soul were some of the reasons for the emergence of Romanticism. Its appearance was an effort to balance the purely objective view of reality with a subjective perspective (Ladd, Phillips, Meyers, Anesko 2010).

Romanticism was a reaction against accepted social and artistic conventions. It emphasized the power of the individual and changed the perception that the world is to be seen from a purely objective perspective to the idea that it can also be seen as a subjective experience. The Romantics believed that emotion and the senses could lead to higher truths than either reason or intellect. They supposed that feelings such as awe, fear,

joy, and wonder could reveal the mysteries of the world, and they explored the inner experiences of the self and the power of imagination. They also believed that human beings could live according to higher principles, such as social equality, freedom, and human rights (Ladd et al. 2010). These ideas of freedom and social equality were already a step further outside the notion of the self as an isolated ego and into the self as an entity concerned with other humans.

The Romantics also had a deep appreciation for nature's beauty and insisted that nature evoked strong feelings of awe and wonder in humankind. Thus, they saw nature as containing a higher, spiritual truth, even though it appeared to people as a material reality (Ladd et al. 2010). The value the Romantics put in nature as a spiritual entity brought it closer to the circle of sympathy they expressed for human beings and planted the seeds for an ecological self. These Romantic ideas point to the existence of an enlarged self that cares about other humans and nature and found its way in American thought primarily through the writers, poets, and thinkers that formed the Transcendentalist movement at the beginning of the 19th century.

The Transcendentalist movement emerged in the context of several independent events cumulating in American society at the beginning of the 19th century. On the one hand, the steady erosion of religious belief and trust in the Church and the rise of Unitarian intellectuals with the means, leisure, and training to pursue literature and scholarship led to the development of the movement (Boller 1974). On the other hand, the disruption of the old order by increasing industrialism and the progressive secularization of modern thought under the impact of science and technology had a significant effect on the appearance of the movement (Boller 1974).

The Transcendentalist movement began as a search for new ways of viewing the human condition that would replace the old views held by the Church. It was mainly a movement carried out by bright young Unitarian clerics searching for meaning, pattern, and purpose in the universe as the religious profession was no longer an option for most of them (Boller 1974). They longed for a more intense spiritual experience than the calm rationalism of Unitarianism (Finseth 1995). The Transcendentalists rejected the miracles presented in the Bible, the formalism, and the religious doctrines of the Church. They saw them as secondary aspects in religious experience, the primary characteristic being a



deep, experiential, and intuitive personal insight (Dinges 2019). For them, God was accessible to all and existed in the depths of the human person and nature, and humans were inherently good, corrupted only by society (Dinges 2019). The fundamental unity of the mind and the material world was one of Transcendentalism's creeds and one of the forms in which the early ecological self was expressed during that period.

The publication of Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* and the founding of the Transcendentalist club in 1836 was the starting point of the movement. Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were two of the most famous and influential Transcendentalists, alongside Margaret Fuller, George Ripley, and Bronson Alcott.

Inspired by earlier Romantic writers, Emerson moved away from his family's religious vocation and turned towards the Romantic cult of nature (Paglia 2003). He adopted a different philosophy than 18th-century rationalism and stated that humans had the ability to surpass the materialistic world and become conscious of the all-pervading spirit of the universe and the potential for human freedom (Britannica 2020). Emerson found reliable support in the world of nature for achieving self-reliance and individual freedom (Brooks 2014). Henry David Thoreau's works also supported the idea that humans must look beyond a materialistic outlook on the world and move away from the trivialities of a system based only on progress and prosperity, as then they will lose themselves and their individuality, one of humanity's most valuable resource (Cater 2008).

George Ripley and Bronson Alcott took the Transcendentalist ideas in a different direction than Emerson and Thoreau and hoped to forge models for the social reconstruction of man by creating utopian communes in the wilderness (Schiff 1973). They wanted to prepare a society of liberal, cultivated persons that would interact cooperatively and renounce competitive societal pressures (Britannica 2019).

Many of the questions the Transcendentalists posed, as well as their answers, passed into the mainstream of the American critical thought and challenged the nation's traditional knowledge (Boller 1974). Their ideas survived over the decades and echoed in the countercultural movement of the 1960s directly and through the influence they had on the Beat movement of the 1950s, a precursor of the counterculture.

## **Transcendentalism and the Beats**

The Beat literature can be seen as an attempt to bring back the Transcendentalist concept of a divine harmony between man and nature by writers alienated in the disillusioned world of 20th century America (Dorobek 2015). In contrast with the mainstream, rational view of society, the Beats saw the world through a Romantic lens (Partridge 2018). They were spiritual protesters and literary innovators that revolted against the outdated orthodoxies of 1950s America, much like the Transcendentalists revolted against the religious stillness of Unitarian orthodoxy (Prothero 1991).

The Beat generation of writers was influenced by the Transcendentalist writers and adopted many of their core ideas. Like Emerson and Thoreau, they aimed to contact the sacred through a nonverbal level of intuition and feeling and to transmit what they experienced through words (Prothero 1991). They believed in the sanctity of everyday life and in the nonconformist who thinks independently of mainstream opinions. And like George Ripley and Bronson Alcott, they wanted to create a spiritual community based on shared experiences, literature, and an ethic of compassion (Prothero 1991).

Like the Transcendentalists, the Beats recognized the potentially destructive effects of society on the individual and looked to avoid such effects through greater self-reliance. Both were discontent with the increasing materialism shown in society and the loss of sustainable values. They rejected mass culture and desired to live independently of its beliefs and customs, looking within oneself to determine one's actual needs and desires (Cater 2008). As such, the relationship between man and society exhibited a paradoxical nature in both movements. The individual existed as an independent, self-reliant entity that is also part of a spiritual, universal whole. The purpose was to motivate personal, fundamental changes in how humans relate to themselves and their surroundings. So, both movements emphasized the importance of making internal changes to the individual - through self-reliance, a personally relevant belief system, and first-hand experience - before pursuing external reforms to society (Cater 2008).

Despite their disappointment in society, neither the Transcendentalists nor the Beats supported widespread civic reform as a solution. Their ideas nevertheless managed to change American society. The alternative views and the original writing styles adopted by the Transcendentalists and the Beats helped expand the awareness of the effects of

society on the individual and emphasized the role of the self as a moral, spiritual, and intellectual entity. Through their different approach to society's problems, they created the motivation for change by affirming the importance of the self in defining one's own needs, desires, and interests (Cater 2008). The break from convention and the established social and political orders was a search for liberating the self and allowing it to pursue new ways of identification and expression in the world.

As an alternative to relying on society for a meaningful existence, The Beats validated the Transcendentalists' view that an individual should instead focus on spirituality and direct experience in nature. For example, in his book *Walden*, Thoreau wanted to demonstrate that one may live a fulfilling life without material goods (Cater 2008) with time to contemplate, walk in the woods, write, and communicate with nature (Lowne 2018). Similarly, Jack Kerouac elevates his experiences in nature in his poem *On the Road* and highlights the beauty of the natural surroundings and the human's connection to it: "We bent down and began picking cotton. It was beautiful...it was beautiful kneeling and hiding in that earth. If I felt like resting, I did, with my face on the pillow of brown moist earth. Birds sang an accompaniment. I thought I had found my life's work...I was a man of the earth" (Kerouac 2011: 61).

Furthermore, inspired by Emerson's ideas that considered man as part of nature, both Thoreau and later the Beats moved to reject the conventional notion of man as master of nature entirely. They proposed instead that the natural world with all living things is in an egalitarian relationship with humans. Nature was an entity that existed outside human society and was a powerful antidote to society's harmful effects. So, both the Transcendentalists and the Beats saw in nature an alternative to human culture, in which one could achieve deeper self-awareness (Cater 2008).

By proposing freedom and independence of the self from the constraints of culture and society, the Beats recovered the idea of self-reliance from the Transcendentalists and brought it to the 1950s. By aspiring towards a self that can follow its desires and needs and can exist outside society and in nature, the Beats promoted the process of expansion of the self from a limited and conformist self to a free and open self that could include other humans and the natural surroundings into itself.

Thus, the Transcendentalists' ideas regarding the role of humans in society and nature could be seen manifested in the Beat movement of the 1950s. Subsequently, those ideas reappeared in the countercultural movement of the 1960s, taken both from the Transcendentalists and the Beats, and reimagined in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century America.

### **Transcendentalism and the Counterculture**

The countercultural movement was, in a sense, the heir of 19th-century Transcendentalism because some of the dynamics of the 19th-century movement showed up again in the 1960s (Dinges 2019). Both movements expressed a rejection of authority and society's demands on the individual, as well as a disbelief in technology and the idea of progress for its own sake. Transcendentalism and the counterculture insisted upon the individual's autonomy and freedom from traditions and conventions, believed that humans are essentially good but corrupted only by society, and idealized nature (Nelson 1989).

#### *Individualism*

The idea of individualism was already embedded in American society in the 19th century through Protestant cultural codes, the various democratic and republican political principles, and the ideology of laissez-faire capitalism. Transcendentalism took the idea of individualism to new heights by more vigorously rejecting conformity and stating that before reforming society, individuals had to reform themselves from within. The Transcendentalists asserted that progress started with improving the individual and cultivating personal virtues rather than using external pressure or coercion (Dinges 2019).

During the counterculture period, this idea of individualism was retrieved and expressed through the desire for authenticity, being oneself, and living more freely, with less regard to external rules and norms. This time individualism took a more utilitarian form by maximizing self-interest and satisfying one's needs and wants without considering society's pressures. This emphasis on individualism created the opportunity for critical thinking and the search for different interpretations and solutions to the problems that humanity was facing (Dinges 2019).

The counterculture of the 1960s was a movement that appeared in opposition to the numbing conformity of the 1950s and the racial and gender injustices present in

American society. It expressed a rejection of bureaucratic structures and the consumer culture that had spread rapidly in the past decades, and it rejected technocracy and purely instrumental rationality (Dinges 2019). The counterculture wanted to release the human spirit from institutional restrictions and limitations and was concerned with issues related to the misuse of government power, war, race relations, sexism, and environmental exploitation (Dinges 2019).

The movement was complex and found expression in two different and contrasting ways. One envisioned a utopian future through confrontation, political activism, protesting and street demonstrations, and the other a future utopia of freedom and free love achieved primarily by dropping out of society (Dinges 2019).

### *Social protest*

The confrontational spirit of the counterculture, as seen in the civil rights movement, anti-war protests, and the environmental movements of the 1960s and 1970s, was directly influenced by the writers associated with Transcendentalism. Even though the Transcendentalists were not social activists in the modern sense, and they were reluctant to lend support to any particular cause, preferring social isolation as a way to achieve a moral society, their ideas nonetheless inspired the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Schiff 1973).

The Transcendentalist movement was primarily concerned with abolishing slavery and women's suffrage, and the counterculture with civil rights for people of color and the anti-war protests. But although the social and political issues that concerned the Transcendentalists and the counterculture people differed to some extent, they both supported the right of individuals to dissent and to engage in civil disobedience (Haydel 2009).

For example, like the counterculture activists, Thoreau fought for the freedom of African American people and openly attacked the Constitution and the National government because he believed they protected slavery and hindered individual freedom. In opposition to slavery, he stopped paying taxes, defending his actions by claiming that he would not support an institution that tolerated injustice: "I did not pay a tax to, or recognize the authority of, the state which buys and sells men, women, and children" (Powell 1995). Thoreau was arrested by the authorities and sent to jail for one night. By

breaking the law and willingly accepting the punishment, he was the first American to practice nonviolent civil disobedience (Powell 1995). After that night spent in jail, he gave a lecture entitled “The Relation of the Individual to the State” that later became “Civil Disobedience” where he opposed slavery and the Mexican-American War, and he advised people to pursue their lives based on conscience and morality (Powell 1995). Through his claim of the privilege to disobey the law, Thoreau inspired counterculture activists to engage in social and political action (Schiff 1973). He was the first American to define and use civil disobedience as a means of protest (Powell 1995). In his “Essay on Civil Disobedience” and “Speech in Defense of John Brown,” Thoreau claimed that a man with integrity has the right to disobey valid laws when his conscience tells him that the social policies are morally wrong. Alongside Gandhi and the Nuremberg Tribunal, Thoreau was one of the major sources cited to justify the right for civil disobedience during the counterculture period (Schiff 1973). During the 1960s, his ideas influenced the most famous leader of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr., who cited Thoreau to justify acts of nonviolent civil disobedience to further civil rights: “During my early college days, I read Thoreau’s essay on ‘Civil Disobedience’ for the first time, ...I became convinced then that non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good” (Powell 1995). King expressed his convictions in “Letter from Birmingham Jail” in 1963, in which he expanded the concepts first presented in Thoreau’s essay, introducing nonviolent direct action into the American tradition of protest. From then on, the civil rights movement inspired and set the stage for subsequent social causes, which borrowed its tactics of protest and social action.

Apart from expressing discontent with unjust laws, Thoreau also saw a need for immediate action. He believed that it is not enough to be against slavery and the war but that people must act on their conscience and bring change through action. By not paying his taxes and breaking the fugitive slave law, he believed he set an example in this sense. In “Civil Disobedience,” he declared that: “In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation, which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty, are slaves, and a whole country [Mexico] is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize.” (Thoreau 1946). Thoreau believed that one is an accomplice to injustice when one

supports the government even when one sees its faults and urged the abolitionists to immediately cut their ties with the government. The same call for action was present during all the countercultural protests when the people involved in the movements gathered in groups and protested against social and political injustices and discrimination (civil rights, anti-war, anti-nuclear, women's rights, gay liberation).

Although Thoreau's influence on the counterculture's spirit of protest is more prominent, Emerson also inspired the ideas that propelled the social movements of the 1960s. During his lifetime, Emerson struggled with the problem of slavery. He changed his view from detached criticism in his younger years to total demand for emancipation towards his adulthood (Moody 1945). Stirred by the arrest of a fugitive slave and the decision to return him to his owner under the Fugitive Slave Laws, Emerson criticized the whole judicial system and recognized within it a general "sickness of the time." The return of slaves to their owners was a clear violation of Emerson's belief in a higher moral law that ensures freedom to all humanity, and he insisted that "a man's right to liberty is as inalienable as his right to life" (Emerson 1923:187). In his two addresses on West Indian Emancipation, Emerson described the harsh realities of slavery and argued for the recognition of a shared "human nature" which has been historically denied to African Americans (Halliwell 1996). While Emerson insisted on the importance of self-reliance and introspection, he realized that it was also crucial for individuals to connect with society in order to improve it (Gougeon 2015). In his "Lecture on Slavery," he talked about the independence of the individual and highlighted the importance of social action to achieve that independence (Halliwell, 1996): "But whilst I insist on the doctrine of the independence and the inspiration of the individual, I do not cripple but exalt the social action ... A wise man delights in the powers of many people... We shall need to call them all out." (Gougeon 2015).

Another influential representative of Transcendentalism who influenced the counterculture of the 1960s was Margaret Fuller. Inspired by Emerson's principle of self-reliance, she became the leading advocate of women's rights in her day. For five years, Fuller conducted classes of conversations for women on literature, education, mythology, and philosophy with the purpose "to systematize thought" and to enrich the lives of women and dignify their place in society (Britannica 2006). These conversations

introduced women to the ideas of Transcendentalism and provided them with the space to engage with the issues surrounding their role in the social and political arena (Kelley 2006). In Fuller's original book, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, she argued, based on Transcendentalist principles, that there should be political, economic and psychological equality of the sexes (Gura 2019). Apart from the demand for equality for women, it was also a genuine appeal for women's emotional, intellectual, and spiritual fulfillment. Fuller advocated the need for young women to seek greater independence from home and family through education and to fulfill their potential instead of choosing a life of domesticity. The publication of this book started a heated debate and brought the issues of women's rights to the nation's attention (Britannica 2006). Margaret Fuller believed in equality between men and women and in the freedom to love without the constraints of society: "there is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman ... a woman may be in love with a woman, and a man with a man. It is pleasant to be sure of it, because it is undoubtedly the same love that we shall feel when we are angels." (Buehrens 2020).

Thoreau's civil disobedience ideas, Emerson's anti-slavery critique, and Fuller's feminist views were precursors of the protest movements of the 1960s and inspired the civil disobedience and civil rights activists of the time. The 19th century ideas found their way within the social and political context of the 1960s and helped consolidate the fight for social justice and equal society by direct action and confrontation.

### *Dropping out*

In contrast to the idea of creating a better future through social and political involvement, others chose the path of dropping out of society and creating a future in isolated communities. One of their sources of inspiration was once more the work of the Transcendentalists.

Thoreau's famous book *Walden* was largely read by founders of communes during the 1960s. His experience of leaving the town for the woods to find "the very essential facts of life" away from urban materialistic concerns inspired the counterculture rebels (Kidari 2012). The counterculture people were inspired by the rural ideal and the simple life described in *Walden*. But unlike Thoreau, who chose to be alone, they decided to create communities with friends and other people who shared the same ideas. The people living in communes believed that dropping out of society to fulfill one's destiny and to



live in harmony with friends and nature, without any unnecessary material goods, would lead humans to discover the essential meaning of existence and complete happiness (Kidari 2012).

The separation from society was a quest for a simpler and less materialistic life and a rejection of industrial and capitalist society and the conventional forms of relationships it promoted. The Transcendentalist journal, the *Harbinger*, frequently described how the Industrial Revolution in America had created factories with inhuman working conditions, poor laborers, crowded cities and slums, and a greedy middle-class, which set an economic value on everything (Schiff 1973). The same conditions were condemned during the 1960s counterculture along with many more topics like racism, imperialism, exploitation, war, and pollution. The Transcendentalist movement represented a form of resistance to the early industrial capitalism (Dinges 2019), and similarly, the 1960s counterculture expressed total dissatisfaction with the consumer capitalist order (Schiff 1973).

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, thousands of Americans expressed their discontent with capitalist culture by abandoning their settled lives, gathering in small groups, and forming Utopian communities, usually in the wilderness (Schiff 1973). These communities varied considerably from one another, but each was based on the rejection of certain or all aspects of the dominant culture. The most intellectual of the utopian communities were Brook Farm and Fruitlands, founded by a minority of the American Transcendentalists (Schiff, 1973). They were trying to create models for the social reconstruction of man, and they considered significant political and economic reform impossible without the proper cultural values (Schiff, 1973). Although there was a considerable amount of religiously inspired communitarian experimentation going on in the mid-19th century, Brook Farm and Fruitlands were secular in the sense that no single religion was imposed on the communities (Dinges 2019). They tried to establish ideas about freedom and human relationships, and to combine work, leisure and intellectual pursuits with spiritual renewal and closer communion with nature (Dinges 2019).

A century later, during the counterculture of the 1960s, people felt displaced after the war and, driven by the high levels of geographic mobility and family instability, some searched for a surrogate family community. The general longing for alternatives to the

American domestic life gave birth to counterculture communes. Some communes were purely secular and some derived from religious influences or were organized around some charismatic leader. Others represented a back-to-nature romanticism with a preference for handicraft and small-scale farming in contrast to business and industry (Dinges 2019). They represented a neutral land in natural surroundings where they could live according to their profound nature, out of sight of the capitalist society's pressures (Kidari 2012). Although the proportion of the nation's population of those who lived in communes was relatively the same during the 1840s as during the 1960s, the counterculture spread the idea of communitarianism much more through ad hoc concerts or music festivals that attracted the youth (Schiff 1973). The desire to be part of a community helped consolidate the idea of the unity between humans and the natural world and added to the development of an ecological self.

The counterculture of the 1960s found its inspiration in the Transcendentalist ideas of individual freedom and self-reliance, equality, social action, and communitarianism. Furthermore, it also reimagined other Transcendentalist ideas: the interest in Eastern philosophy, the rejection of scientism, and deepening of humanity's relation to nature.

### *Eastern philosophy*

Both Transcendentalism and the counterculture appeared in the context of general religious resurgence which made it possible to experiment with new religions and new forms of spiritual endeavour besides the Western religious tradition (Dinges 2019). Transcendentalism arose in the ferment of the Second Great Awakening, a Protestant religious revival, when new religious movements, cults, and new types of spiritualism appeared (Adventism, Mormonism, Shakers). Similarly, the counterculture emerged during a period of eruption of religions and spiritual experimentation, religious-inspired social activism, the Black Church, and the charismatic movement's appearance. Beginning with Transcendentalism and continuing during the 1960s counterculture, the main religious traditions of the Western world began a long-term steady decline, and a significant number of Americans began turning towards the Eastern religions (Dinges 2019).

The Transcendentalist movement was one of the earliest encounters with Eastern traditions, and its practitioners were the first Americans to be exposed to the then newly translated Eastern sacred texts. India's religious literature had been unknown to the West until the first European translation of the Bhagavad Gita appeared in 1785 when Sanskrit studies had just begun (Paglia 2003). During this time, articles started to appear in various journals dealing with different aspects of Asian religions. Some of the Transcendentalists, especially Emerson and Thoreau, were fascinated by these religions (Dinges 2019). They saw similarities between the Eastern philosophies' ideas and their own thought and used these ideas for inspiration and to fortify their own mystical beliefs. Eastern philosophy helped them reaffirm their convictions about the emergence of what Emerson called absolute religion or universal religion (Dinges 2019). They were interested in these traditions from an intellectual perspective and were drawn to their mystical and universalist aspect. The Transcendentalists helped plant Eastern religions in American culture and helped move American religious pluralism forward, creating a fertile ground for the coming movements (Dinges 2019).

During the 1950s and 1960s, more people started to adhere to Eastern religions and showed interest towards them beyond the pure intellectual curiosity showed by the Transcendentalists. They joined these traditions and became meditative practitioners. This interest in Eastern philosophy was already being anticipated in the Beat generation of the 1950s (Dinges 2019).

Part of the appeal of Eastern religions for both Transcendentalism and the counterculture was driven by the perception that these traditions offered a more benevolent view of the human relationship to the natural world (Dinges 2019). These views were not characterized by a doctrine of anthropocentrism, exploitation, and dominion over nature as in the Western culture. Still, they viewed nature as part of humanity in a holistic manner (Dinges 2019). The adoption of some of Eastern philosophy's core concepts contributed to an expansion of the social self to include all living beings as well as the natural world into itself and to the later emergence of an ecological self.

### *Rejection of scientism*

The counterculture also shared the Transcendentalist repulsion for scientism and technology, characteristic of industrial society. Technology was viewed as numbing and dehumanizing, with people treated like robots and human needs subordinated to industrial profits and technological programs (Schiff 1973). In a time when positivism and scientism were the dominant paradigms, the Transcendentalists saw technical progress as useless in human evolution (Kidari 2012). As opposed to the predominant view that knowledge could only be reached through objective observations and scientific experiences, the Transcendentalists believed that knowledge was an experience that came from deep inside and needed no other evidence than the feeling itself. They perceived the link between humans and nature through subjective experience and saw humanity and nature as one organism with God being present both in nature as it is in humans. One of the core questions of both movements was related to how to leave the materialistic world, go search for answers inside oneself, free humanity from the vision promoted by mainstream society, and allow people to find their real nature (Kidari 2012).

Although the use of technology was much more widespread in the 1960s and it became almost completely embedded in American culture, some people saw the dangers of continuous technological progress and feared that humanity would lose touch with itself and with nature in the process.

### *Humanity and nature*

In opposition to the artificiality of human creations, the Transcendentalists showed deep gratitude and appreciation for nature, not only for aesthetic reasons but also as a way to observe and understand the universal spirit that connects everyone and everything (Dinges 2019). Emerson's holistic vision of nature, like that of his friend Henry David Thoreau, anticipated the 1960s ecology. Thoreau's *Walden*, for example, was a journal of his experiment in austere living in the woods near Boston and became a canonical text for the sixty's counterculture (Paglia 2003).

For the Transcendentalists, nature was a holistic power, and it represented the place where one lost one's egotistical self and became one with the divine essence (Dinges 2019). The Transcendentalists had a sacramental sensibility towards nature and saw it as a source of moral discipline and the primary motor for revelation, enlightenment,

and spiritual fulfillment (Dinges 2019). They were not ecologists in the modern sense but had an ecological consciousness and rejected the utilitarian idea that nature was a tool, a commodity for manipulation and profit.

Similarly, the counterculture movement embraced a view on the human relationship to the natural world where nature was seen as permeated by divinity. The movement included a back-to-nature romanticism which emphasized getting in touch and living close to nature, more simply and often in communes, as described earlier. At first, the interest in nature during the 1960s counterculture was less spiritualized than that of the Transcendentalists (Dinges 2019). People had an ecological sensibility related to growing concern about pollution, chemicals, the environmental damage caused by the excesses of industrialization and commercialism, and a growing awareness of the fragility of the planet. However, towards the end of the 1960s, influenced by Eastern philosophy, psychedelic drugs, the flight to the Moon and not lastly by the old Transcendentalist ideas, this environmental awareness evolved into a stronger sense of the interdependence of all things and took on a more spiritualized sensibility (Dinges 2019).

The Transcendentalist writers spoke for nature and gave it a spiritual value that further influenced other writers and, finally, people's perception regarding the natural world (Brooks 2014). In the century between the publishing of *Walden* and *Silent Spring*, there was a growth in the awareness of the American people concerning the role of nature in human society and an intellectual and spiritual revolution resulting from the books and articles of the literary naturalists (Brooks 2014). If the response to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was instantaneous, this success was a culmination of all the works previously written about the value of nature that led readers to appreciate "the beauty of the living world" and made them fight to preserve what they had come to love and understand (Brooks 2014).

Therefore, social change and paradigm shifts are not caused by the appearance of entirely new ideas but by the reemergence of old ideas adopted and adapted to current situations. Such was the case during the counterculture of the 1960s when the steady accumulation of Romantic and Transcendentalist ideas, aided by the social context of the time, led to the emergence of an increasingly expanding self and finally to the emergence of an ecological self.

## **The enlarged self of the 1960s**

The parallels and borrowings notwithstanding, the expanded self that was blossoming during the 1960s counterculture took a different form than its previous manifestations and was distinctly expressed through the physical appearance of the counterculture rebels and their practices and beliefs. Emerging in a post-scarcity society with an increasingly affluent middle class, the counterculture people perceived that the central issue of the time was no longer the production of material goods but the inequality of distribution of such goods (Larkin 2015). With a great deal of leisure time on their hands, they started to think about other people and to pursue different ways of living and various forms of expression for one's individuality and personality.

The spirit of the 1960s counterculture emerged in contrast to the previous forms of expression of the older generations. The hippie culture was inspired by transcendentalist ideas and the Beat Generation's values, reinvented these ideas and values and expressed them in a different style.

As opposed to the spiritual and intellectual thought of the Transcendentalists and the cynical and dark attitude of the Beats, the hippies of the counterculture projected an attitude of joy and happiness into the world. Their search for independence from society's restrictions found expression in their standard of dress and grooming, which made hippies instantly recognizable to one another and served as a visual symbol of their respect for individual rights (Yablonsky 1968). The hippie's appearance showed their willingness to question authority and distance themselves from the conformist segments of society. They wore brightly colored clothes in unusual styles for that time, such as bell-bottom pants, vests, tie-dyed garments, dashikis, peasant blouses, and long, flowing skirts. The hippie's colorful and loose-fitting style came in opposition to the rigid and uniform clothing of the 1940s and 1950s. Their clothing was self-made or purchased from flea markets and second-hand shops, signifying a rejection of the consumerist and corporate culture of the 1960s (Pendergast 2004). The counterculture people were also challenging the prevailing gender differences of the time, as both men and women wore jeans and had long hair, both wore sandals, moccasins, or went barefoot. Men often sported beards while women wore little or no makeup and sometimes were going braless (Tompkins 2001).

The symbols and images used as a form of expression were intentionally borrowed from the poorer sections of society and different cultures. The hippie subculture celebrated groups of deprived and disadvantaged people and identified with the 'poor,' although most of the participants were part of the affluent, middle-class category (Hall 1968). The poor were social rejects and 'deviants' from mainstream society, living outside the prevalent social norms and expectations. They were one of the groups with which the hippies emotionally identified (Hall 1968). That was partly due to the shared life experiences, as the people of the counterculture, in their escape from society, found themselves on the fringe of the social order and could sympathize with other groups that had historically been in the same situation (Hall 1968). The Hippies expressed those identifications through their appearance as they had a disorderly and nomadic style that resembled the poor strata of society (Pendergast 2004).

Similarly, a large proportion of style inspiration was drawn from traditional clothing in Nepal, India, Bali, Morocco, Latin America, and African countries and from the Native Americans. Indian Nehru shirts, brightly colored African dashikis, Middle Eastern caftans, saris from India, and sarongs from Bali and Java were common in the Hippie costume. The Hippies wore jewelry made of silver from Mexico, India or Morocco in the form of bangles, rings, earrings, nose rings, and ankle bracelets (Stone 2021). The necklaces were decorated with peace symbols, yin-yang symbols, and other Eastern esoterica. Accessories for both men and women also included Native American jewelry, headscarves, headbands and long beaded necklaces (Tompkins 2001).

In the Hippie culture, there was a strong identification with the Native American culture because the Native Americans represented a symbol of the simple and primitive existence in a society of affluence and technological sophistication. Further, they were among the several deprived and exploited groups with whom the counterculture people identified (Hall 1968). The use of hallucinogenic drugs such as mescaline, cannabis, and peyote by the American Indians was another point of attraction for the counterculture rebels, and they adopted those practices and ritual emblems together with the clothing style (Hall 1968).

The counterculture people found inspiration for expressing their individuality by identifying with the social rejects of society: Amerindians, African Americans and other

subaltern groups. Although the black culture didn't exert such a powerful impact on the Hippies as it did on their predecessors, the beatnik generation, it nonetheless influenced the music and style of the counterculture and the sense of identity of the movement. The Hippies were mainly white, but they were cultural outsiders and rebels who rejected the American way of life. They recognized in the black radicals countercultural heroes who refused to compromise with the white and prosperous establishment (Miller 2012). Black musicians gave heart, soul, and energy to folk and jazz music and contributed significantly to the backbone of rock music (Miller 2012).

Both folk, jazz, and rock music were an integral part of hippie culture. But a distinctive feature of counterculture music was the influence of psychedelic drugs that were becoming common substances of use among the people from the movement. The music of the 1960s went beyond the limits of both folk and jazz by adding LSD and other mind-altering chemicals that inspired the artists to create an electrified rock and roll (Moore 2012) as a meaningful form of cultural expression. Towards the end of the 1960s, the blend between psychedelics and rock music produced a new form of expression of the counterculture's quest for meaning and expansion of the self. The counterculture rebels aimed to reach higher states of consciousness and live among individuals with the same values and ideas about the world. The use of psychedelics along with rock music challenged the traditional American social norms and institutions and played the role of liberator of minds and bodies, uniting the artists and the audiences in a community of the young and giving them the means to experiment and improvise with new ideas (Moore 2012).

The sounds of Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, The Doors, Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead, and many others, articulated an unconventional attitude toward the world (Moist 2018). Using fuzztone electric guitar, delay, and phasing alongside colorful and bright light shows, those artists were recreating the psychedelic experience and, by extension, a set of countercultural values and ideas along with it (Moist, 2018). This elaborated experience had both cultural and political implications as it offered a space for artistic expression and experimenting, and it also connected individuals to larger social and cultural issues that were happening at the time (Moist 2018), like the Vietnam war, the civil rights movement, and environmental pollution.



The counterculture music spread a message of social solidarity and a desire to overcome the opposition between individualism and collectivism by bringing together creative people that would inspire and influence one another and develop a collaborative community with a unique and renewed spirit. The need for a collective vision came as a reaction to the post-war modernization and the individualistic American life set to conform to already defined social roles. The narrow social networks were replaced by larger communities of people sharing the same values and ideas. Individual artists would collaborate with their peers and create an interdependent collective where each individual's skill would contribute to the whole musical experience.

During the 1960s, the desire for being part of a community also found expression in the live performances and festivals that became the most powerful medium for creating a sense of community within the counterculture. Audiences grew enormously in just a few years and culminated in 1969 with the Woodstock festival, which attracted more than 400.000 people and was a real-time experiment for communal living and sharing. Music concerts created an environment similar to religious rituals or festivals where the intensity of social interaction produced a state of euphoria among people who felt elevated beyond their ordinary, everyday selves (Moore 2016).

The counterculture had a much more significant impact on American culture than Transcendentalism did, even though both movements shared the same basic ideas of social reformation of man and society. The Transcendentalist intelligentsia was never large enough to challenge the existing order directly, but their ideas were propagated and adopted by the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s (Schiff 1973). Due to the economic affluence, the advances in technology, and especially due to the widespread use of mass media and television, the 1960s America created the medium in which a large, well-educated intelligentsia with much time on its hands could begin to examine the cultural values underlying capitalist materialism and spread alternative solutions to its ills (Schiff 1973).

## **Summary**

Throughout this chapter, I explored the origins of the ideas that formed an ecological consciousness during the 1960s counterculture. The emergence of an

ecological self was not sudden, but it evolved gradually. The isolated human ego incorporated more and more entities, starting from other humans, other living beings, and culminating with the entire planet. This process was one of expansion from a singular, isolated element to a network of interconnected parts that together formed a whole. The expansion of the self was set off by a multitude of diverse events (economic affluence, technological progress, war) but also by the perpetuation of ideas that challenged the role of humans in the world and their relationship with nature.

My argument is that during the modern era, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic movement, formed by a group of thinkers and writers concerned with human rights, the effects of industrialization, capitalism, and the separation of man from nature, planted the seeds for the 20<sup>th</sup> century emergence of an ecological self. Both movements emphasized the importance of the individual and the subjective experience of reality and insisted on the superiority of emotion and feeling over reason and intellect.

Inspired by the Romantics, the American Transcendentalists took those ideas and adapted them to the social context they were living in at the beginning of the 19th century when religion became less spiritual, and society was marked by slavery and war. For the Transcendentalists, humans were inherently good, self-reliant, in fundamental unity with nature, and the divine essence permeated both humans and nature. Therefore, humans were equal to each other, and all deserved to be free and have the same rights; they were part of nature and so nature as well deserved to be free and respected. Thoreau proposed civil disobedience as a way to initiate social change and retreat in nature as a way to improve oneself before aspiring to change society. Emerson was against slavery and believed in human freedom and the spiritual and divine qualities of nature, and Fuller was a strong proponent of women's rights and emancipation. In contrast to Thoreau's and Emerson's focus on individuality, Alcott and Ripley proposed the idea of a utopian community separated from society, centered around the same Transcendentalist's thoughts. Regardless of the differences in approach of the major Transcendentalist figures, they all inspired the following social movements and contributed to the expansion of the self and the inclusion of various categories of disadvantaged people and nature itself into the collective consciousness.

The Transcendentalists' ideas first influenced the Beat generation, the precursor of the counterculture, through the concepts of self-reliance and the divine harmony between humans and nature. The Beat poets felt alienated from the conformist and consumerist American society of the 1950s. They believed in self-reliance, intuition, feeling, and a direct experience in nature as ways to achieve a meaningful life. Just as the Transcendentalists, they were concerned with the relation between the individual self and society, with how to preserve individuality and at the same time be part of a universal whole.

The Beats, as well as the Transcendentalists, further inspired the counterculture of the 1960s, which borrowed and reimagined the Transcendentalist philosophy and expressed it in two different ways: through confrontation and social action and through withdrawal from society. The 1960s decade was confronted with a series of social issues accumulated over time, such as war, discrimination, poverty, consumerism, industrialization, alienation. The people concerned with such matters chose as a solution either to protest or drop out of society and live in communities with their likes. On the one hand, the counterculture rebels reimagined the Transcendentalists' ideas of civil disobedience and protest against the unfairness of the system into mass demonstrations and sit-ins. On the other, they found the inspiration for becoming self-reliant, non-dependent on society, and finding their true self and identity living close to nature and away from artificial human creations. The counterculture tried to solve the paradoxical role of the individual in the world by pursuing an authentic lifestyle while engaging in social action and longing to be part of a community.

The counterculture adopted the Transcendentalists' ideas in its own way, by the clothing style, music, and nomadic life of the people that formed it, frequently called the Hippies. In the search for an identity, the Hippies looked towards Eastern religions for spiritual experiences, experimented with psychedelics to expand consciousness, dressed and lived differently to rebel against the status quo, and engaged in protests with the desire to improve society. Their acceptance of people regardless of race, gender, or economic status was a big step in expanding the self, and the people of the counterculture were no longer isolated individuals but a community based on cooperation and a desire to improve humanity. And the counterculture's return to nature as a way to escape the ills

of society and the recognition that humanity is, in fact, part of nature gave the natural world great importance and value.

Inspired by the Transcendentalist philosophy of human freedom and equality and reverence for nature, the Counterculture of the 1960s reinvented those ideas and expressed them in the form of protest, social gatherings, art, music, and lifestyle. The massive number of people that participated in the movement and that adopted the countercultural ideals of human freedom was a clear sign of the emergence of an enlarged self that included humanity as a whole in itself. The further acceptance of the idea that humanity is part of nature and that the whole planet is an interconnected system points to the fact that an ecological self emerged during the 1960s in American culture.

In order to identify the forms of expression of the ecological self in the American counterculture, I will proceed to examine samples of poems written by the Beat generation of poets, the precursors of the of the 1960s cultural movement.

#### **IV. The Beat poetry**

In this chapter, I will analyze a selection of poems written by the Beat poets in the 1950s and 1960s to demonstrate the presence of an ecological self in the Beat literature and identify the cultural narratives in which it was expressed.

The Beat movement began with the collaboration of Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, and Allen Ginsberg at Columbia University in the 1940s. In the 1950s, Kerouac and Ginsberg left the East Coast and moved to San Francisco, where their literary success began with Ginsberg's recitation of *Howl* at the famous "Six Poets and the Six Gallery" reading in 1955. The co-founder of City Lights Booksellers & Publishers, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, was present and offered to publish Ginsberg's poems (Johnston 2013). Their unique style represented a new consciousness, and it soon attracted other aspiring poets, novelists, and artists, among which Gary Snyder and Michael McClure, and the movement began to grow and expand (Prothero 1991). This group of writers represented the core of Beat literature.

Therefore, to analyze the emergence of an ecological self in the Beat literature of the 1950s and 1960s, I will use a selection of poems from Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Michael McClure, as they were the most influential poets of

the movement. Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs, although emblematic figures of the Beat generation, were not focused on poetry, and their work will not be part of the analysis.

As I have argued in the previous chapters, the expansion of the social self towards an ecological self was a gradual one, and it was connected to a few core ideas and narratives that developed during the 1950s and the 1960s due to the social context of the time. The narratives described below, will guide the analysis of the poems, as I will identify which ones appear most often and how they are connected in the analyzed texts.<sup>2</sup>

My questions are: “In what way do the narratives of Beat poetry reflect the paradigm change in the perception of human identity, from an egotistical self to an ecological self?” and “What are the cultural and psychological sources of the ecological consciousness expressed in the Beat poems?”

### **Narratives of ecological consciousness**

In order to systematize the analysis of the poems, I have identified the primary ideas that demonstrate the presence of an ecological consciousness, as follows:

1. The main narratives directly associated with the emergence of an ecological self are related to the human’s perception of nature and the place of humans in the natural world. In this group, I have included the sense of the interconnectedness of the whole world, the idea of oneness and unity of all matter, the belief in the intrinsic value and beauty of nature, the desire for direct experience in nature, the importance of a connection between humanity and nature and the feelings of empathy towards all living beings. In direct connection with the human’s perception of nature, I have identified one other theme necessary for developing an ecological consciousness: people’s awareness of human-made environmental destruction.

2. A second key narrative includes the idea of individualism, expressed through the importance placed on the individual self, self-reliance, independent and critical thinking, authenticity, the rejection of conformism and the status quo, and the questioning of tradition. The independence of the self and the realization that the human self is the

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<sup>2</sup> The poems were selected based on the topics focusing on nature and human-nature relationships. They are summarized in Appendix 1 and presented integrally in Appendixes 2-16.

most fundamental unit of society which expresses the freedom to question social rules, reject authority and conformism, be authentic and find alternative ways of living. The expansion of the self towards an ecological self would have to begin with the awareness of the importance of the individual self and its place in the world, which is why I have included this theme in the analysis.

3. The narratives associated with the experimentation with mind-altering chemicals are related to the emergence of an ecological self. Regardless of the motivation for using mind-expanding drugs, the ingestion of psychedelics and smoking of marijuana allowed the user to experience the feelings of interconnectedness and unity of all living beings and unconditional love and empathy. The chemicals were the medium through which artists fulfilled their desire to belong and be integrated into a higher order of existence, into some larger entity. Many users of drugs sought to transcend reality, find an alternative existence free from conventions, and connect with the self and the natural world. Those experiences closed the gap between the self and the world and permitted the user to recognize the value of humans and nature and feel connected to the world as a whole, contributing to a change in the humans' awareness towards a more holistic understanding of the world.

4. Similarly, the narratives related to the search for an alternative spiritual system, particularly Eastern philosophy and Native American beliefs, point to an expansion of the self from egocentrism to ecocentrism. The underlying principles of these belief systems were in contrast to the traditional Western religious values and offered an alternative relation between humans and humans and nature. Eastern and Native American beliefs appeared under the form of non-duality, interconnectedness, unity of life on Earth, and living in the present as part of nature. Thus, the interest in alternative beliefs' systems that placed humans within the natural world offered people a different perspective and helped the emergence of an ecological self.

5. Another narrative that helped the appearance of an ecological consciousness includes the themes of rejection of materialism, consumerism, industrialism, capitalism, mechanistic culture and mass media culture, the rejection of scientific knowledge and technology. The massive economic and technological development of the 1950s and 1960s and the rapid change in the organization of society made many people feel alienated

from community and nature. They started looking for a more sustainable and gratifying way of living. The rejection of materialism and technology was linked to a desire to belong to a community, to return to nature and acknowledge the subjective side of life. It was a search for connection with other humans and nature as well, unmediated by the use of machines. The rejection of the growing mechanistic culture expressed the need for rediscovering sustainable human values that would bring people back together and in communion with nature, and it represented an initial stage in the emergence of the ecological self.

### **Ecological consciousness in Beat poetry**

*“Cold Mountain poems”* by Gary Snyder (1959)

The stanzas<sup>3</sup> analyzed in this section are part of the volume of poetry titled *Cold Mountain Poems*, first published by Gary Snyder in 1959. The poems are translations of an unknown Chinese poet’s works by the name of Han Shan, with whom Snyder felt a special affinity while studying Chinese and Japanese at the University of California. However, the poems are not mere translations but a melding of Han Shan’s Buddhist ideas and Snyder’s own philosophy and thought (Murphy 1992).

The narrative of living in direct communion with nature, isolated from society, appears from the beginning of the volume (Poem no. 2): “In a tangle of cliffs I chose a place - Bird-paths, but no trails for men.” The poet chooses a way of life secluded from human culture, following the cycle of nature: “Now I’ve lived here - how many years - Again and again, spring and winter pass” and rejects the materialistic life of the ordinary citizen that owns “silverware and cars” by asking “What’s the use of all that noise and money?”

The same narrative appears in Poem no. 7, where the speaker reiterates his connection to a secluded place in the mountains (“I settled at Cold Mountain long ago”) where he enjoys the creations of nature (“I prowl the woods and streams,” “Thin grass does for a mattress,” “The blue sky makes a good quilt”) and lives happily in unity with the natural world (“Happy with a stone overhead”). The direct experience of nature also provides the space for meditation and introspection, as he “linger(s) watching things

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 2 on page 113

themselves,” and allows for the acceptance of the cycle of life and nature in their ever-changing state (“Let heaven and earth go about their changes”).

In Poem no. 8, Snyder describes the wonders of nature (“long gorge,” “wide creek,” “mist-blurred grass,” “The pine sings”), invites the reader to renounce the attachment to materialistic perceptions (“Who can leap the world’s ties”), and embrace the marvel that is the natural world (“sit with me among the white clouds”).

Further in the volume, the poet presents the world of nature as the path to Enlightenment (Poem no 11): “Spring-water in the green creek is clear / Moonlight on Cold Mountain is white / Silent knowledge - the spirit is enlightened of itself.” By contemplating the elements and processes of nature and by being part of nature, the individual can enlighten himself and evolve into a higher being.

In Poem no. 12, Snyder shows the dark side of society when he describes the cities as polluted and hectic (“Entered cities of boiling red dust”) in contrast to the natural world (“Walked by rivers through deep green grass”). To escape from society and transcend reality, he consumes drugs, but their effect doesn’t last indefinitely: “Tried drugs, but couldn’t make Immortal.” Also, the activities performed in society are not satisfactory and cannot compare to a life in nature, so he chooses to return to the mountains and live in isolation, away from the cities and human society: “Read books and wrote poems on history. / Today I’m back at Cold Mountain: / I’ll sleep by the creek and purify my ears.” The poet once again elevates life in nature and attributes it cleansing and purifying qualities.

The mountain where the poet finds refuge becomes his home: “Cold Mountain is a house / Without beams or walls. / The six doors left and right are open / The hall is blue sky.” He finds in nature all that is necessary for living an accomplished life: “In the cold I build a little fire / When I’m hungry I boil up some greens.” Snyder criticizes the people that need material possessions and sees them as captives: “I’ve got no use for the kulak / With his big barn and pasture - / He just sets up a prison for himself.”

The idea of isolation in nature is further expressed in poem no. 5, in which Snyder “wanted a good place to settle” and found “Cold Mountain” as a suitable place. Under “a hidden pine” in the mountains, surrounded only by a “light wind,” reading “Huang and Lao,” the speaker transforms and unites with nature “I’ve even forgotten the way by



which I came.” The reference to “Huang and Lao” brings into focus the poet’s fascination with Eastern philosophy. Huang-Lao was the most influential Chinese school of thought in the 2nd-century BCE, which developed into the major religion named Taoism (Hansen 2014). The philosophy of Taoism emphasizes living in harmony with everything that exists and becoming one with the unplanned rhythms of the universe (Pollard and Rosenberg 2014), which is what Snyder also aspired to by reading Huang-Lao philosophy.

Throughout the poems, nature is perceived as beautiful, peaceful, nurturing, and humanity’s rightful home. The poet is aware of society’s harmful effects on nature, rejects its materialistic approach to life, and prefers to isolate himself and live in direct communion with the natural world. There, he can become part of the cycle of life and nature and, aided by Eastern philosophical concepts, can achieve heightened states of awareness and, ultimately, Enlightenment. In those poems, Snyder’s affection and awe towards nature seem to come from a dissatisfaction with human culture and a desire to free and expand his own self from the constraints of the social order. The poet chooses to flee from society and isolate himself in the wilderness, where through direct experience, he acknowledges the wonders of nature and incorporates it into his self.

*“Milton by Firelight”* by Gary Snyder (1959)

The poem “Milton by Firelight<sup>4</sup>” reviews the vision John Milton portrayed in “Paradise Lost” from the viewpoint of the modern man living in 1950s America. After reading Milton’s poem one night by the firelight, Snyder reflects on Earth and humankind’s beauty and innocence.

The first lines of the poem are a quotation from Paradise Lost, the words of Satan, spoken when he first invades Paradise and sees the original parents, Adam and Eve, and the beauty and innocence of Earth and humankind: “O hell, what do mine eyes / with grief behold?” Those words are now addressed to a simple miner who is part of and works together with nature, signifying the pure connection between humans and the natural world: “Working with an old / Single jack miner, who can sense / The vein and cleavage / In the very guts of rock, can.” The miner is one with the land and senses the unity of all

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 3 on page 115

matter. He perceives the “rock” as being organic and inorganic at the same time, as having “vein” and “guts,” both human, organic characteristics, but also “cleavage,” a feature of minerals, of inorganic matter.

Those lines reveal a theme of human communion with nature, in a real time and a real space. As opposed to Milton’s story that takes place in an imagined world, the story of the miner is real, concrete, and takes place in the present: “What use, Milton, a silly story / Of our lost general parents, / eaters of fruit?” The theme of human communion with nature is continued by the appearance of an American Indian boy that comes searching for tomatoes and green apples: “The Indian, the chainsaw boy, / And a string of six mules / Came riding down to camp / Hungry for tomatoes and green apples.” The apples that the boy is searching for to satisfy his hunger are presented in contrast with the apple mentioned in the origin story, the symbol of knowledge of good and evil. This time, the apples are products of nature and not of the human mind, nurturing human beings and having no philosophical meaning attached to them.

Thus, the Indian boy is a real being who lives in accordance with the cycle of nature, sleeping under the night sky and watching the river by morning: “Sleeping in saddle-blankets / Under a bright night-sky / Han River slantwise by morning.” As part of a different culture, the boy doesn’t need to worry about Western religious tradition or the stories humans create because he has his own beliefs and way of living in accordance with nature, preserved through generations. The presence of the Indian boy alludes to the search for an alternative system of beliefs that recognizes the importance of nature in human everyday life. Snyder expresses a rejection of Western mythology as a false and silly story that has no place in the current manifestation of the world (Jason 2002). The natural world is to be experienced and valued by humans, who are a part and a product of nature.

At the same time, nature is presented as following its own course independent of human concerns: “In ten thousand years the Sierras / Will be dry and dead, home of the scorpion. / Ice-scratched slabs and bent trees.” The human mind cannot compete with the grandness of nature, which transcends both time and space, and exists in an ever-changing state: “No paradise, no fall, / Only the weathering land / The wheeling sky.” The “Paradise” and the “fall” are human creations that fade in the face of eternal nature, which

will continue to exist long after humanity has disappeared. The images of a “weathering land” and a “wheeling sky” express both similarity and contrast. They refer to opposed elements of nature (“land” and “sky”) but are characterized by similar processes that describe large motions and changes.

The earth and the sky are in an ongoing process of transformation, and it is humankind that interferes with this process: “Man, with his Satan / Scouring the chaos of the mind.” The chaos Snyder refers to signifies nature, as nature is often regarded as chaotic and unpredictable. Man with his conscience (“Satan”) tries to remove this chaos by inventing stories and searching for explanations for natural processes to eliminate the unknown, but in the process, loses an essential part of his connection to nature. Here Snyder articulates the idea of direct experience in nature as an important part of human life rather than interpreting and conceptualizing the natural world through myths and stories.

After the journey into the world of ideas inspired by Milton’s story, the poet returns to his time and uses the same exclamation from the beginning, “Oh Hell! Fire down,” to express his wonder for the world of ordinary things, just as Satan marvelled at the sight of Paradise.

The poem expresses Snyder’s deep appreciation of nature and of the relationship between humans and the natural world, unmediated by reason but achieved through the senses and direct experience. The poet shows interest in other belief systems as alternatives to traditional Western thought because of their focus on the senses rather than the mind, just as the American Indian boy lives in accordance with the cycle of nature of which he is a part. Adding the miner’s connection to the land and rocks, the world described in the poem becomes interconnected and unitary. Humans are not expected to escape society, but rather perform the duties necessary for their survival, in direct communion with nature, focusing on their senses and respecting and admiring the natural world.

“*Migration of Birds*” by Gary Snyder (1965)

The poem “Migration of birds<sup>5</sup>” expresses the poet’s reflection on the life of migratory birds and their existence as a part of an interconnected ecosystem.

The poem begins with a hummingbird that distracts and awakens the poet to the world around: “It started just now with a hummingbird / ... / It stopped me studying.” The hummingbird is a symbol of nature, and it introduces the author to the surrounding environment, where he begins to notice other elements of the natural world: “the redwood post,” “a bush of yellow flowers,” “network of the sunshine,” “vines.” The redwood is covered in yellow flowers, the color of the sun, and white-crowned sparrows, a species of migratory birds, are beautifully singing: “White-crowned sparrows / Make tremendous singings in the trees.” The natural world that Snyder presents in this introduction is beautiful, valuable, and humans are part of it as their dwelling.

Jack Kerouac is sitting next to Snyder and is reading the *Diamond Sutra*: “Jack Kerouac outside, behind my back / Reads the Diamond Sutra in the sun.” The word “Sutra” is a form of literature found in Buddhism and represents a literary work composed of aphorisms - statements of a general truth or insights. *Diamond Sutra* contains teachings about anatman (non-self), giving without attachment to self (altruism), compassion for beings without notions of self (animals) and living without attachment (Hsing 2012). The reference to the Buddhist sacred text shows that the poet and his peers had an interest in Eastern philosophies and the idea of a non-egotistical self. Like the birds, the poets search for a way to live in communion with nature and their surroundings, without attachment to material things.

The movement of the birds is saddening (“Today that big abstraction’s at our door / For juncos and the robins all have left”) but Snyder understands that their migration is a necessary part in the cycle of nature. The birds depart to warmer climates, from one corner of the world to the other as an essential part for their survival: “Across the hill the seabirds / Chase Spring north along the coast.” This migratory movement signifies the interconnectedness of the world and the importance of all ecosystems for the preservation of nature and its cycles.

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<sup>5</sup> Appendix 4 on page 116

The poem expresses the beauty of the natural world and the sense of the interconnectedness of the whole planet. Inspired by Eastern religious teachings, Snyder contemplates nature with non-attachment and empathy and acknowledges that he is part of the natural world. The poet's ecological consciousness is expressed through his wonder and admiration of nature, and his focus on directly experiencing the world of nature.

*“Regarding Wave”* by Gary Snyder (1969)

The poem “Regarding wave<sup>6</sup>” expresses the idea that the natural world is connected through a constant flow of energy that passes through every being and object at every moment.

The opening lines of the poem describe waves of energy that are moving like music through everything that exists in the Universe: “The voice of the Dharma / the voice / now / A shimmering bell / through all.” “Dharma” is a key concept that appears in Indian religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and denotes the basic principles of cosmic or individual existence (Merriam-Webster 2021), also referred to as a “natural law” (Sundaram 1952). The Eastern concept of Dharma is used by the poet to illustrate a natural force that permeates all existence and creates the interconnectedness of all matter.

Snyder uses simple words arranged in subtle and irregular rhythms, and free word associations, making the poem flow through many musical repetitions of words and syntax: “Every hill, still. / Every tree alive. Every leaf. / All the slopes flow. / old woods, new seedlings, / tall grasses plumes. / Dark hollows; peaks of light. / wind stirs the cool side / Each leaf living. / All the hills.” Reiterating the words “all” and “every”, the poet suggests the unity and oneness of all matter across space and time (“old” / “new,” “dark” / “light”). Energy passes through everything (“hill,” “tree,” “leaf,” “slopes,” “woods,” “grasses,” “wind”), and as the stanza begins and ends with the same element (“hills”) it creates the sense of connection of all matter. At the same time, nature is seen as alive (“Every tree alive,” “Each leaf living”) and in constant change and movement (“old woods, new seedlings”).

The interconnectedness of the world is reinforced at the end when Snyder returns to the voice from the beginning of the poem: “The Voice / is a wife / to / him still.” The

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 5 on page 117

voice of Dharma, the wave of energy, becomes “the wife,” a symbol of humanity, suggesting that human beings are also part of the natural world.

In his book, *How to Change Your Mind* (2018), Michael Pollan describes numerous accounts of psychedelic experiences where the users had a perception of interconnectedness of all life and a feeling of belonging to the universe, similar to the ones described by Snyder: “Mushrooms have taught me the interconnectedness of all life-forms ... I am part of the stream of molecules that are flowing through nature. ... I feel that I am part of this continuum of stardust into which I am born and to which I will return at the end of this life” (Pollan 2018: 125). Similarly, the image of live nature created in the poem (“Every tree alive,” “Each leaf living”) resembles the psychedelic experiences described by Pollan: “I looked through the negative spaces formed by the hydrangea leaves ..., and it too was now more alive than I’d ever known a tree to be, infused with some kind of spirit—this one, too, benevolent” (Pollan, 2018: 132).

Snyder’s poem’s writing style is composed as a stream of consciousness, with an irregular cadence, and numerous repetitions and free associations that create the sensation of a transcendent experience, likely induced by drugs. Also, the feelings of unity, oneness, interconnectedness, and liveness of the universe described in the poem are very similar to the experiences felt on psychedelic substances. Those ideas, combined with the writing style, suggest that mind-altering chemicals might have inspired the poet to discover a higher plane of existence in communion with the world of nature.

Snyder’s desire to transcend reality leads him to Eastern philosophy and possibly experimentation with psychedelics, which in turn allow the poet to see the world of nature differently and discover feelings of interconnectedness, unity, and oneness of the universe.

“Wave” by Gary Snyder (1969)

The poem “Wave<sup>7</sup>” is part of the same volume of poetry as the previous piece “Regarding wave,” and it is a reflection on the essence of energy in the universe.

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 6 on page 118

Snyder begins by describing the ways energy manifests itself in the forms of natural objects: “Grooving clam shell, / streakt through marble, / sweeping down ponderosa pine bark-scale / rip-cut tree grain / sand-dunes, lava / flow.”

As the poem continues, Snyder merges the concept of universal energy with that of a human, specifically a woman: “Wave wife. / woman - wyfman, - / “veiled; vibrating; vague” / sawtooth ranges pulsing;” In his essay “Poetry and the Primitive” (Snyder 1969), the poet explains that, in Indo-European etymology, the words “voice,” “wife,” “wave,” and “vibration” come from the common root “yak,” which also represents the wife of the Hindu god Brahma (Kellman 2021). By using those concepts simultaneously, Snyder creates the image of unity and interconnectedness of life and natural processes and points out that the source of the universal energy is a feminine force. This reference alludes to the natural world as the source of life, since nature is often personified as a female, a mother (e.g., Mother Nature). The feminine force is described as “veiled; vibrating; vague” referring to both the power of natural forces (“vibrating”) but also to the mystery and unknown that surrounds nature (“veiled”, “vague”).

The natural world is infused with energy and manifests it in many forms: “great dunes rolling / Each inch rippled, every grain a wave.,” “wind, shake,” “Ah, trembling spreading radiating wyf / racing zebra.” Again, the “radiating wyf” (wife, nature) is seen as the primal source of energy linking all the elements present in the text.

The poem concludes with a request for the primal force of the universe (nature) to free the poet’s mind and open himself to unite with the energy: “catch me and fling me wide / To the dancing grain of things / of my mind!”

“Wave” is written in free verse with no regular metrical pattern and shifts in cadence, making it appear unstructured. The poem is composed of a flood of words and phrases, using the stream of consciousness<sup>8</sup> technique, and describes Snyder’s flow of thoughts in a transcendent, extraordinary experience. Both the writing style and the ideas presented in the poem point to experimentation with psychedelic substances, where the users describe feelings of connection with the universe in a free, unmediated state of

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<sup>8</sup> Stream of consciousness is a style or technique of writing that tries to capture the natural flow of a character's extended thought process, often by incorporating sensory impressions, incomplete ideas, unusual syntax, associations, repetitions and rough grammar (Frisella 2017)

being: “but the stream of consciousness is taking its own desultory course, and you are bobbing and drifting along with it, looking neither forward nor back, immersed in the currents of being rather than doing” (Pollan 2018: 409). The flow of words, ideas, and free associations that express the same states experienced while on mind-altering chemicals, make the poem an account of transcending reality through the use of such substances.

The poet’s experience of an alternate reality leads him to perceive the world of nature as the source of life and humanity as part of the interconnected web of nature. Eastern philosophical concepts, such as the sense of unity and interrelatedness of the natural world, guide the psychedelic experience, which in turn reinforces those ideas and leads to transcending reality and acknowledging the humans’ connection with nature.

*“Empty Mirror: Early Poems”* by Allen Ginsberg (1961)

The volume of poetry “Empty Mirror: Early Poems<sup>9</sup>” contains poems written by Allen Ginsberg in his youth. I found the pieces relevant for the analysis as they reveal the seeds of an ecological self in the poet’s earliest works and represent a starting point for further developing an ecological consciousness. They express ideas commonly found in the accounts of people who experienced psychedelic chemicals, making a case for the influence of mind-altering substances in the emergence of an ecological consciousness in Ginsberg’s works.

In “The Trembling of the Veil,” Ginsberg projects a view of nature as a live organism: “Today out of the window / the trees seemed like live / organisms on the moon.” The trees are a symbol of the natural world and they exist in communion with other elements of nature: “budding leaves wave delicately in the sunlight,” “blown by the breeze,” “bending and straining downward at once.” However, the images used by the poet create a vision of nature as striking and peculiar, as a mysterious land seen for the first time: “organisms on the moon,” “leaves, like a green hairy protuberance,” “scarlet-and-pink shoot-tips.” Ginsberg and the Beats experienced heavily with psychedelic substances (Chapman 2015), whose effects include seeing the world in a completely different way, often as alive: “I’m having these very interesting visuals, ... the stains on

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<sup>9</sup> see Appendixes 7-9 on page 119



the coffee table coming to life, swirling and transforming and rising from the surface” (Pollan 2018: 131).

Similarly, in “Metaphysics,” Ginsberg explores the unity, interconnectedness and divine character of the world: “This is the one and only / it is the absolute world. / There is no other world. / The circle is complete. / I am living in Eternity. / The ways of this world / are the ways of Heaven.” Nature becomes valuable in itself, divine and in unity with all life and matter. The feeling of divinity in the natural world again alludes to the experiences lived after consuming psychedelics, as users “described being given access to ... various manifestations of cosmic consciousness or divinity” (Pollan 2018: 11), and declared that they see the world as divine: “So I think we are divine. This is not intellectual; this is a core knowingness” (Pollan 2018: 71).

The poem “A Desolation” continues the poet’s journey into the new world, as he realizes that a meaningful life is to be found in the wilderness: “Now mind is clear / as a cloudless sky. / Time then to make a / home in wilderness.” Away from society, in nature, the poet becomes conscious and aware of the world around him and feels at home: “I live / here in the wilderness / awake and at home.” The awareness seems sudden and provoked by something (“Now mind is clear,” “I live ... awake”), and again resembles the accounts described after the use of mind-altering chemicals: “A part of my brain that had gone to sleep was awakened” (Pollan 2018: 362).

Those early poems show Allen Ginsberg’s fascination with the world of nature, as experienced from an alternate plane of consciousness: alive and pristine, seen as an organism that encircles everything and represents the original home of humanity. The remarkable similarity between Ginsberg’s descriptions of the world (nature as alive and divine, the universe as interconnected), his state of clarity and awareness, and the effects of psychedelics suggest that experimentation with mind-altering drugs influenced and shaped the poet’s perception of the natural world.

“*Sunflower Sutra*” by Allen Ginsberg (1956)

The poem “Sunflower Sutra<sup>10</sup>” focuses on the effects of modern society on humans and nature, showing Ginsberg’s awareness of the human-made environmental

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 10 on page 121

problems of his time. Right from the beginning, the poet introduces the reader to Eastern philosophy, naming the poem after one of the literary types of work found in the Buddhist tradition. Using the ancient sutra, the poet describes the man-nature relationship in the 20th century.

The first lines are a lament on the growing industrial and commercial society and the human perversion of nature. The image of heavy machinery and square housing units in contrast with the beauty of the sunset saddens Ginsberg, as he senses the deterioration of the natural landscape: “I walked on the banks of the tincan banana dock and sat down under the huge shade of a Southern Pacific locomotive to look at the sunset over the box house hills and cry.”

Accompanied by his friend Jack Kerouac, Ginsberg describes the surrounding landscape: “Jack Kerouac sat beside me on a busted rusty iron pole, companion, we thought the same thoughts of the soul, bleak and blue and sad-eyed, surrounded by the gnarled steel roots of trees of machinery.” By bringing together the mechanical “rusty iron,” “gnarled steel,” “machinery” and the natural “roots of trees” the poet creates a strong image of desolation and devastation of nature by industrial production. The natural world is replaced by machines, and the beauty of nature is lost in this artificial landscape.

The narrative of human-made environmental pollution continues in the following verses: “The oily water on the river mirrored the red sky, sun sank on top of final Frisco peaks, no fish in that stream, no hermit in those mounts, just ourselves rheumy-eyed and hung-over like old bums on the riverbank, tired and wily.” The effects of industrial pollution are depicted clearly in this verse: the river that the two see is filled with oil, which makes it impossible for the fish to live in it; the sky is red, also a sign of pollution; the hermit who might have lived off the land doesn’t exist anymore, as every human must instead find its place in the industrial world.

As they sit in contemplation, Kerouac shows a sunflower to Ginsberg, a symbol of nature and beauty. The poet is initially enchanted at the sight of the sunflower (“Look at the Sunflower, he said, ... - I rushed up enchanted - it was my first sunflower, memories of Blake - my visions - Harlem.” The memories of his first sunflower refer to a moment in Ginsberg’s life when, as he had an auditory hallucination, he heard the voice of William Blake reading poetry. In the hallucination, Blake was reciting one of his famous works,

“Ah, Sunflower,” a poem about humanity’s ceaseless aspiration for progress (Lane and Chazelle 2009). In Ginsberg’s poem, the sunflower is depicted as a dead object on top of a pile of waste, symbolizing the extreme pollution and exploitation of nature in the modern world caused by the continuous human need for progress.

The lines that follow depict a scenery of pollution and environmental devastation on the other side of the continent, signifying that the effects of industrialism are global and can be seen in the entire United States: “and Hells of the Eastern rivers, . . ., dead baby carriages, black treadless tires forgotten and unretreaded, the poem of the riverbank, condoms & pots, steel knives, nothing stainless, only the dank muck and the razor-sharp artifacts passing into the past.”

In this scene, the sunflower takes over the characteristic of the polluted society: “and the gray Sunflower poised against the sunset, crackly bleak and dusty with the smut and smog and smoke of olden locomotives in its eye.” Once a symbol of beauty, the flower became the symbol of a depraved and polluted society. However, it stands confidently and with dignity against all adversities, as it is “poised against the sunset,” signifying the poet’s belief in individualism and self-reliance.

Ginsberg continues to describe the devastating scene he finds himself in, using powerful imagery to represent the waste and destruction of the environment: “dress of dust,” “railroad skin,” “smog of cheek,” “eyelid of black mis’ry,” “hand of artificial worse-than-dirt-industrial,” “dusty loveless eyes,” “withered roots,” “skin of machinery,” “guts and innards of the weeping coughing car,” “tincans with their rusty tongues,” “milky breasts of cars,” “entangled in your mummied roots.” Here nature and humanity become entangled in the same web of existence, and the harm done to the environment affects humans as well, as they are interconnected parts of the same whole.

In the following lines, the poet contrasts the disturbing images described earlier with the beauty of the sunflower: “and you there standing before me in the sunset, all your glory in your form! / A perfect beauty of a sunflower! a perfect excellent lovely sunflower existence! / a sweet natural eye to the new hip moon, woke up alive and excited grasping in the sunset shadow sunrise golden monthly breeze!” Here the sunflower represents the beauty and the innocence of the natural world and the hope it brings to humanity through its existence. These lines are Romantic in style, and they express the

reverence for nature Ginsberg wants to bring back in order to solve society's present crisis: the sunflower is "a sweet natural eye," symbol of nature and hope, that "woke up" in "the new hip moon," a reference to the poet's generation.

The poet calls for a return to authenticity and individualism in the form of self-knowledge and self-awareness and a connection to the natural world as humans are part of nature after all: "You were never no locomotive, Sunflower, you were a sunflower!" He wants to contribute to the betterment of society and its relation to nature: "So I grabbed up the skeleton thick sunflower and stuck it at my side like a scepter, / and deliver my sermon to my soul, and Jack's soul too, and anyone who'll listen."

The poem is centered around a narrative expressing the awareness of human-made environmental destruction. The themes of rejection of materialism, industrialism, and mechanistic culture, coupled with the reverence and appreciation of nature, complement the main narrative. Themes of individualism and interest in Eastern philosophy are also present in the text, although indirectly.

The strong awareness of environmental problems merged with the intrinsic value attributed to nature, the interest in Eastern philosophy, and the belief in individualism show the presence of an ecological consciousness in the poem. This consciousness is expressed on the one hand by acknowledging the beauty of nature and the damage done by humans, and on the other, by desiring to change society and contribute to the improvement of the human-nature relationship.

*"America"* by Allen Ginsberg (1956)

The poem "America"<sup>11</sup> is a critique of American culture from the point of view of the disillusioned youths of the 1950s, and it anticipated the critique directed at the United States by the 1960's counterculture. Although a political statement, the poem contains relevant themes that signify the presence of an ecological consciousness in Allen Ginsberg's works.

The first section expresses the disappointment and disillusionment of the poet, who finds himself in a state of mental distress: "America I've given you all and now I'm nothing. / ... / I can't stand my own mind." His emotional state further highlights the

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix 11 on page 122

poet's discontent: "I don't feel good don't bother me. / I won't write my poem till I'm in my right mind." He personifies the nation and seems to be caught in a fictional world that he tries to make sense of: "America when will you be angelic? / When will you take off your clothes? / When will you look at yourself through the grave? When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites?"

The precarious state of mind Ginsberg experiences alludes to the consumption of drugs and alcohol as a way to escape the disturbing and unjust reality. The use of mind-altering chemicals is alluded to throughout the poem. For example, Ginsberg brings into focus his friend, Beat writer William S. Burroughs, who spent time in Tangiers, Morocco, in a sort of exile from the United States because of legal problems related to the transport of illegal drugs from Mexico (Lane and Chazelle 2009): "Burroughs is in Tangiers I don't think he'll come back it's sinister. / Are you being sinister or is this some form of practical joke?" Throughout his life, Ginsberg was firmly in support of legalizing drugs. He considered that the criminalization of such substances would chase away the artists, the 'great minds' of the nation, as had happened with Burroughs (Lane and Chazelle 2009).

Further on in the poem, Ginsberg declares that he also consumes mind-altering drugs: "I smoke marijuana every chance I get. / I sit in my house for days on end and stare at the roses in the closet." By describing the effect of those substances, the poet suggests that they induce a state of self-reflection, as he isolates himself inside his home and stares "in the closet." The "closet" signifies the inner life and the journey inward associated with consuming mind-altering substances, and the "roses" represent the beauty of life and nature. Through the use of mind-altering chemicals, Ginsberg searches for alternative states of consciousness and an escape from the real world and finds an answer in the innocent world of nature.

Simultaneously, an answer to the hardship of life is found in other religions and belief systems. Ginsberg renounces the Western religious tradition and embraces an alternative spiritual approach: "I won't say the Lord's Prayer. / I have mystical visions and cosmic vibrations." The perception of the world as "mystical" and full of "cosmic vibrations" alludes to an attraction to Eastern philosophical concepts and signifies that the world is seen as interconnected and unitary. The poet's interest in alternative belief systems is reinforced later when Ginsberg expresses the collision of values, between the

Western culture he grew up in and the later acquired interest in Zen Buddhism and Eastern philosophy: “Asia is rising against me. / I haven’t got a chinaman’s chance.” “Asia” and the Eastern thought are coming for him, and he cannot fight back with his American values that became irrelevant in solving the problems of the time.

The poet shows that American culture became too focused on materialism, and criticizes it when he ironically compares himself and his work to that of Henry Ford: “I will continue like Henry Ford my strophes are as individual as his automobiles more so they’re all different sexes. / America I will sell you strophes \$2500 apiece \$500 down on your old strophe”; “Your machinery is too much for me.” Henry Ford revolutionized the industry by creating an automatized assembly line for the mass production of automobiles, but with mass production, individuality and originality were destroyed. The poet shows that by being part of the capitalist and consumerist culture, the artist’s creative work would lose its value, and so he rejects materialism and the mechanistic culture of his time.

Even though the poem is not an explicit nature poem, Ginsberg intertwines narratives related to an ecological consciousness and recreates the image of an ecological self in his work. At the same time, he alludes to Eastern philosophy as an alternative to Western rigid and mechanistic values. Ginsberg rejects the materialistic approach to reality entirely, focusing instead on feeling and subjectivity.

Thus, the poet’s ecological self emerges from his dissatisfaction with mechanistic society, which strips people of their individuality and freedom. In the search for liberating the self, he discovers a new belief system in the East and a different way to experience reality with the help of mind-altering substances. Those guide him to contemplate nature and create a connection with the natural world.

“*Wales Visitation*” by Allen Ginsberg (1967)

The poem “Wales Visitation<sup>12</sup>” is a vivid description of the beautiful scenery in Wales that Ginsberg visited on one of his trips. It is a visionary encounter with the world of nature that the poet experienced after experimenting with psychedelic chemicals<sup>13</sup>. He

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 12 on page 125

<sup>13</sup> In the final line of the poem, Ginsberg reveals that part of the poem was written under the influence of LSD: “July 29, 1967 (LSD)—August 3, 1967 (London)”

vividly describes the experience and expresses common themes emerging from experimenting with mind-altering substances, such as the oneness, interconnectedness and aliveness of nature (Pollan 2018).

From the beginning of the poem, intense imagery is used to create a sense of awe and profound admiration for nature: “White fog lifting & falling on mountain-brow / Trees moving in rivers of wind / The clouds arise / as on a wave, gigantic eddy lifting mist / above teeming ferns exquisitely swayed / along a green crag.”

In the next lines, Ginsberg creates a contrast between the beautiful Welsh landscape and the urban setting of London, filled with the products of modernity such as towers and television: “but what seen by one man in a vale in Albion, / of the folk, whose physical sciences end in Ecology, / the wisdom of earthly relations, / ... / of the satanic thistle that raises its horned symmetry / ... / Remember 160 miles from London’s symmetrical thorned tower / & network of TV pictures flashing bearded your Self / ... / clouds passing through skeleton arches of Tintern Abbey.” The poet chooses the beauty of nature as opposed to material progress. He also refers to Blake and Wordsworth, Romantic poets, who also reflected on the beauty of the natural world: “heard in Blake’s old ear, & the silent thought of Wordsworth in eld Stillness.” When the Romantic poets appear in Ginsberg’s visions, he identifies with them and their ideas (“Bard Nameless as the Vast, babble to Vastness!”) and so with their reverence and admiration for nature.

The poem continues with the poet’s reflection on his surroundings and the description of the movement of the wind, the valley, the hills, the leaves, and the grasses in a unitary and interconnected movement: “All the Valley quivered, one extended motion, wind / undulating on mossy hills / a giant wash that sank white fog delicately down red runnels / ... / and lifted the floating Nebulous upward, and lifted the arms of the trees / and lifted the grasses an instant in balance / and lifted the lambs to hold still / and lifted the green of the hill, in one solemn wave.”

The movement is “upward” and all the elements of nature are “lifted” to the sky, to Heaven, in a synchronized motion: “valley upon valley under Heaven’s Ocean.” As the poet wonders at the vastness and immensity of the natural world (“A solid mass of Heaven, ... / a wavelet of Immensity”), he also suggests that divinity is found everywhere, even in the tiniest “grassblade” (“Heaven balanced on a grassblade”) and that all the

natural world and the entire universe is “One Being”: “One Being on the mountainside stirring gently / Exquisite scales trembling everywhere in balance, / ... / one Majesty the motion that stirred wet grass quivering.”

The following section celebrates the perfection and vitality of the external world and suggests that everything is a living being which breathes and is in constant motion and change: “No imperfection in the budded mountain, / Valleys breathe, heaven and earth move together, / daisies push inches of yellow air, vegetables tremble, / grass shimmers green / sheep speckle the mountainside, revolving their jaws with empty eyes, / horses dance in the warm rain, / tree-lined canals network live farmland, / blueberries fringe stone walls on hawthorn’d hills, / pheasants croak on meadows haired with fern.” All the elements of nature, organic or inorganic, are described as part of the same being that keeps everything in constant motion: “One being so balanced, so vast, that its softest breath / moves every floweret in the stillness on the valley floor, / trembles lamb-hair hung gossamer rain-beaded in the grass, / lifts trees on their roots, birds in the great draught.” The poet states that nature as representing eternal being is to be worshiped: “Kneel before the foxglove raising green buds, mauve bells drooped,” signifying the profound respect and reverence he holds for the natural world.

The poet’s fascination with Eastern philosophy also appears in the references to Buddha: “Stare close, no imperfection in the grass, / each flower Buddha-eye, repeating the story.” The ‘Buddha eye’ refers to the Eyes of Wisdom, a Buddhist concept signifying the Enlightened’s ability to see what lies beyond the material world, in all directions, and in the various flows of time. Nature, thus, is superior to humans and divine, for it transcends both space and time and sees beyond the mundane and the temporary.

The unity of the natural world and its divine state is reaffirmed in the following lines, where Ginsberg appeals to all life to come together with the Earth in one breath: “Groan thru breast and neck, a great Oh! to earth heart / Calling our Presence together / The great secret is no secret/ ... / Heaven breath and my own symmetric / Airs wavering thru antlered green fern / drawn in my navel, same breath as breathes thru Capel-Y-Ffn.”

The idea of divinity of nature is emphasized by the use of both Jewish and Eastern religious symbols: “the wind’s kabbala,” “Sounds of Aleph and Aum / through forests of gristle, / my skull and Lord Hereford’s Knob equal, / All Albion one.” The Kabbalah is a



set of Judaic teachings that explain the relationship between the unchanging, eternal God and the mortal, finite universe (God's creation) (Dan 2006). Ginsberg attributes the notion of kabbala to the wind, a natural element, making nature the medium through which humans can experience divinity.

“Aleph” is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet that implies the oneness of God (BJE n.d.), and “Aum” is a sacred sound and a spiritual symbol in Indian religions which signifies the essence of the ultimate reality, consciousness, or Atman (soul, self within) (Lochtefeld 2002). The sounds of “Aleph and Aum” (oneness, soul) encompass both humans (“gristle,” “my skull”) and nature (“forests,” “Lord Hereford’s Knob<sup>14</sup>”) in perfect unity and equality.

The poem ends with Ginsberg’s return from the state of meditation, as the effect of the chemicals wears off. The experience left a mark, and the poet continues to wonder about the complexity and vastness of the universe: “What did I notice? Particulars! The / vision of the great One is myriad - / smoke curls upward from ashtray, / house fire burned low, / The night, still wet & moody black heaven starless / upward in motion with wet wind.”

The entire poem is an ode to nature, centered around the unity, oneness, interconnectedness of the whole universe, and appreciation of the natural world. It was written under the influence of psychedelic substances, which enhanced the poet’s experience, influenced his relation with nature and elevated the natural world to the rank of divinity. The Eastern philosophical ideas of unity and oneness of the universe also contributed to the enrichment of the experience.

*“In Goya's greatest scenes we seem to see”* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1958)

The poem “In Goya’s greatest scenes we seem to see<sup>15</sup>” is a critique of the devastating effects of the American capitalist and consumerist society on the environment. It begins with the presentation of the works of Romantic painter Francisco Goya, famous for his depictions of the horrors and disastrous consequences of war, in the collection “Disasters of War” (Harris-Frankfort 2008): “In Goya’s greatest scenes we

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<sup>14</sup> Lord Hereford’s Knob is a mountain in Wales

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 13 on page 129

seem to see / the people of the world / exactly at the moment when / they first attained the title of / 'suffering humanity'."

Ferlinghetti uses the imagery of Goya's paintings to suggest the state of devastation and disaster of the past. People were full of rage and adversity, fixated on death and destruction ("bayonets," "blasted trees," "bent statues," "gibbets," "cadavers," "carnivorous cocks"). The natural world is barely represented in Goya's paintings, and Ferlinghetti uses that imagery to create the artificial and dead landscape in which the scene takes place ("abstract landscape," "under cement skies"). The dead landscape and the presence of war and violence make for an "imagination of disaster."

In the following lines, this scene of devastation is transposed from Goya's paintings into the present. The suffering and destruction found in the painter's works are still alive more than a century later, this time in a different place and culture. Ferlinghetti uses the comparison between Goya's scenes of war and the state of modern society to emphasize the gravity of the situation: "they are so bloody real / it is as if they really still existed / And they do / landscape is changed."

Just as Goya's characters are depicted in agony, the people of 1950s America are "ranged along the roads" instead of being pictured in their homes or communities, they are "plagued by legionaries" and live in a fake society, seized by madness ("demented roosters"). The roosters are the same predatory birds mentioned in the depiction of Goya's scene ("carnivorous cocks"). Still, this time they are "demented," signifying a change from the physical destruction that happens during the war to a spiritual decadence of a society created by modernity.

The average person suffers the same as the victims of war ("They are the same people"), but this time they are seen as victims of a senseless, greedy system. Isolated and detached from the community ("further from home"), they live in a dead and bleak environment where nature doesn't belong, occupied by enormous roads ("freeways fifty lanes wide"), cement constructions ("concrete continent"), and filled with advertisements of a false reality ("bland billboards"). The people are trapped in a world built for machinery and advertising. The physical brutality in Goya's scene turns to spiritual brutality in the section on America: the images of "babies and bayonets" and of "cadavers and carnivorous cocks" are replaced by "bland billboards" and "a concrete continent."

The “carnivorous cocks” that devoured the flesh have been replaced by “engines” that “devour America.” The scene Ferlinghetti is describing shows that a society that focuses on technology and capitalism rather than on people is as dangerous and causes as much destruction as war.

The poem criticizes the materialistic view of the world, human violence and ignorance, the environmental damage produced by modern society, and indirectly demands a reconnection with nature.

*“I am waiting”* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1958)

In the poem “I Am Waiting<sup>16</sup>,” Ferlinghetti expresses his hope for the improvement of American society through a change of approach to war, the environment, religion, and the media. Although the poem is not a direct nature poem, it tackles some narratives that refer directly to nature and an ecological consciousness in the poet’s mindset.

Ferlinghetti appeals to Romantic ideals and aspirations to articulate his desire for the rebirth of a lost state of wonder, as he repeats the line “I am waiting for a rebirth of wonder” seven times throughout the poem. The poet articulates his hope and desire for the improvement of society, which would be accomplished through a return to the innocence of the past: “and I am waiting / for the Age of Anxiety / to drop dead / ... / for the final withering away / of all governments / ... / for a religious revival / ... / for the meek to be blessed / ... / for the lost music to sound again / ... / for Alice in Wonderland / to retransmit to me / her total dream of innocence.” Before the destruction of nature by humankind, the world seemingly existed in harmony and balance, and the poet wants to return to that state: “and I am waiting / for forests and animals / to reclaim the earth as theirs.” The “forests” and “animals” are the representatives of nature, and they are depicted as the rightful heirs of the Earth. Ferlinghetti advocates for the freedom of the natural world from humanity’s constraints and for the appreciation of the wonder and beauty of nature: “and I am awaiting perpetually and forever / a renaissance of wonder.”

The longing for a better world is expressed through the poet’s desire to a return to the youthful and innocent spirit of nature that has existed since the beginning of time:

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix 14 on page 130

“and I am waiting / for the green mornings to come again / youth’s dumb green fields come back again.”

The poem reveals the presence of an ecological consciousness through the narratives that describe the world of nature as the primordial and original ruler of the planet and the need for humans to reconnect to nature and to be part of it again.

“*For the death of 100 Whales*” by Michael McClure (1959)

The poem “For the death of 100 Whales<sup>17</sup>” was written by Michael McClure in response to an article in *Time* magazine, in which United States soldiers were commissioned to slaughter one hundred killer whales: “In a single morning the soldiers, armed with rifles, machine guns, and boats, rounded up and then shot the whales to death. I read this poem at my first reading, in 1955.” (McClure 1959).

McClure depicts the horror of the whales’ slaughter in an attempt to awaken an indifferent public to its reckless treatment of nature (Faylor 2016). The whales are described as “Arctic steamers” that “Hung midsea / Like a boat mid-air” with “Brains the size of a teacup / Mouths the size of a door.” They are characterized as “sheep or children,” as innocent beings that merely exist within the cycle of nature, but also as divine characters that suffer a tragic fate (“Christ of mammals”). Humans, depicted as greedy and selfish (“sleek wolves / Mowers and reapers of sea kine”), attack the whales in a display of terror: “Turned and twisted / (Goya!!) / Flung blood and sperm. / Incense. / Gnashed at their tails and brothers / ... / Snapped at the sun, / Ran for the Sea’s floor.”

In order to create a powerful image, McClure invokes the painter Goya whose series of works, “Disasters of War,” depicted extreme war scenes, violence, and the mayhem of human conflicts (“(Goya!!),” “Goya! Goya!”). Nature and humankind merge, as both are being hunted down (“No angels dance those bridges. / OH GUN! OH BOW!”) and ruthlessly killed (“Cursed Christ of mammals”). By showing that both humans and animals suffer the same fate, the poet signifies the idea of unity and interconnectedness of all life on Earth, and that humans are part of nature and not a separate entity.

The massacre of the whales and the humans’ reckless actions are depicted as sinful: “There are no churches in the waves, / No holiness, / No passages or crossings /

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 15 on page 134

From the beasts' wet shore." Through its irresponsible actions, humanity degenerates and loses touch with nature and consequently with divinity, since the whales, symbol of nature, are seen as divine beings.

On the one hand, the poem suggests that humans and nature are interconnected and share the same destiny. On the other hand, it draws attention to the destruction of nature by humankind. McClure is strongly aware of the negative effect humans have on the natural world. Through the powerful images described in the poem, he desires to make others aware and eventually change their perception and actions towards nature.

*"Peyote Poem, Part I"* by Michael McClure (1959)

"Peyote Poem, Part I"<sup>18</sup> was written after Michael McClure's first experimentation with the hallucinatory drug peyote, a form of mescaline used by some North American Indian tribes in religious ceremonies (Jason 2002). The poet saw mind-altering substances as an instrument for developing and expanding his consciousness, and in the process, his view on humanity and nature was transformed. The poem describes the psychedelic experience and the effects it had on McClure's consciousness.

The piece begins with describing the setting for the psychedelic experience ("sitting in the black chair -- Rocker -- / the white walls reflecting the color of clouds / moving over the sun"). Soon after the ingestion of peyote, the poet's senses awaken, and he begins to feel the effects of the drug: "Clear -- the senses bright / ... / I hear the music of myself." He enters a state of omniscient consciousness: "I visit / among the peoples of myself and know all / I need to know. / I KNOW EVERYTHING!".

McClure experiences the opposites simultaneously: "but like divisions of all space / of all hideousness and beauty," "I close my eyes in divinity and pain. / I blink in solemnity and unsolemn joy." "I am without care part of all. Distinct." At the same time, he has synesthetic perceptions ("I see all there is to feel."), a conflation of senses that psychedelics are known to induce: colors attach to sounds, visuals become tactile and so on (Pollan 2018). The poets' experiences are concentrated on his feelings and sensations rather than the intellect ("I am friendly with the ache / in my belly,," "The answer to

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 16 on page 135

feeling is my feeling.,” “The pain in my stomach / is warm and tender. I am smiling. / The pain is many pointed, without anguish.”).

The drug expands McClure’s awareness (“I know / all there is to know. / I see all there is to feel.”), and as the poet becomes omniscient, he realizes that there is no time (“There is no time! / No answers.”), only space (“The dark brown space behind the door is precious”) and that he exists in this space both as a distinct element and as a part of the whole (“I am separate. / ... / I am without care part of all. Distinct.”).

The altered state of consciousness allows the poet to experiment with reality differently, and he senses, paradoxically, a simultaneous separateness from nature and a connection to the natural world. People who have experienced with those chemicals often describe being “given access to an alternative reality, a “beyond” where the usual physical laws don’t apply and various manifestations of cosmic consciousness or divinity present themselves as unmistakably real” (Pollan 2018: 11).

As difficult as it may be to put into words drug-induced hallucinatory experiences, by using contrasting metaphors and repetitions, contradictory images and ideas, and irregular rhythms, McClure managed to portray such an experience. The poet used psychedelic substances as a way to transcend reality and expand his sense of self. In the process, he discovered an answer to existence in the form of living without attachment to material things and focusing on feeling interconnected with the universe.

## **Conclusions**

The Beat generation of poets anticipated the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s American counterculture, and their ideas contributed to a change in the psychology of a young subculture of society. The exploration of a selection of Beat poems from the 1950s and 1960s revealed various narratives connected to the emergence of an ecological self.

The most common narrative, which appeared in ten of the quoted thirteen poems, expressed the idea of interconnectedness, oneness, and unity of life and the planet. This narrative is found both in Eastern philosophy and in the accounts describing the use of mind-altering substances, suggesting their influence in changing the perception towards nature for the Beat poets.

Consequently, the second most common narrative appeared in eight of the poems and expressed the interest in and fascination with alternative spiritual systems. Specifically, this interest was shown mostly through Eastern philosophical concepts and – though references to Native American beliefs (in “Milton by firelight”) and to Judaism (“Wales visitation”) are also to be found. The theme of spiritual awakening was dominant in “Cold Mountain poems,” “Migration of birds,” “Sunflower Sutra,” “Regarding wave” and “Wales visitation” and indirectly in “Milton by firelight,” “Wave” and “America.” The Beat poets’ fascination with Buddhism and other Eastern religions seems to have contributed to the adoption of ideas of unity, interconnectedness, and living in harmony with nature.

Another common narrative identified in the literary pieces has to do with achieving higher states of consciousness through experimentation with psychedelic substances (in six out of thirteen poems). The search for an alternative reality through the use of chemicals is found often in the poems, either by direct statements of the authors regarding the ingestion of psychedelics (like in “America,” “Wales visitation” and “Peyote Poem, Part I”) or by implied references within the poems (like in “Regarding wave,” “Wave” and “Empty mirror: Early poems”). Notably, the effects of such substances are described by the poets as experiences of oneness, interconnectedness, unity of the natural world, and reverence for nature.

The three narratives: nature - spirituality - psychedelic journey – described above usually appeared together in most of the poems, suggesting that they are interrelated. The use of psychedelics and the interest in alternative belief systems often occur together and always alongside the concept of unity and interconnectedness of nature, suggesting they significantly influenced the emergence of an ecological consciousness in the 1950s Beat generation.

Another set of narratives that appeared in three of the thirteen poems are related to concrete interpretations of reality, namely the idea of living physically in nature, the awareness of human-made environmental destruction, and the concept of rejection of materialism and all that it includes. The narrative of living in communion with nature and of direct experience in nature was present alongside the narratives of interconnectedness and interest in alternative spiritual beliefs, and it complemented the two themes.

The narrative of awareness of human-made environmental destruction and the idea of rejecting materialism appeared together in two of the poems (“Sunflower sutra” and “In Goya’s greatest scenes we seem to see”). Both poems suggested that one causes the other, namely the focus on materialism leads to the destruction of the environment.

However, in Ginsberg’s “America,” the critique of materialism does not relate to environmental degradation but to human degradation, as the poet suffers psychologically by living in a materialistic society. In contrast, in “For the death of 100 whales,” the sufferers are the animals, and environmental destruction is not caused by the materialistic view of the world but by other human characteristics, such as greed and selfishness.

Additionally, two of the poems (“Sunflower Sutra” and “America”) reflect the idea of individualism, through the use of tropes expressing the concepts of authenticity, self-knowledge, self-reliance and creativity. The majority of poems are written from a first-person perspective and repeatedly used the pronouns “I”, “me”, “mine” (“Cold Mountain poems”, “Milton by Firelight”, “Migration of Birds”, “Wave”, “Empty Mirror: Early poems”, “America”, “Sunflower Sutra”, “Wales Visitation”, “I am waiting”, “Peyote Poem, Part I”). Thus, it can be argued that all poems expressed a belief in individuality through a nonconformist style of writing and language and the focus placed on conveying the inner life of the poets and their subjective experiences.

The analysis of the selected poems revealed the complexity of the Beat generation’s ideals and motivations. The Beat poets were dissatisfied with the materialistic society of 1950s America, its conformism and violence, and felt alienated, alone, rejected and spiritually constricted by their culture. Inspired by previous Romantic and Transcendentalist thinkers, to whom they turned for guidance, they adopted a belief in individualism, authenticity, self-reliance, freedom and a commitment to the spiritual life that would provide a meaningful existence. In the search for individuality and meaningful existence, the Beats discovered Eastern philosophy and other non-Western spiritual systems and adopted many of their core beliefs (the unity and interconnectedness of the world, non-attachment to material possessions). Incidentally, psychedelic substances were permeating society at the time and, through their mind-expanding effects, became catalysts for the emerging new consciousness of the Beats.



The poems primarily expose the artists' desire to escape the harsh and conformist reality of their society and experience novel states of consciousness. In doing so, either through the use of mind-altering substances or Eastern practices and philosophies, they seem to have discovered a connection to the natural world and a new sense of empathy with nature and humanity. The altered states of consciousness opened the poets' minds to an alternative existence and a new possibility for the functioning of human culture, in accordance and as part of the cycles of nature. With this newly acquired vision of the world, the Beat poets began to acknowledge the adverse effects humans had on nature, the excessive focus on materialism that leads to the destruction of the environment, and the blind conformism that keeps the spirit of the people imprisoned. They expressed the need to effect change and sustainably reinvent society through their literary works that criticized and opposed the dominant values of the time.

In their attempts to flee from the evils of the world, the Beats discovered higher planes of consciousness, which made them want to improve the plight of society and contribute to the reinvention of humanity. The expanded consciousness - induced by mind-altering substances and inspired by Eastern philosophical ideas - was the starting point for a struggle for a better world which influenced the subsequent countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

## **V. The 1960s countercultural music**

In this chapter, I will analyze a selection of song lyrics released during the 1960s and 1970s by artists that influenced the American counterculture. My objective is to identify the cultural narratives that expressed the presence of an ecological self and the form in which it emerged in the music of the time.

During the 1960s and 1970s, music genres and themes diversified as people's interests and liberties expanded, and artists gained a better platform to promote their music on radio and television. Consequently, music played a significant role during the American counterculture as a medium through which the young people expressed their feelings and beliefs and as an instrument that mobilized and supported social activism and protests. Although most counterculture artists focused on anti-war and civil rights protest songs, a portion of them included environmental themes and ideas in their

artworks. Thus, for the analysis, I will select a sample of songs<sup>19</sup> released in the 1960s and 1970s related to nature and human-nature relationships. The narratives used for the analysis of the songs are the same narratives described and detailed in Chapter 4.

My questions are: “In what way do the narratives of countercultural songs reflect the paradigm change in the perception of human identity, from an egotistical self to an ecological self?” and “What are the cultural and psychological sources of the ecological consciousness expressed in the countercultural songs?”

### **Ecological consciousness in countercultural songs**

*“A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall” by Bob Dylan (1962)*

“A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall<sup>20</sup>” is a song written by Bob Dylan in 1962 and recorded later that year for his second album, “The Freewheeling' Bob Dylan<sup>21</sup>,” reaching number 22 in the US Billboard Top 100 in 1963. The folk song is written in the question-and-answer form, typical of traditional ballads, and its multiple themes communicate a message of injustice, suffering, warfare, and pollution.

Written as a conversation between a father and his son, where the father asks the questions, and the son answers, the song signifies the need for discussion between the old and young generations and the idea that the youth is discovering essential facts about the world that the older generation was unaware of.

The song tackles the themes of poverty (“Heard one person starve, I heard many people laughin’”; “Where the people are many and their hands are all empty”; “Where hunger is ugly”); corruption (“I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it”; “I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken”); and war and violence (“I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children”; “And the executioner’s face is always well hidden”). Each section ends with the concluding verses, “And it’s a hard, and it’s a hard, it’s a hard, it’s a hard / And it’s a hard rain’s a-gonna fall,” which signify that reckless human actions will lead to the end of the world which involves provoking the powers of nature. The “Hard rain” is similar to the biblical flood that wiped out humanity because of its corruption and degeneracy.

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<sup>19</sup> The selected songs are summarized in Annex 17 and presented integrally in Annexes 18-31.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 18 on page 150

<sup>21</sup> The album reached no. 22 in the US Billboard Top 100 in 1963 (Levy, 2005)

The themes described above are woven into two main narratives related to nature: one about human-made environmental degradation; and the other about the immense power of the forces of nature.

First, the natural world is depicted in a lamentable state: “misty mountains,” “sad forests,” “dead oceans.” Along with all the trouble that humans produce (poverty, war), they also cause the degradation of nature: “the pellets of poison are flooding their waters.” Water is being polluted, and the soil is being harmed through oil drilling: “I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin’ / I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin’.” Through personification and the use of powerful imagery (“branch with blood dripping,” “hammers bleeding”), nature is presented as alive and harmed by human activities. The destruction of the environment affects all life on Earth, including future generations who will not be able to enjoy the beauty of nature: “I met a young child beside a dead pony.”

However, the lines “a hard rain’s a-gonna fall” repeated throughout the song express the powerful force of nature that can wipe everything out. This idea is reinforced by the verses “I heard the sound of a thunder, it roared out a warnin’ / Heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world.” The natural world is incomparably more powerful than humankind and human creations and can potentially destroy the whole world if humans don’t end their destructive exploitation.

The song “A Hard Rain’s a-Gonna Fall” brings forth two narratives related to the relationship between humans and nature, and humanity’s view of the natural world. First, the song expresses a strong awareness of human-made environmental destruction and an implicit criticism of industrial activities. Second, it views nature as being a formidable force that humans should fear and respect, for they are not equal but inferior to nature and depend on it for survival. The second theme is new in the analysis, as it has not been previously identified in the literature review or the examination of the Beat poems. However, the theme is relevant for developing an ecological consciousness because it reveals the natural world's value for humanity’s survival.

*“What Have They Done to The Rain” by Joan Baez (1962)*

The song “What Have They Done to The Rain<sup>22</sup>” was initially written by folk singer Malvina Reynolds in 1962 as part of a campaign to stop nuclear testing in the atmosphere (Wikipedia 2021). It was later adopted by many other artists<sup>23</sup> including Joan Baez, who released it on her live album “Joan Baez in Concert, Part 1,” which peaked at number 10 on the Billboard Pop Albums chart in 1962.

The musical piece is a folk song including vocals accompanied by guitar. Its simplicity conveys a gentle yet melancholic and thought-provoking message and induces the listener with a sense of empathy for nature: “It doesn’t protest gently, but it sounds gentle” (Baez 1962).

The song begins by describing the rain as a continuous and constant process of nature that nurtures and sustains life on Earth, from leaves of grass to human beings: “Just a little rain falling all around / The grass lifts its head to the heavenly sound,” “Just a little boy standing in the rain / The gentle rain that falls for years,” “The leaves nod their head as the breeze blows by.” Nature is seen as innocent and divine: “little rain,” “gentle rain,” “heavenly sound”. At the same time, the natural world is anthropomorphized and presented as being in an interconnected relation with all its elements, humanity included: “grass lifts its head,” “leaves nod their head”.

However, humans interrupt this natural process, as the song asks, “What have they done to the rain,” which signifies that humans are disturbing the cycle of nature. As a result of human intervention, the once “gentle rain” transforms to “helpless tears,” personifying nature as a defenseless sufferer. The damage done to the rain affects all life on the planet: “And the grass is gone, the boy disappears / And rain keeps falling like helpless tears.”

The wind associated with the rain transforms as well, from “Just a little breeze out of the sky” to “Just a little breeze with some smoke in its eye.” The smoke represents the effects of the nuclear bomb after the explosion, when residual material propelled into the atmosphere “falls out” of the sky, under the form of dust or “black rain.” The song was written in the aftermath of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, during a

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix 19 on page 152

<sup>23</sup> The Searchers (reaching number 29 on the U.S. charts), The Seekers, Marianne Faithfull

period of intense military nuclear testing (US Department of Energy 1994). People could see the effects of the atom bomb in real-time, and the destruction it caused made a tremendous impression on humanity. The song expresses a general feeling of sorrow over injustice and suffering inflicted upon the natural environment, transmits this emotion to the listeners, and subtly incites them to protest.

*“Pollution” by Tom Lehrer (1965)*

The song “Pollution<sup>24</sup>” was written by Tom Lehrer and recorded in 1965 for the live album “That Was the Year That Was.” The album reached number 18 on Billboard's Top 200 Albums in 1966 and was on the chart for 51 weeks.

The song is a satiric condemnation of industrial pollution. The comic interpretation of the artist accompanied by the piano conveys a feeling of carefree cheerfulness in total contrast with the lyrics that transmit a somber message. The disparity between the joyful music and thought-provoking lyrics makes the song memorable and invites the listener to ponder the message in a relaxed manner.

The song begins with a warning for visitors to the United States: “Don’t drink the water and don’t breathe the air!” because they are polluted: “Pollution, pollution! / They got smog and sewage and mud. / Turn on your tap / And get hot and cold running crud!”. The warning comes as a result of the severe ecological damage that affects Americans constantly, in their communities and homes: “The city streets are really quite a thrill - / If the hoods don’t get you, the monoxide will”; “Lots of things there that you can drink, / But stay away from the kitchen sink!”

This environmental damage is attributed to human activity, specifically to industry: “You can use the latest toothpaste, / And then rinse your mouth / With industrial waste.” That is because the search for progress and the latest technologies can improve human life, but it also leads to the pollution of the environment and consequently to harm for humankind as well (“latest toothpaste,” “industrial waste”).

The song focuses on the air and water, the two elements necessary for human survival: “Just go out for a breath of air / And you’ll be ready for Medicare.”; “Wear a gas mask and a veil. / Then you can breathe, / Long as you don’t inhale!”; “The breakfast

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix 20 on page 153

garbage that you throw into the Bay / They drink at lunch in San Jose.” Both elements are in a precarious state, but humans refuse to acknowledge the danger and to do something about it, with the risk of perishing: “So go to the city, / See the crazy people there. / Like lambs to the slaughter, / They’re drinking the water / And breathing [cough] the air!”

Similarly, the pollution of the environment affects the animal world and, consequently, nature as a whole: “See the halibuts and the sturgeons / Being wiped out by detergeons. / Fish gotta swim and birds gotta fly, / But they don’t last long if they try.” The natural world is seen as interconnected because animals from separate ecosystems, as the fish and the birds, are being affected by pollution simultaneously. Similarly, the waste from one city can pollute another city.

The song presents the harmful effects of human activities on the environment and criticizes the ignorance of humankind about causing the destruction of the planet. The central theme is one of awareness of human-made ecological damage, specifically the pollution of the air and water, and a rejection of materialistic culture. A secondary theme refers to the connection between different ecosystems and between humans and nature.

*“When the Music’s Over” by The Doors (1967)*

“When the Music’s Over<sup>25</sup>” is a song by the band The Doors released in 1967 on their second album “Strange Days.” The album was a commercial success, reaching number three on the US Billboard 200 and eventually earning the Recording Industry Association of America platinum certification.

The song incorporates psychedelic references both in musical composition and in the lyrics. The psychedelic experience is known to produce a wide range of effects on the consciousness of the self and the environment that changes the perception of reality and introduces the user to a trance (Nichols 2016). Similarly, the song’s music integrates the sound of an organ with distorted guitars and electric bass that alternates with tranquil passages to create an intensely dramatic scene and reproduce the psychedelic trance and a distortion of reality. Also, the lyrics are written in a disordered manner and contain numerous repetitions and metaphors that create the illusion of an alternate reality.

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<sup>25</sup> See Appendix 21 on page 154

The beginning and end of the song are almost identical. They contain the repetition of the verses “When the music’s over / Turn out the lights / Until the end,” which creates the image of circularity and unity, making the song a journey for the listener. The music is the main element of the song and it is referred to throughout the song as “music is your special friend,” “Music is your only friend.” The psychedelic experience creates an altered perception of time and space, and when linked to music, results in a hyper-focusing of attention on sound and total immersion in an acoustic space (Fachner 1999). The psychedelic journey into sound becomes an enhanced and intensified experience of music and existence is conceived only in relation to sound (Fachner 1999): “Music is your only friend / Until the end”. At the same time, also through acoustic metaphors, it indicates a desire to transcend known reality and experience the impossible: “I want to hear / The scream of the butterfly.”

In the following lines, the music becomes the sound of the Earth: “Waitin’ around with our heads to the ground / I hear a very gentle sound / Very near yet very far / Very soft, yeah, very clear.” The altered perception of time and space, described by contrasting adjectives and as having opposing characteristics simultaneously (“near” but “far,” “soft” but “clear”), directs the listeners' attention from music to the sound of the natural world.

The shift in focus to the sounds of the Earth introduces the next section where the author is concerned about the fate of the planet: “What have they done to the earth, yeah? / What have they done to our fair sister?”. The Earth is depicted as “fair,” signifying the innocence and impartiality of nature as opposed to the corruption of humankind. At the same time, the planet is seen as a “sister,” expressing the equality and similarity between humans and nature, as they are both parts of the same whole.

However, the story told in the song is one of devastation and destruction of the natural world, expressed using powerful and violent imagery: “Ravaged and plundered and ripped her and bit her / Stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn and / Tied her with fences and dragged her down.” Nature is personified and seen as a living being that becomes a victim of human viciousness and greed and a prisoner of human activities (“Tied her with fences”).

The powerful scene of environmental degradation ends with the return to the “gentle sound” and the demand for regaining and living in harmony with the natural

world: “With your ear down to the ground / We want the world and we want it / Now!”. The entire journey is imagined in relation to sound. It suggests that the alteration of perceptions and conceptualizations of reality acquired through music results in an expansion of consciousness and recognizing the importance of protecting nature and reconnecting with the Earth.

The song invokes Christian divinity for the salvation of nature and society (“Jesus / Save us!”). By appealing to Jesus, the song alludes to a belief in the power of humankind to rise above the mundane and achieve Enlightenment in order to connect with the entire world.

Through musical composition, writing style, and the flow of ideas and narratives, the song describes an experience very similar to a psychedelic journey. The journey opens the author’s mind to see and feel the world differently, recognize the deep connection between humanity and nature, and simultaneously calls for action to save the natural world.

*“The Eleven” by The Grateful Dead (1969)*

The song “The Eleven<sup>26</sup>” appeared on the first official live album released in 1969 by the rock band Grateful Dead, called “Live/Dead.” The album reached number 62 on the Billboard top 200 in 1970.

“The Eleven” is a psychedelic rock song composed in an odd time signature and containing various combinations of rhythm. Like most of the band’s music, the song sounds purely improvised, as if following inspiration and a sense of trance or hallucinatory journey. The lyrics complement the music in creating an unusual alternative reality and, at the same time, express a profound and poetic interpretation of the experience in contrast with the energetic and upbeat rhythm of the song.

The first lines of the song create the image of a fascinating natural world, with “green chilly winds,” “shafts of lavender,” “arms of ivy,” “manzanita” in an interconnected web of existence: “High green chilly winds and windy vines / In loops around the twisted shafts of lavender, / They’re crawling to the sun / Underfoot the ground is patched / With arms of ivy wrapped around the manzanita, / Stark and shiny in the

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 22 on page 157



breeze.” The standard elements and processes of nature are defamiliarized by the use of original tropes and metaphors: “green winds,” “windy vines,” “crawling to the sun,” “arms of ivy”. They constantly communicate to each other (“In loops around the twisted shafts of lavender,” “the ground is patched,” “arms of ivy wrapped around the manzanita”).

However, the world of nature is threatened with destruction: “Wonder who will water all the children of the garden / When they sigh about the barren lack of rain and / Droop so hungry neath the sky.” The cause of the destruction is suggested in the following lines, where people are made responsible for protecting nature and also asked to rise above their condition and expand their awareness: “it may require a change that hasn’t come before. / ... / Now is the time of returning with our thought.” Humanity’s conceptualization of the world is challenged (“No more time to tell how, this is the season of what”), and humans are provoked to expand their consciousness (“returning with our thought”) and be part of a revolutionary change (“a change that hasn’t come before”).

The author states that “Now is the test of the boomerang tossed in the night of redeeming,” signifying that humanity has to repair the damage done and redeem itself in the face of nature or it will suffer the same fate as a boomerang that comes back with full force. The destructive side of humankind is accentuated further by the obsessive exploitation of the natural world in the line “Four men tracking down the great white sperm whale.”

The imaginative descriptions of nature are intertwined with peculiar tropes illustrating hallucinatory images: “Seven faced marble eyed transitory dream doll,” “Six proud walkers on the jingle bell rainbow,” “Riding in the whale belly,” “Sink beneath the waters.” The improvisational musical style is thus complemented by what appear to be spontaneous visual images, which taken together suggests that the authors might have been inspired by psychedelic experiences. Indeed, The Grateful Dead have been known to experiment with psychedelics, as they were the house band of the Acid Tests<sup>27</sup> (Wolfe 1968) and declared to use such chemicals either in private or on stage (Troy 1994).

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<sup>27</sup> The Acid Tests were a series of free form performance events organized by author Ken Kesey in which the participants (this included band members as well as audience members) were given LSD (<https://popularmusic.pressbooks.com/chapter/psychedelic-music-and-the-1960s/>)

Thus, the song describes the beauty of nature and the connection between natural elements and processes, retrieved through mind-altering experimentation. The unusual experience of reality creates a sense of awareness of the surroundings and the ecological damage done to the environment. Also, the change in perception opens a higher plane of understanding, and the song suggests that this is where a solution for the wrongdoings of humanity is to be found.

*“Eskimo Blue day” by Jefferson Airplane (1969)*

“Eskimo Blue day<sup>28</sup>” is a song by American psychedelic rock band Jefferson Airplane, released in 1969 on the album “Volunteers.” The album was a commercial success, peaking at number 13 on the Billboard album chart and receiving a Recording Industry Association of America gold certification within two months of its release.

The song begins by expressing the connection between the Earth’s ecosystems: “Sun cuts loose from the frozen / Until it joins with the African sea.” The sun treats the Arctic and the African seas equally with its constant movement across the Earth, nurturing all life on the planet: “The reason I come and I go is the same / Animal game for me.”

In the following stanzas, the writer uses a strong repetition to express humanity’s insignificance in the face of nature: “You call it rain / But the human name / Doesn’t mean shit to a tree,” “You call it loud / But the human crowd / Doesn’t mean shit to a tree,” “The human name / Doesn’t mean shit to a tree,” “The human dream / Doesn’t mean shit to a tree.” The repetition is used throughout the song and represents the piece’s central theme, namely that nature is superior to humans, regardless of their creations and desires: “Consider how small you are / Compared to your scream.” At the same time, humans are seen as ignorant (“And if you don’t mind heat in your river”) and evil (“Swim like an eel fantastic snake”), pretending to have no responsibility for the damage they do to nature.

The natural world is seen as sustaining and nurturing human life: “Water my roots the natural thing / Natural spring to the sea.” Still, it also has the ability to destroy it: “Snow called water going violent / Damn the end of the stream / Too much cold in one place breaks.” Similarly, the song ends with a powerful sound resembling the falling of a

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<sup>28</sup> See Appendix 23 on page 157

tree, indicating the immense force of nature and the imminent danger to the environment and the tragedy of nature's destruction.

The music of the song begins slowly in a medium tempo and soon builds into a rock groove complemented by distorted guitars, bass, and drums performed in a manner that characterizes psychedelic music (Hicks 1999). The musical composition is dynamic and fluctuates between powerful and calm sections, creating the sense of a journey that takes the listener through moments of tranquility alternated by moments of intensity and culmination. The song is composed and performed in a style characteristic of the psychedelic music of the 1960s, and together with the literary composition of the lyrics, suggests experimentation with mind-altering chemicals. The themes illustrated above describe a sense of awe and reverence for nature and the idea of interconnection of the natural world that are generally associated with the psychedelic journey. Similarly, the writing style, similar to a free association of words, and the presence of peculiar sentence structures allude to the influence of mind-expanding substances, that alter perceptions to allow an alternate interpretation of reality: "Change the strings and notes slide / Change the bridge and string shift down / Shift the notes and bridge sings."

Thus, the main narratives of the song express the mystery and power of nature and the dependence of humans on the natural world, complemented by the acknowledgment that humanity is damaging the environment. They complement the music in creating a psychedelic journey of awakening to a different reality, one in which nature is part of a higher plane of existence, above the mundane activities of humankind, and to which humans should aspire.

*"Big Yellow Taxi" by Joni Mitchell (1970)*

"Big Yellow Taxi<sup>29</sup>" is a song written by Joni Mitchell in 1970 and originally released on her album "Ladies of the Canyon." The song reached number 67 on the US Billboard Hot 100 in 1970, but a live version released in 1974 peaked at number 24. Over time, it became an environmental anthem performed by numerous other artists such as Maire Brennan, Amy Grant, Bob Dylan, and Counting Crows.

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<sup>29</sup> See Appendix 24 on page 159

The song was written as a nursery rhyme, with a joyful and carefree rhythm accomplished by an acoustic guitar and the artist's voice, contrasted by the melancholic lyrics that create an image of disappointment and regret.

The beginning lines are also the chorus, and they are repeated numerous times throughout the song: "They paved paradise / Put up a parking lot." Those lines set the song's central theme, namely the damage done to the environment by constructions created for human convenience, with no regard for pristine and beautiful nature. The natural world is depicted as a "Paradise" that humans ("they") destroy for their benefit and pleasure ("With a pink hotel, a boutique / And a swinging hot spot"). Further on, the singer criticizes the consumerist culture that puts a price on anything, including nature, and destroys the purity and beauty of nature: "They took all the trees / Put 'em in a tree museum / And they charged the people / A dollar and a half just to see 'em." Nature is being enclosed in a museum and kept prisoner for the pleasure of humankind.

The song also brings attention to the environmental damage caused by the use of harmful chemicals: "Hey, farmer, farmer / Put away the DDT now / Give me spots on my apples / But leave me the birds and the bees, please." The singer pleads the farmers to abandon the use of DDT, still in use at the time, as she does not care about the appearance of food as long as the animals are safe. People are asked to be more considerate and empathetic and renounce some of their pleasures for the benefit of nature because exploiting nature has irreversible consequences: "Don't it always seem to go / That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?"

"Big Yellow Taxi" contrasts a joyful melody, the symbol of the beauty and cheerfulness of nature (a paradise), with the grim and critical environmental problems caused by humankind. The author's view of the world reveals an awareness of the ecological damage and a rejection of the American consumerist culture of the 1970s held responsible for this damage. At the same time, the artist sees nature as a pristine and extraordinary entity, resembling paradise.

*“Whose Garden Was This?” By Tom Paxton (1970)*

The song “Whose Garden Was This?”<sup>30</sup> was written by Tom Paxton in 1970 for the first Earth Day. Though it did not reach the charts, the song was performed at a teach-in during Earth Day, and it was among the first ecological songs ever written.

The song describes the perspective of someone living after environmental destruction, who lost touch with the natural world and longs for a reconnection with nature. In this futuristic scenario, the world of nature has been lost: “Tell me again, I need to know / The forests had trees, the meadows were green / The oceans were blue and birds really flew / Can you swear that was true?” The artist does not indicate the causes of the ecological destruction but focuses on the beauty of nature, likening it to the garden of Eden: “Whose garden was this? It must have been lovely.”

Paxton touches upon all the elements of nature and their long-forgotten splendor: “Did it have flowers?”; “Whose river was this? You say it ran freely / Blue was its color”; “Whose gray sky was this? Or was it a blue one? / At night there were breezes.” The wonder and beauty of the world have been lost. Nature only appears in pictures and stories, but it cannot be experienced directly by humans: “I’ve seen pictures of flowers,” “I’ve seen blue in some pictures,” “I’ve heard records of breezes.” At the same time, the song expresses the human desire to reconnect to the natural world and the importance of direct experience in nature: “And I’d love to have smelled one”; “And I’d love to have been there”; “And I’d love to have felt one.”

“Whose Garden Was This?” touches upon the theme of human-made ecological destruction and focuses on the beauty and miracle of nature as well as on the need for a human-nature connection. The song presents those ideas from an apocalyptic perspective, reflecting the anxiety of the 1960s generation about the imminent destruction of the environment. In the face of disaster, the natural world becomes valuable and beautiful. Indirectly, the song suggests a social change for avoiding an ecological catastrophe and reclaiming the sense of unity with nature.

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<sup>30</sup> See Appendix 25 on page 161

*“After the Gold Rush” by Neil Young (1970)*

“After the Gold Rush<sup>31</sup>” is a song written by Neil Young in 1970 and covered by numerous artists over time, such as Prelude, Patti Smith, Thom Yorke, Natalie Merchant, and others. It was released on the album with the same name, which reached number 8 on the Billboard Top Pop Albums chart in 1970.

The song describes a vision-like dream, and it begins with a powerful scene suggestive of war and conflict: “I dreamed I saw the knights in armor coming / There were peasants singin’ and drummers drumming / And the archer split the tree / There was a fanfare blowin’ to the sun / That floated on the breeze.” The turmoil is caused by humans, and it disturbs nature: “Look at mother nature on the run in the nineteen seventies.” The “knights,” a symbol of medieval times, have been attacking nature (“the archer split the tree”) from the oldest times up to the present day, signifying the continuous abuse and exploitation of the natural world by humankind. Nature is depicted as a “Mother,” a personification that shows life-giving and nurturing characteristics, but also as “on the run,” pointing to the disconnection of humans from the natural world.

The following lines describe the artist’s state of mind: “I was lyin’ in a burned out basement / With a full moon in my eyes / I was hopin’ for a replacement.” The “burned out basement” signifies, on the one hand, the precarious mental state of the writer and, at the same time, the devastating condition of the planet, for which there is no hope for recovery and can only be replaced. Pondering on the destruction of the Earth and wanting to escape from reality (“Thinkin’ about what a friend had said / I was hopin’ it was a lie”), Young finds the solution in “getting high” (“And I felt like getting high”). The line indicates the desire to consume mind-altering substances to detach from reality, escape its overwhelming and disturbing condition and find an alternative existence.

Under the effect of the drugs, the singer has a vision about the future: “Well, I dreamed I saw the silver spaceships flying / In the yellow haze of the sun.” A spaceship is departing from Earth, carrying with it a group of chosen young people to a better world: “There were children crying and colors flying / All around the chosen ones / To a new home in the sun.” In the dream, the singer’s initial desire to replace the planet is satisfied as the spaceship becomes “mother nature’s silver seed” that leads humans to a distant

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix 26 on page 163

world. However, the chosen ones are crying, indicating that this is not an easy choice to make and that humans would lose a significant part of themselves by abandoning their home planet.

The song expresses a strong awareness of environmental destruction caused by human greed, as the song's title indicates ("After the gold rush") and conveys a deep appreciation for nature seen as nurturing and benevolent. The singers' vision of the world and the solution to ecological damage are inspired by the use of mind-altering substances, which enabled a mind-expanding journey. The insight acquired during the hallucination revealed an original and creative approach to reality and humanity's relation to "Mother Nature."

*"Hungry Planet" by The Byrds (1970)*

"Hungry Planet"<sup>32</sup> is a song written and performed by The Byrds, an influential band specializing in psychedelic rock music. The piece appeared on their 1970 album called "(Untitled)" which peaked at number 40 on the Billboard Top LPs in the same year. The musical composition conveys an underlying psychedelic atmosphere, enhanced by the sound of a synthesizer and the addition of earthquake sound effects.

The title is repeated at the beginning of every stanza and is suggestive of human greed and selfishness. However, throughout the song, the "hungry planet" refers to the natural world, which laments its fate at the hands of humanity: "I'm a hungry planet, I had a youthful face, ... over in the sky .... I had a blue sea." Nature is separated from humankind, as humans exploit it, yet at the same time remains connected to humankind as it becomes sentient and shares similar characteristics with humans ("hungry," "I am," "I have").

The song describes how humankind exploits nature for its resources and destroys valuable ecosystems, with no regard for the destruction it causes: "They were in a hurry to take a lot of space / They needed bombs and tungsten, ore and iron / So they climbed right down in and blew a lot of me right through." Human exploitation affects all elements of nature: the land, sky, and seas: "I'm a hungry planet, over in the sky / ... I had a blue sea." The destruction of the environment is presented through strong images ("chopping,"

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<sup>32</sup> See Appendix 27 on page 164

“poisoning,” “digging ... skin”) as the author personifies nature and gives it a voice to express its discontent toward humans: “All the people kept chopping down all my finest trees / Poisoning my oxygen, digging in my skin.” At the same time, humanity is seen as not worthy of nature’s benevolence and abundance because it cannot create resources and life the same way as nature can: “Takin’ more out of my earth than they’ll ever put there in.”

The mindless exploitation results in the revenge of nature and the destruction of humankind: “The things they did to hurt me have gone by and by / Now here I am all alone, will they ever learn / Well I had to shake and quake and make their houses burn.” Nature punishes humans for their greed and carelessness and eradicates them, signifying that nature does not need humans; it’s the other way round. The line “Now here I am all alone” alludes to a feeling of regret for the disappearance of humankind and indicates that the natural world is inclined to have a connection and live in symbiosis with humans. However, the song warns that people should know their limits and care for nature for such a symbiosis to be possible.

The song centers around the narrative of human-made ecological destruction caused by greed and selfishness and criticizes the materialistic culture of the time. The theme is complemented by nature’s response to this abuse, as the natural world is seen as more powerful and resourceful than humankind and having the ability to destroy it completely.

*“Apeman” by The Kinks (1970)*

“Apeman<sup>33</sup>” by The Kinks was released on their 1970 album “Lola vs. Powerman” and reached number 45 on the US Billboard Hot 100. The song is an easy beat calypso<sup>34</sup> rock piece contrasted by powerful lyrics that describe the negative side of modern human society.

The song is an ironic critique of humankind and its creations, and humans are depicted as pretentious and arrogant: “I think I’m sophisticated ’cause I’m living my life / Like a good homo sapiens,” “I think I’m so educated and I’m so civilized / ’Cause I’m

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<sup>33</sup> See Appendix 28 on page 165

<sup>34</sup> Calypso is a style of Afro-Caribbean music, characterized by highly rhythmic and harmonic vocals (Wikipedia 2021)



a strict vegetarian.” Their actions are reckless and selfish and harm both themselves and the natural world: “But all around me everybody’s multiplying / And they’re walking round like flies man,” “But with the over-population and inflation and starvation / And the crazy politicians / I don’t feel safe in this world no more,” “I look out the window but I can’t see the sky / The air pollution is a-fogging up my eyes.” Additionally, the writer mentions nuclear weapons as products of modern society to be feared and rejected: “I don’t feel safe in this world no more / I don’t want to die in a nuclear war.”

The singer expresses his desire to be part of the natural world because he does not consider humans to be superior, but on the contrary, equal to all other elements of nature, living beings or natural processes: “I’m no better than the animals sitting / In the cages in the zoo, man”; “Cause compared to the flowers and the birds and the trees / I am an apeman”; “Cause compared to the sun that sits in the sky / Compared to the clouds as they roll by / Compared to the bugs and the spiders and flies I am an apeman.”

Human corruption and ecological damage make the author no longer want to be part of the human species: “I want to get out of this city alive and make like an apeman,” “I want to sail away to a distant shore and make like an apeman.” Instead, he desires to return to simpler times and to live in connection with nature, without the products of modern society: “In man’s evolution / He’s created the city / And the motor traffic rumble / But give me half a chance / And I’d be taking off my clothes / And living in the jungle / ’Cause the only time that I feel at ease / Is swinging up and down in a coconut tree / Oh what a life of luxury to be like an apeman.” A life in nature, specifically in the wilderness (“in the jungle”) is more appealing than a life in the city: “we’ll be so happy in my apeman world / We’ll sit in the trees and eat bananas all day, just like an apeman.”

The song shows the awareness of humans’ destructive effect on the environment and humankind, and it criticizes materialism and industrialism for causing such damage. The artist desires to escape the city’s social pressures and pollution and create a home in the jungle. Humanity is depicted as more connected and in tune with the natural world than artificial creations. The song acts as an invitation for the listener to realize their condition as part of nature and renounce the materialism of human culture and return to a humbler and purer existence.

*“Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)” by Marvin Gaye (1971)*

“Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)<sup>35</sup>” is a song by Marvin Gaye released on his 1971 album “What’s Going On.” The song rose to number 4 on Billboard’s Pop Singles chart and number one for two weeks on the R&B Singles charts in 1971, becoming one of the most popular anthems regarding the environment. The melancholic soul rhythm of the song, combined with the sad lyrics, communicates a feeling of sorrow and grief about the ecological devastation of the planet.

The song describes the damage inflicted on the natural world by human activities: “Poison is the wind that blows from the north and south and east,” “Oil wasted on the oceans and upon our seas, fish full of mercury,” “Radiation underground and in the sky / Animals and birds who live nearby are dying.” All elements of nature are being affected, ecosystems and living beings equally (“wind,” “oceans,” “seas,” “underground,” “sky,” “fish,” “birds”), and the damage is done to the entire planet (“from the north and south and east”).

This ecological destruction of the planet is attributed to humans. They are presented as destructive forces that abuse nature because they have deviated from the right path and lost the connection and beauty of nature in the process: “things ain’t what they used to be,” “Where did all the blue skies go?”. The relationship between humans and nature critically deteriorated because of humanity’s endless greed and need for progress.

For the salvation of the natural world, the song invokes the intervention of divine power. The beginning of each stanza is a direct invocation of the mercy of God (“mercy, mercy me”), and the ending of most lines also appeals to God (“mercy Father,” “help us, help us, Father,” “help us Father, please help us”). The song is constructed as a prayer, showing that divine intervention is required to stop the human-made destruction of the environment and consequently to save humanity as well (“Father, please help us”). By invoking divinity to intervene in protecting the natural world, the author signifies the absolute importance of nature for humankind.

However, the relationship between humans and nature is expressed as a contradictory duality. On the one hand, nature is seen as a static landscape (“land”), which

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<sup>35</sup> See Appendix 29 on page 166

humans can manipulate for their benefit, and on the other, as a live being (“she”), with whom humans sympathize and form a whole: “What about this overcrowded land / How much more abuse from man can she stand?”.

In this paradoxical context, the divine power is called to restore the initial order and be an example of how humans should relate to nature. In the song, divinity is represented by the Christian God, conceptualized as an entity that lives in nature but at the same time is separate and has power over it. Humanity also has control over nature, but it is urged to recognize its value and beauty and the sense of connection to the natural world.

The song expresses a strong awareness of human-made environmental destruction and a feeling of deep sorrow for the grim fate of nature. It recognizes the flawed relationship between humans and nature, and in the desire to restore a lost connection, it demands a transition from abusing the natural world to protecting it.

*“Don't Go Near the Water” by The Beach Boys (1971)*

“Don’t Go Near the Water<sup>36</sup>” is a song by The Beach Boys, included in their 1971 album “Surf’s Up.” The album reached number 29 on the Billboard 200 albums chart and number 89 on the US Billboard Hot 100 Singles Chart in 1971.

The song focuses on the ecological damage inflicted on the Earth’s aquatic ecosystems (“Our water’s going bad”) and expresses sorrow for the precarious state of the environment (“Don’t you think it’s sad / What’s happened to the water”). The advice for people to stay away (“Don’t go near the water”) indicates the critical situation of the waters.

Human activities cause ecological damage: “Oceans, rivers, lakes and streams / Have all been touched by man,” “Toothpaste and soap will make our oceans a bubble bath.” The pollution is caused by industry and excessive commercialism, and the song criticizes those activities for nature's salvation. The effects of human pollution are global, and the damage done to one ecosystem affects another, for the natural world is seen as interconnected: “The poison floating out to sea / Now threatens life on land.”

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<sup>36</sup> See Appendix 30 on page 167

The song focuses on humanity's responsibility towards the environment and urges humans to save the waters through individual change and collective action: "So let's avoid an ecological aftermath / Beginning with me / Beginning with you," "Let's all help the water / Right away." Simultaneously, it encourages people to be sympathetic towards nature and protect and respect it: "Don't go near the water / To do it any wrong / To be cool with the water / Is the message of this song."

The lyrics describe the ecological disasters in the Earth's aquatic ecosystems caused by industrial pollution. It demands a benevolent relationship between humans and nature and humankind's responsibility to take care of the natural world. The song acts as a call to individual change and especially to social action to preserve aquatic ecosystems and implicitly the entire Earth.

*"Rocky Mountain High" by John Denver (1972)*

"Rocky Mountain High"<sup>37</sup> is a folk-rock song released by John Denver as a single in 1972 that went to number 9 on the US Billboard Hot 100 in 1973. The song, played in a country-rock style, centers on the beauty of the natural world as seen by the singer in the mountainous landscape of Colorado, United States.

The first encounter with the mountains makes the writer find peace and feel at home: "Coming home to a place he'd never been before / ... / You might say he was born again / You might say he found a key for ev'ry door / When he first came to the mountains his life was far away." The natural world is powerful ("But the Colorado Rocky Mountain high / I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky"), but it also has soothing and comforting properties: "The shadow from the starlight / Is softer than a lullaby / Rocky Mountain high."

The singer directly experiences the wonders of nature: "he climbed cathedral mountains," "he saw silver clouds below," "he tried to touch the sun." He appreciates what the natural world has to offer: "Now he walks in quiet solitude the forest and the streams," "I know he'd be a poorer man if he never saw an eagle fly." Divine properties are attributed to nature, as the place in which God resides and through which divinity communicates with humans: "Seeking grace in every step he takes," "You can talk to

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<sup>37</sup> See Appendix 31 on page 168

God and listen to the casual reply,” “cathedral mountains.” Life in nature leads to introspection and the discovery of peacefulness: “His sight has turned inside himself to try and understand / The serenity of a clear blue mountain lake.”

However, Denver feels that the world of nature is under threat and fears for its destruction by humankind’s expansion into pristine landscapes: “Now his life is full of wonder but his heart still knows some fear / Of a simple thing he cannot comprehend / Why they try to tear the mountains down to bring in a couple more / More people, more scars upon the land.” Humans are seen as “scars” that exploit nature for their benefit and destroy natural habitats for artificial creations.

The song’s main narrative expresses the beauty and wonder of the natural world, its divine characteristics, and its relaxing properties. The central theme is complemented by the awareness of humanity’s destructive effects on the environment and the criticism of an increasingly materialistic culture.

*“Down by the River” by Albert Hammond (1972)*

“Down by the River<sup>38</sup>” is a 1972 song written and performed by Albert Hammond. The song was released on the album “It Never Rains in Southern California” and reached 91 on the US Billboard Hot 100 and 38 on the US Easy Listening (Billboard) list.

The song describes the effects of human industrial activity on the environment and draws attention to the imminent destruction of nature. It mainly focuses on the pollution of the waters and describes its impact on animal life and other related ecosystems.

The opening lines are positive and describe the author’s pleasant outdoor experience in the attempt to escape the burdening atmosphere of the city: “City life was getting us down so we spent a weekend out town / Pitched our tent on a patch of ground down by the river / ... / I said: Come in / The water’s fine / Down by the river.” However, the experience turns dark, as the protagonists become ill after entering the water (“Didn’t feel too good all night”) and discover that the river is polluted and dead: “And came across the strangest sight down by the river / Silver fish lay on its side it was washed up by the early tide / I wonder how it died?”.

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<sup>38</sup> See Appendix 32 on page 170

The following lines provide the explanation they receive from a doctor, an educated person, who is aware of the damaged environment: “The doctor ... shook his head / Only foolish people go / Down by the river.” This passage signifies that ordinary people are ignorant of nature’s destruction but are made aware of it as they begin to experience it personally. Simultaneously, they begin to acknowledge the importance of nature and the interconnection between humanity and the natural world, as the damage done to one environment is not local but also affects humans.

The state of the natural world is depicted as precarious due to human industrial production: “The mighty willows weep / Because they’re dying gradually / From the waste from the factories.” The pollution affects all surrounding ecosystems because nature is seen as interconnected and interrelated: “And in time the riverbanks will die / The reeds will wilt and the ducks won’t fly / There’ll be a tear in the otter’s eye down by the river / The banks will soon be black and dead / And where the otter raised his head / Will be a clean / White skull instead.”

The song centers around the narrative of environmental destruction caused by human industrial activity and the imminence of the apocalyptic fate of the world unless humanity reconsiders its damaging activities. The themes of the interconnectedness of life on Earth and the importance of the natural world are expressed as well, as the song acts as a lesson for people to reflect on and become conscious of their role in the world.

## **Conclusions**

The music of the 1960s American counterculture was diverse and extended from folk and blues songs to pop and rock tunes. In a growing social and political uproar, some musicians turned their attention to the pressing issues of the time and protested through their music, lyrics, and style. Apart from the interest in civil rights, war, and poverty, care for the environment found a place in the musical sphere as well.

Throughout this chapter, I have analyzed a sample of fifteen songs performed by influential artists associated with the countercultural spirit of the 1960s and 1970s to identify their conceptualizations of nature and human-nature relationships. In doing so, I hoped to show a strong ecological consciousness expressed in various forms of music.

The most common narrative found in all the songs was the awareness of human-made destruction of the environment. The idea of ecological damage was directly articulated through vivid descriptions in most songs (11 of the 15 songs) and implied in four of them (“Eskimo Blue day,” “The Eleven,” “Whose Garden Was This,” “After the Gold Rush”). The songs used images of environmental destruction to increase people’s awareness of their impact on nature and elicit feelings of empathy and care towards the natural world. In five of the songs, the ecological damage was presented as an Apocalypse, by either announcing the imminent end of the world or presenting the grim post-calamity society.

The primary sources for the adverse effects of humanity on the planet were identified in twelve songs as industrialism with its pollution of the soil, air, and water. The critique of industrial human activity suggests the rejection of materialism and of the ceaseless pursuit of technological progress.

Human traits are also to blame for destroying the environment in three of the songs: ignorance (“Pollution”), greed, and selfishness (“After the Gold Rush,” “Hungry Planet”). Also, in three of the songs, the nuclear bomb is mentioned as a source of the destruction of the environment (“What have they done to the rain,” “Hungry Planet,” “Apeman”). In the majority of the songs, the damage done to the natural world is focused on a specific part of nature: the contamination of the waters was the most common reference and appears in nine songs; the second was the reference to atmospheric pollution (sky) and the devastation of animal life which appears in four songs; and third, the pollution of the soil (land) and vegetation (trees and flowers) which appears in three pieces. The emergence of ecological consciousness is influenced by the events happening at the time, as people could directly experience the effects of industrial pollution and warfare.

Although most of the songs find humanity to be responsible for the restoration of the natural world, in two of the tracks, divinity is invoked to save nature (“Mercy, Mercy Me,” and “When the Music’s Over”), showing, on the one hand, the gravity of environmental disorder, and on the other, the importance of nature. Also, in two of the songs, the artists present the solution as escaping into the wilderness (“Apeman”) or to a different planet (“After the Gold Rush”). The idea of escape from society is similar to

that found in the Beat poems, but it appears much less often in the selection of songs than in the selection of poetry.

The perception of humanity and the natural world is conceptualized in a variety of ways. In most songs (7 out of 15), nature is depicted as beautiful and a benevolent force: a gentle and fragile entity (“What have they done to the rain”); pristine and paradisiac (“Big Yellow Taxi”); beautiful and miraculous (“Whose garden was this,” “Rocky Mountain High,” “The Eleven”); nourishing and benevolent (“After the Gold Rush,” “Don’t Go Near the Water”). However, in three of the songs, nature is depicted as all-powerful and superior to humans (“A Hard Rain’s a-Gonna fall,” “Eskimo blue,” “Hungry Planet”), with the ability to destroy humanity instantly. In only two songs nature is represented as a part of humanity (“When the music’s over,” “Apeman”). The need for a reconnection between humans and nature and a direct experience of the natural world appears in several songs as a secondary theme (“Pollution,” “Whose Garden Was This,” “Apeman,” “Don’t Go Near the Water,” and “Rocky Mountain High”). Additionally, the theme of the interconnectedness of life on Earth is indirectly present in four songs (“Pollution,” “The Eleven,” “Don’t Go Near the Water,” and “Down by the River”).

The narrative of enlarged consciousness due to mind-altering drugs appears explicitly in one of the songs (“After the Gold Rush”) and is implied in four other songs through the musical and writing style as well as metaphors (“When the Music’s Over,” “The Eleven,” “Eskimo Blue day,” “Hungry Planet”). In “After the Gold Rush,” the idea of experimentation with mind-altering substances appears concomitantly with the desire to leave the planet and find a new world, signifying the use of those chemicals as gateways to alternative better realities. The allusion to mind-expanding substances in the other four songs suggests that the chemicals induced or helped induce a different, renewed perspective that viewed the natural world as beautiful, valuable, and essential for humanity.

Narratives related to the idea of individualism are identified only once, in “Don’t Go Near the Water.” They are expressed as a call for individual change and allude to the power of the individual to influence society. However, more than half of the songs are written from first-person perspective, expressing the author’s point of view or experiences and emotions (“A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall,” “When the Music’s Over,” “Eskimo Blue



day”, “Whose Garden Was This?”, “After the Gold Rush”, “Hungry Planet”, “Apeman”, “Mercy Mercy Me”, “Down by the River”).

The songs center around the ecological damage done to nature by humankind, specifically through industrial production and human flaws, and hold humans responsible for protecting nature. The environmental awareness is informed by directly experiencing and visualizing the damage done to nature and experimenting with mind-expanding substances. Nature is seen mainly as beautiful and extraordinary and equal to humans. However, in some cases, it is seen as superior to humans, having enormous power. The need for a reconnection with nature and the idea of the interconnectedness of life on Earth are also suggested but are not main themes in any of the songs.

The analysis reveals the existence of two types of songs, differing in their approach towards nature: one is more concerned with social and environmental criticism and focused on facts and solutions to the ecological problems of the time; the other is more celebratory, describing the affinity and connection to nature and the desire to be one with the natural world. However, regardless of their approach, all songs contain references to human-made environmental damage.

The selected songs were influential in the American culture during the 1960s and 1970s, as they appeared in the music charts for the most popular songs of the time. Their popularity meant that a significant number of people heard and understood their message. By describing the bleak reality of human pollution and eliciting emotional responses and feelings of sympathy and empathy for the natural world, the musical pieces became teaching tools in reimagining the human relationship with nature. It seemed like the artists became aware of the ecological issues and the human hostility towards nature and wanted to spread that awareness to the entire humankind with the hope of producing change. The manner in which they chose to do so differed from one song to another, but they all had in common the recognition of the adverse effects of humanity over nature and the value and importance of the natural world.

## Summary and discussion

The purpose of the thesis was to find out to what extent the emergence of an ecological self in modern Western culture can be traced back to the 1960s American cultural revolution. My aim has been to identify the cultural narratives that contributed to - and reflected - environmental awakening and describe the forms in which it was expressed in the Beat poetry and countercultural music of the time.

In order to guide my study, I have asked the following research questions:

“What types of narratives reflected and contributed to the emergence of an ecological self during the 1960s American cultural revolution?”

“In what way do the narratives of Beat poetry and countercultural songs reflect the paradigm change in the perception of human identity, from an egotistical self to an ecological self?”

“What were the cultural and psychological sources of the ecological consciousness expressed in the Beat poems and countercultural songs?”

I began by examining the social, cultural, and political climate of the 1960s to create a picture of American society at the time and to demonstrate that a massive change in the values and attitudes of the individuals and an expansion of the social consciousness took place. The literature review showed that this change was initiated by a cumulation of factors, ranging from post-war economic affluence, great technological and scientific advances, increased social security and welfare contrasted by the Cold war, the nuclear crisis, the Vietnam war, and the culmination of social, civil and racial unrest that had been growing for decades. A psychological conflict was felt between the advantages of progress and economic affluence and the alienation, violence, and injustice seen in society, especially by the younger generation. With more resources and leisure time on their hands and advances in communication mediums, a group of critical writers and artists challenged mainstream thinking and formed a subculture with differing and expanding interests and concerns. Against the background of an already expanding social consciousness, as seen in the Civil Rights and Peace movements, and aided by a series of cultural narratives that were emerging at the time, they formed a countercultural movement that desired to expand the social self, to include the natural surroundings and eventually the whole planet.

The cultural narratives that assisted the emergence of an ecological self were identified based on a literature review of writings concerned with the counterculture but also drawing on Romanticism, and especially Transcendentalism. The literature review revealed the presence of several dominant narratives, some reinvented from the Transcendentalists and others newly created in the 1960s.

In common with the Transcendentalist movement, the counterculture reimagined narratives regarding the idea of individualism, expressed as authenticity and the rejection of conformism and tradition. I have considered the focus on individualism an initial necessary step in the emergence of an ecological self because the focus on the individual and the realization that the self is a fundamental unit of society led to questioning its place in the world and finding new alternative ways of existence.

Simultaneously, the countercultural rebels rejected materialism and technology, just as their Transcendentalist predecessors rejected early capitalism and scientific knowledge. They saw materialistic culture focused on progress as creating a gap between humans and alienating them from themselves and the natural world. In the process of continuous development, the subjective side of life was being lost along with a part of what it meant to be human. Thus, a dominant narrative focused on the rejection of artificial creations emerged, allowing the counterculture artists to find an alternative in the world of nature, which they cherished and revered.

Similarly, the counterculture of the 1960s drew on - and reworked - the Transcendentalists' search for a spiritual system that would offer an alternative to the traditional Christian values and conceptualizations, and they figured especially in the Eastern religions. Since the fundamental principles of Eastern philosophy were based on a more inclusive and benevolent relation between humans and nature, based indeed on the interconnectedness and unity of all living beings, it offered the counterculture artists a different narrative of connection with the natural world.

Apart from the narratives inspired by the Transcendentalists, the 1960s cultural revolution featured a new cultural narrative focused on the search for higher orders of existence, introduced by the appearance of mind-expanding chemicals, such as psychedelics. Those substances evoked feelings of interconnectedness and unity of the

world as well as unconditional love and empathy and made the counterculture rebels discover a divine connection to nature.

The cumulation of the previously described narratives led to the emergence of a core ecological narrative during the 1960s counterculture, namely the perception of the world of nature as intrinsically valuable and beautiful and the need for humans to reconnect to the natural world. This narrative was complemented by the awareness of ecological damage that was beginning to be significantly more evident to a larger part of the population.

Throughout the literature review, I have found that, during the counterculture period, all the narratives mentioned above contributed to a change in human perception of nature and the emergence of an ecological consciousness. Further on, based on those narratives, I have analyzed a selection of Beat poems and counterculture nature songs to identify a change in the perception of human identity from the 1950s to the 1970s.

The analysis of poems and songs revealed a series of commonalities and differences between the artistic expression of the Beats and the counterculture musicians, suggesting that their creative responses depended on the social context of their time, and also that the ideas surrounding the ecological consciousness change continuously. The selection of both the poems and the songs contained references to a set of thematic categories.

The themes found in the poems focused on the idea of interconnectedness, oneness, and unity of life and the planet. Most of them contained references to the interest in and fascination with alternative spiritual systems, especially with Eastern religions, and in achieving higher states of consciousness through experimentation with psychedelic substances. The idea of individualism was an essential theme in the Beat poems and, although it opened the path to improve the self and find new ways of living, among which the one that seeks to reconnect humans with nature, it can be argued that it also limited the emergence of an all-embracing collective identity. The Beat poems focused almost exclusively on individual experience and emotions, and expressed no demand for a socially engaged collective that needs to cooperate for the public good. The emphasis was predominantly on the individual and his state of mind, desires, needs, experiences and individual change and not on collective change.

Thus, the environmental consciousness of Beat poetry was mainly individualistic and, on occasions, escapist, and only in part critical to the social issues of the time. The poets acknowledged the social and environmental problems, but their solution was mainly to flee society and isolate themselves in nature or in an alternate state of consciousness, where they could change and improve themselves individually. They did not engage in social action but brought the attention to the defective relationship between humans and nature through their personal experiences and emotions, and proposed that others do the same.

Roughly a decade later, the songs related to nature written by the counterculture artists shifted focus, by strongly criticizing the human-made environmental damage. The narrative of ecological damage was present in all the songs, and in the majority of them, it was the central theme. The songs were composed as descriptions of environmental destruction, using apocalyptic images and symbols to create a sense of importance and urgency for protecting nature. In most songs, industrialism was to blame for the destruction of the environment, complemented by the catastrophic effects of the nuclear bomb. The musical compositions also suggested the use of psychedelic chemicals for experimenting with altered states of consciousness. The presence of drug-induced altered states of consciousness was not merely correlated with the feelings of interconnectedness and oneness, but with the insight that the natural world is valuable and admirable. The theme of the interconnectedness of life on Earth was indirectly expressed in several songs, but - in contrast to the Beat poems - it was not a notable theme. Similarly, Eastern philosophical concepts were not identified in the songs that I have analyzed.

The musicians were less focused on individualism than the Beat poets, but they still showed a strong manifestation of an individualist philosophy. More than half of the songs expressed first-person interpretations and the subjective feelings and emotions of the artists with regards to the state of the world. At the same time, however, the artists became more engaged in social and environmental issues. They addressed, advised, and called people to act and fight for social change. Compared to the earlier Beat movement, the counterculture artists expressed an attitude more inclined towards the need for a collective identity.

In most songs, the criticism of environmental destruction was pointed towards ‘the others’ and suggested a sense of separation between the artists and the people who had differing views or were ignorant to ecological issues. The counterculture movement united people who expressed a strong individual identity that differentiated them from the previous generations and their “conformist” peers and, paradoxically, created a kind of group identity based on individuality. The selected songs suggest the presence of such a group identity, united by specific values and objectives (protecting the waters, the Earth, recognize the value in nature) but not the presence of an all-embracing collective identity that accepts and includes everyone and everything regardless of their opinions and values.

The analysis also shows that the counterculture songs expressed a much more prominent confrontational spirit than the Beat poems, as the social and environmental critique intensified and the musicians demanded social and cultural change. The social context in which they performed was strongly influenced by the Civil rights and Peace movements which ignited the environmental protests as well. However, some of an escapist attitude remained, as the musicians also looked for a way to leave society and live in nature or in an alternative reality induced by mind-altering substances.

The study of poems and songs revealed the shifting interest of the artists from the 1950s to the 1970s. In the 1950s, the Beats were more concerned with finding themselves by experiencing novel states of consciousness and belief systems. In the 1960s, the counterculture musicians turned towards the tangible effects of environmental degradation and protested against it. The view of nature also shifted during the decade, from a state of deep appreciation, respect, and reverence, towards a more pragmatic perspective with nature viewed as valuable and essential. The change of perception towards nature seems to have been provoked by the growing preoccupation with pollution and toxicity, as people began to notice and directly experience the effects of a chemically treated environment. Similarly, the Beat poets expressed a more contemplative outlook on the individual and the natural world than the musicians of the counterculture. The latter were more vocal and engaged more prominently in social protest and calls for action.

The perception of human identity changed from the 1950s to the 1970s, from an almost exclusively individualistic philosophy focused on the improvement of the individual as a means to improve society, to a group consciousness, where people were

becoming more concerned with social and environmental issues and engaged in protests and manifestations to enact social change.

The psychological motivations that ignited an ecological consciousness in the Beat poems and counterculture songs had multiple sources. The Beats were distressed with the excessive focus on materialism that detached people from their inner selves and endangered authentic and subjective experiences that would consequently lead to the loss of the human essence. The counterculture musicians also rebelled against materialism, but this time because its adverse effects were obvious and tangible, and linked to the destruction of humankind and the environment. The sense of alienation from society and nature was a strong motivator beginning with the Beats and continuing with the counterculture movement. This sense of separation made the Beats yearn for belonging to a higher order of existence, the counterculture artists to a community and made both want to reconnect to the natural world. At the same time, a strong sense of sympathy with other humans and living beings made both the Beat poets and the counterculture artists acknowledged the injustices towards disadvantaged members of society and the natural world as well, and to rebel against it. The societal restraints and the monotony of ordinary life ignited a desire for experimenting and transcending the limitations of being a human. In this context, the teachings of Eastern philosophy were eagerly adopted as alternatives to the mainstream cultural values and the use of psychedelics opened the artists perceptions to experiences of a higher order.

The ecological consciousness that emerged beginning with the Beats and developed during the counterculture movement preceded the environmental movements of the 1970s. With the exception of the Civil rights movement, that had a significant tangible impact on society, both the Beat and the counterculture movement were artistic revolutions rather than social upheavals. But they contributed to these upheavals. Their message proposed the need for an ecological consciousness and a change in the perception of human identity in order to solve both the social and environmental issues. The Beats were more inclined towards individual change and the musicians towards social change, but both proposed a change in the individual's identity and perceptions with regards to the surrounding environment and humanity's place in it.

Throughout the study, I sought to demonstrate that the 1960s American counterculture represented a historical change in human identity through the emergence of an ecological self that anticipated later environmental movements. The findings revealed that, during the course of three decades, the relationship between humanity and nature became increasingly more important for a significant number of people. The focus shifted from solely appreciating nature to protesting against environmental damage and demanding a change in the exploitative relation between humans and nature.

### **Limitations of the study and future research**

In writing the thesis, I have encountered a series of challenges connected with the research methodology, sample selection, and my cultural background and belief system.

The research methodology was composed of a combination of qualitative research methods, personally designed, and not based on prior research studies on the topic. The study of narratives and meanings has offered interpretations that may provoke disagreement. I have tried to address this issue by quantifying the most common themes and grouping them in dominant narratives. The criterion of my selection of poems and songs was based on choosing those texts and lyrics which were well-known, had broad readership or had reached the “hit status” in the musical rankings.

My other criterion of selection was the focus on nature and human-nature relationships. For this reason, and considering that qualitative research is not statistically representative, the study results cannot be generalized to the entire population of Beat poems and countercultural songs. It merely represents a portion of the artists’ interests and concerns. There is still a need for more solid empirical basis for a more comprehensive study. However, the artwork’s popularity suggests that the narratives identified in the study can be extrapolated to refer to the interests and concerns of a larger group of the American population of the 1950s-1970s.

Finally, the analysis and interpretation of results contain personal and cultural biases, which I have tried to overcome by focusing on the written words and phrases and consulting my interpretations with my supervisor.

Throughout the thesis, I have aspired to shed new light on the 1960s American counterculture by analyzing the creation of an ecological consciousness that set the



ground for later environmental movements. I hope that future research can investigate in more detail the narratives that lie behind the emergence of an ecological self, both in the past and in the present. Here I have tried to show that poetry and music are important vehicles of change in humanity's perceptions of the natural world, and triggers of actions to prevent the environmental and climate Armageddon.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1 - Selection of Beat poems

1. Selection of poems from “Cold Mountain poems” by Gary Snyder, first published in “Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems” in 1959 (Snyder, 1969);
2. “Milton by Firelight” by Gary Snyder, first published in “Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems” in 1959 (Snyder, 1969);
3. “Migration of Birds” by Gary Snyder, first published in “Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems” in 1959 (Snyder, 1969);
4. “Regarding Wave” by Gary Snyder, first published in “Regarding Wave” in 1969 (Snyder, 1969);
5. “Wave” by Gary Snyder, first published in “Regarding Wave” in 1969 (Snyder, 1969);
6. Selection of poems from “Empty Mirror: Early Poems” by Allen Ginsberg, first published in “Empty Mirror: Early Poems” in 1961 (Ginsberg, 2006);
7. “Sunflower Sutra” by Allen Ginsberg, first published in “Howl and Other Poems” in 1956 (Ginsberg, 2006);
8. “America” by Allen Ginsberg, first published in “Howl and Other Poems” in 1956 (Ginsberg, 2006);
9. “Wales Visitation” by Allen Ginsberg, first published individually in 1967 (Ginsberg, 2006);
10. “A Coney Island of the mind 1” or “In Goya's greatest scenes we seem to see’ by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, first published in “A Coney Island of the mind” in 1958 (Ferlinghetti, 1958);
11. “I am waiting,” first published in “A Coney Island of the mind” in 1958 by Lawrence Ferlinghetti (Ferlinghetti, 1958);
12. “For the death of 100 Whales” by Michael McClure, first published in “Hymn to St. Geryon” in 1959 (McClure, 1959);
13. “Peyote Poem, Part I” by Michael McClure, first published in “Hymn to St. Geryon” in 1959 (McClure, 1959).

## Appendix 2 - "Cold Mountain poems" by Gary Snyder

2

In a tangle of cliffs I chose a place— Bird-paths, but no trails for men.

What's beyond the yard?

White clouds clinging to vague rocks.

Now I've lived here—how many years— Again and again, spring and winter pass.

Go tell families with silverware and cars "What's the use of all that noise and money?"

5

I wanted a good place to settle:

Cold Mountain would be safe.

Light wind in a hidden pine—

Listen close—the sound gets better.

Under it a gray-haired man Mumbles along reading Huang and Lao.

For ten years I haven't gone back home I've even forgotten the way by which I came.

6

Men ask the way to Cold Mountain

Cold Mountain: there's no through trail.

In summer, ice doesn't melt

The rising sun blurs in swirling fog.

How did I make it?

My heart's not the same as yours.

If your heart was like mine

You'd get it and be right here.

7

I settled at Cold Mountain long ago,

Already it seems like years and years.

Freely drifting, I prowl the woods and streams

And linger watching things themselves.

Men don't get this far into the mountains,

White clouds gather and billow.

Thin grass does for a mattress.

The blue sky makes a good quilt.  
Happy with a stone overhead  
Let heaven and earth go about their changes.

8

Clambering up the Cold Mountain path,  
The Cold Mountain trail goes on and on:  
The long gorge choked with scree and boulders, The wide creek, the mist-blurred grass.  
The moss is slippery, though there's been no rain The pine sings, but there's no wind.  
Who can leap the world's ties  
And sit with me among the white clouds?

11

Spring-water in the green creek is clear  
Moonlight on Cold Mountain is white  
Silent knowledge—the spirit is enlightened of itself  
Contemplate the void: this world exceeds stillness.

12

In my first thirty years of life  
I roamed hundreds and thousands of miles  
Walked by rivers through deep green grass  
Entered cities of boiling red dust.  
Tried drugs, but couldn't make Immortal;  
Read books and wrote poems on history.  
Today I'm back at Cold Mountain:  
I'll sleep by the creek and purify my ears.

16

Cold Mountain is a house  
Without beams or walls.  
The six doors left and right are open  
The hall is blue sky.  
The rooms all vacant and vague  
The east wall beats on the west wall

At the center nothing.  
Borrowers don't bother me  
In the cold I build a little fire  
When I'm hungry I boil up some greens.  
I've got no use for the kulak  
With his big barn and pasture—  
He just sets up a prison for himself.  
Once in he can't get out.  
Think it over—  
You know it might happen to you.

### **Appendix 3 - "Milton by Firelight" by Gary Snyder**

"O hell, what do mine eyes  
with grief behold?"  
Working with an old  
Singlejack miner, who can sense  
The vein and cleavage  
In the very guts of rock, can  
Blast granite, build  
Switchbacks that last for years  
Under the beat of snow, thaw, mule-hooves.  
What use, Milton, a silly story  
Of our lost general parents,  
eaters of fruit?  
The Indian, the chainsaw boy,  
And a string of six mules  
Came riding down to camp  
Hungry for tomatoes and green apples.  
Sleeping in saddle-blankets  
Under a bright night-sky  
Han River slantwise by morning.

Jays squall  
Coffee boils  
In ten thousand years the Sierras  
Will be dry and dead, home of the scorpion.  
Ice-scratched slabs and bent trees.  
No paradise, no fall,  
Only the weathering land  
The wheeling sky,  
Man, with his Satan  
Scouring the chaos of the mind.  
Oh Hell!  
Fire down  
Too dark to read, miles from a road  
The bell-mare clangs in the meadow  
That packed dirt for a fill-in  
Scrambling through loose rocks  
On an old trail  
All of a summer's day.

#### **Appendix 4 – “Migration of Birds” by Gary Snyder**

April 1956  
It started just now with a hummingbird  
Hovering over the porch two yards away  
then gone,  
It stopped me studying.  
I saw the redwood post  
Leaning in clod ground  
Tangled in a bush of yellow flowers  
Higher than my head, through which we push  
Every time we come inside—  
The shadow network of the sunshine

Through its vines. White-crowned sparrows  
Make tremendous singings in the trees  
The rooster down the valley crows and crows.  
Jack Kerouac outside, behind my back  
Reads the Diamond Sutra in the sun.  
Yesterday I read Migration of Birds',  
The Golden Plover and the Arctic Tern.  
Today that big abstraction's at our door  
Forjuncoes and the robins all have left,  
Broody scrabblers pick up bits of string  
And in this hazy day  
Of April summer heat  
Across the hill the seabirds  
Chase Spring north along the coast:  
Nesting in Alaska  
In six weeks.

### **Appendix 5 – “Regarding Wave” by Gary Snyder**

The voice of the Dharma  
    the voice  
        now  
A shimmering bell  
    through all.  
Every hill, still.  
Every tree alive. Every leaf.  
All the slopes flow.  
    old woods, new seedlings,  
    tall grasses plumes.  
Dark hollows; peaks of light.  
    wind stirs the cool side  
Each leaf living.

All the hills.  
The Voice  
is a wife  
to  
him still.

### **Appendix 6 – “Wave” by Gary Snyder**

Grooving clam shell,  
streakt through marble,  
sweeping down ponderosa pine bark-scale  
rip-cut tree grain  
sand-dunes, lava  
flow  
Wave wife.  
woman—wyfman—  
"veiled; vibrating; vague"  
sawtooth ranges pulsing;  
veins on the back of the hand.  
Forkt out:  
birdsfoot-alluvium  
wash  
great dunes rolling  
Each inch rippled, every grain a wave.  
Leaning against sand cornices til they blow away  
—wind, shake  
stiff thorns of cholla, ocotillo  
sometimes I get stuck in thickets—  
Ah, trembling spreading radiating wyf  
racing zebra  
catch me and fling me wide  
To the dancing grain of things

of my mind!

**Appendix 7 - “The Trembling of the Veil” by Allen Ginsberg**

Today out of the window  
the trees seemed like live  
organisms on the moon.  
Each bough extended upward  
covered at the north end  
with leaves, like a green  
hairy protuberance. I saw  
the scarlet-and-pink shoot-tips  
of budding leaves wave  
delicately in the sunlight,  
blown by the breeze,  
all the arms of the trees  
“bending and straining downward at once” when the wind  
pushed them.

Paterson, August 1948

**Appendix 8 - “Metaphysics” by Allen Ginsberg**

This is the one and only  
firmament; therefore  
it is the absolute world.  
There is no other world.  
The circle is complete.  
I am living in Eternity.  
The ways of this world  
are the ways of Heaven.

New York, Mid-1949



### **Appendix 9 - “A Desolation” by Allen Ginsberg**

Now mind is clear  
as a cloudless sky.  
Time then to make a  
home in wilderness.  
What have I done but  
wander with my eyes  
in the trees? So I  
will build: wife,  
family, and seek  
for neighbors.  
Or I  
perish of lonesomeness  
or want of food or  
lightning or the bear  
(must tame the hart  
and wear the bear).  
And maybe make an image  
of my wandering, a little  
image—shrine by the  
roadside to signify  
to traveler that I live  
here in the wilderness  
awake and at home.  
Paterson, Mid-1950

### **Appendix 10 – “Sunflower Sutra” by Allen Ginsberg**

I walked on the banks of the tincan banana dock and sat down under the huge shade of a Southern Pacific locomotive to look at the sunset over the box house hills and cry.

Jack Kerouac sat beside me on a busted rusty iron pole, companion, we thought the same thoughts of the soul, bleak and blue and sad-eyed, surrounded by the gnarled steel roots of trees of machinery.

The oily water on the river mirrored the red sky, sun sank on top of final Frisco peaks, no fish in that stream, no hermit in those mounts, just ourselves rheumy-eyed and hung-over like old bums on the riverbank, tired and wily.

Look at the Sunflower, he said, there was a dead gray shadow against the sky, big as a man, sitting dry on top of a pile of ancient sawdust—

—I rushed up enchanted—it was my first sunflower, memories of Blake—my visions—  
Harlem

and Hells of the Eastern rivers, bridges clanking Joes Greasy Sandwiches, dead baby carriages, black treadless tires forgotten and unretreaded, the poem of the riverbank, condoms & pots, steel knives, nothing stainless, only the dank muck and the razor-sharp artifacts passing into the past—

and the gray Sunflower poised against the sunset, crackly bleak and dusty with the smut and smog and smoke of olden locomotives in its eye—

corolla of bleary spikes pushed down and broken like a battered crown, seeds fallen out of its face, soon-to-be-toothless mouth of sunny air, sunrays obliterated on its hairy head like a dried wire spiderweb,

leaves stuck out like arms out of the stem, gestures from the sawdust root, broke pieces of plaster fallen out of the black twigs, a dead fly in its ear,

Unholy battered old thing you were, my sunflower O my soul, I loved you then!

The grime was no man's grime but death and human locomotives,

all that dress of dust, that veil of darkened railroad skin, that smog of cheek, that eyelid of black mis'ry, that sooty hand or phallus or protuberance of artificial worse-than-dirt—  
industrial—modern—all that civilization spotting your crazy golden crown—

and those blear thoughts of death and dusty loveless eyes and ends and withered roots below, in the home-pile of sand and sawdust, rubber dollar bills, skin of machinery, the guts and innards of the weeping coughing car, the empty lonely tincans with their rusty tongues alack, what more could I name, the smoked ashes of some cock cigar, the cunts

of wheelbarrows and the milky breasts of cars, wornout asses out of chairs & sphincters  
of dynamos—all these

entangled in your mummied roots—and you there standing before me in the sunset, all  
your glory in your form!

A perfect beauty of a sunflower! a perfect excellent lovely sunflower existence! a sweet  
natural eye to the new hip moon, woke up alive and excited grasping in the sunset shadow  
sunrise golden monthly breeze!

How many flies buzzed round you innocent of your grime, while you cursed the heavens  
of the railroad and your flower soul?

Poor dead flower? when did you forget you were a flower? when did you look at your  
skin and decide you were an impotent dirty old locomotive? the ghost of a locomotive?  
the specter and shade of a once powerful mad American locomotive?

You were never no locomotive, Sunflower, you were a sunflower!

And you Locomotive, you are a locomotive, forget me not!

So I grabbed up the skeleton thick sunflower and stuck it at my side like a scepter,  
and deliver my sermon to my soul, and Jack's soul too, and anyone who'll listen,  
—We're not our skin of grime, we're not dread bleak dusty imageless locomotives, we're  
golden sunflowers inside, blessed by our own seed & hairy naked accomplishment-bodies  
growing into mad black formal sunflowers in the sunset, spied on by our own eyes under  
the shadow of the mad locomotive riverbank sunset Frisco hilly tincan evening sitdown  
vision.

Berkeley, 1955

### **Appendix 11 - "America" by Allen Ginsberg**

America I've given you all and now I'm nothing.

America two dollars and twentyseven cents January 17, 1956.

I can't stand my own mind.

America when will we end the human war?

Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb.

I don't feel good don't bother me.

I won't write my poem till I'm in my right mind.

America when will you be angelic?  
When will you take off your clothes?  
When will you look at yourself through the grave?  
When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites?  
America why are your libraries full of tears?  
America when will you send your eggs to India?  
I'm sick of your insane demands.  
When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need with my good looks?  
America after all it is you and I who are perfect not the next world.  
Your machinery is too much for me.  
You made me want to be a saint.  
There must be some other way to settle this argument.  
Burroughs is in Tangiers I don't think he'll come back it's sinister.  
Are you being sinister or is this some form of practical joke?  
I'm trying to come to the point.  
I refuse to give up my obsession.  
America stop pushing I know what I'm doing.  
America the plum blossoms are falling.  
I haven't read the newspapers for months, everyday somebody goes on trial for murder.  
America I feel sentimental about the Wobblies.  
America I used to be a communist when I was a kid I'm not sorry.  
I smoke marijuana every chance I get.  
I sit in my house for days on end and stare at the roses in the closet.  
When I go to Chinatown I get drunk and never get laid.  
My mind is made up there's going to be trouble.  
You should have seen me reading Marx.  
My psychoanalyst thinks I'm perfectly right.  
I won't say the Lord's Prayer.  
I have mystical visions and cosmic vibrations.  
America I still haven't told you what you did to Uncle Max after he came over from  
Russia.

I'm addressing you.

Are you going to let your emotional life be run by Time Magazine?

I'm obsessed by Time Magazine.

I read it every week.

Its cover stares at me every time I slink past the corner candystore.

I read it in the basement of the Berkeley Public Library.

It's always telling me about responsibility. Businessmen are serious. Movie producers are serious. Everybody's serious but me.

It occurs to me that I am America.

I am talking to myself again.

Asia is rising against me.

I haven't got a chinaman's chance.

I'd better consider my national resources.

My national resources consist of two joints of marijuana millions of genitals an unpublishable private literature that jetplanes 1400 miles an hour and twentyfive-thousand mental institutions.

I say nothing about my prisons nor the millions of underprivileged who live in my flowerpots under the light of five hundred suns.

I have abolished the warehouses of France, Tangiers is the next to go.

My ambition is to be President despite the fact that I'm a Catholic.

America how can I write a holy litany in your silly mood?

I will continue like Henry Ford my strophes are as individual as his automobiles more so they're all different sexes.

America I will sell you strophes \$2500 apiece \$500 down on your old strophe

America free Tom Mooney

America save the Spanish Loyalists

America Sacco & Vanzetti must not die

America I am the Scottsboro boys.

America when I was seven momma took me to Communist Cell meetings they sold us garbanzos a handful per ticket a ticket costs a nickel and the speeches were free everybody was angelic and sentimental about the workers it was all so sincere you have no idea what a good thing the party was in 1835 Scott Nearing was a grand old man a real mensch Mother Bloor the Silk-strikers' Ewig-Weibliche made me cry I once saw the Yiddish orator Israel Amter plain. Everybody must have been a spy.

America you don't really want to go to war.

America its them bad Russians.

Them Russians them Russians and them Chinamen. And them Russians.

The Russia wants to eat us alive. The Russia's power mad. She wants to take our cars from out our garages.

Her wants to grab Chicago. Her needs a Red Reader's Digest. Her wants our auto plants in Siberia. Him big bureaucracy running our filling stations.

That no good. Ugh. Him make Indians learn read. Him need big black niggers. Hah. Her make us all work sixteen hours a day. Help.

America this is quite serious.

America this is the impression I get from looking in the television set.

America is this correct?

I'd better get right down to the job.

It's true I don't want to join the Army or turn lathes in precision parts factories, I'm nearsighted and psychopathic anyway.

America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel.

## **Appendix 12 - "Wales Visitation" by Allen Ginsberg**

White fog lifting & falling on mountain-brow

Trees moving in rivers of wind

The clouds arise

as on a wave, gigantic eddy lifting mist

above teeming ferns exquisitely swayed

along a green crag

glimpsed thru mullioned glass in valley raine—

Bardic, O Self, Visitacione, tell naught  
but what seen by one man in a vale in Albion,  
of the folk, whose physical sciences end in Ecology,  
the wisdom of earthly relations,  
of mouths & eyes interknit ten centuries visible  
orchards of mind language manifest human,  
of the satanic thistle that raises its horned symmetry  
flowering above sister grass-daisies' pink tiny  
bloomlets angelic as lightbulbs—

Remember 160 miles from London's symmetrical thorned tower  
& network of TV pictures flashing bearded your Self  
the lambs on the tree-nooked hillside this day bleating  
heard in Blake's old ear, & the silent thought of Wordsworth in eld Stillness  
clouds passing through skeleton arches of Tintern Abbey—  
Bard Nameless as the Vast, babble to Vastness!

All the Valley quivered, one extended motion, wind  
undulating on mossy hills  
a giant wash that sank white fog delicately down red runnels  
on the mountainside  
whose leaf-branch tendrils moved asway  
in granitic undertow down—  
and lifted the floating Nebulous upward, and lifted the arms of the trees  
and lifted the grasses an instant in balance  
and lifted the lambs to hold still  
and lifted the green of the hill, in one solemn wave

A solid mass of Heaven, mist-infused, ebbs thru the vale,  
a wavelet of Immensity, lapping gigantic through Llanthony Valley,

the length of all England, valley upon valley under Heaven's ocean  
tonned with cloud-hang,

—Heaven balanced on a grassblade.

Roar of the mountain wind slow, sigh of the body,  
One Being on the mountainside stirring gently  
Exquisite scales trembling everywhere in balance,  
one motion thru the cloudy sky-floor shifting on the million feet of daisies,  
one Majesty the motion that stirred wet grass quivering  
to the farthest tendril of white fog poured down  
through shivering flowers on the mountain's head—

No imperfection in the budded mountain,  
Valleys breathe, heaven and earth move together,  
daisies push inches of yellow air, vegetables tremble,  
grass shimmers green  
sheep speckle the mountainside, revolving their jaws with empty eyes,  
horses dance in the warm rain,  
tree-lined canals network live farmland,  
blueberries fringe stone walls on hawthorn'd hills,  
pheasants croak on meadows haired with fern—

Out, out on the hillside, into the ocean sound, into delicate gusts of wet air,  
Fall on the ground, O great Wetness, O Mother, No harm on your body!  
Stare close, no imperfection in the grass,  
each flower Buddha-eye, repeating the story,  
myriad-formed—

Kneel before the foxglove raising green buds, mauve bells dropped  
doubled down the stem trembling antennae,  
& look in the eyes of the branded lambs that stare  
breathing stockstill under dripping hawthorn—

I lay down mixing my beard with the wet hair of the mountainside,



smelling the brown vagina-moist ground, harmless,  
tasting the violet thistle-hair, sweetness—  
One being so balanced, so vast, that its softest breath  
moves every floweret in the stillness on the valley floor,  
trembles lamb-hair hung gossamer rain-beaded in the grass,  
lifts trees on their roots, birds in the great draught  
hiding their strength in the rain, bearing same weight,

Groan thru breast and neck, a great Oh! to earth heart  
Calling our Presence together  
The great secret is no secret  
Senses fit the winds,  
Visible is visible,  
rain-mist curtains wave through the bearded vale,  
gray atoms wet the wind's kabbala  
Crosslegged on a rock in dusk rain,  
rubber boot in soft grass, mind moveless,  
breath trembles in white daisies by the roadside,  
Heaven breath and my own symmetric  
Airs wavering thru antlered green fern  
drawn in my navel, same breath as breathes thru Capel-Y-Ffn,  
Sounds of Aleph and Aum  
through forests of gristle,  
my skull and Lord Hereford's Knob equal,  
All Albion one.

What did I notice? Particulars! The  
vision of the great One is myriad—  
smoke curls upward from ashtray,  
house fire burned low,  
The night, still wet & moody black heaven

starless

upward in motion with wet wind.

July 29, 1967 (LSD)—August 3, 1967 (London)

**Appendix 13 - “In Goya's greatest scenes we seem to see” by Lawrence  
Ferlinghetti**

In Goya's greatest scenes we seem to see

the people of the world

exactly at the moment when

they first attained the title of

'suffering humanity'

They writhe upon the page

in a veritable rage

of adversity

Heaped up

groaning with babies and bayonets

under cement skies

in an abstract landscape of blasted trees

bent statues bats wings and beaks

slippery gibbets

cadavers and carnivorous cocks

and all the final hollering monsters

of the

'imagination of disaster'

they are so bloody real

it is as if they really still existed

And they do

landscape is changed

They still are ranged along the roads

plagued by legionaires  
false windmills and demented roosters

They are the same people,  
only further from home  
on freeways fifty lanes wide  
on a concrete continent  
spaced with bland billboards  
illustrating imbecile illusions of happiness  
The scene shows fewer tumbrils  
but more strung-out citizens  
in painted cars  
and they have strange license plates  
and engines  
that devour America

**Appendix 14 - "I am waiting" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti**

I am waiting for my case to come up  
and I am waiting for a rebirth of wonder  
and I am waiting for someone  
to really discover America  
and wail  
and I am waiting  
for the discovery  
of a new symbolic western frontier  
and I am waiting for the American Eagle  
to really spread its wings  
and straighten up and fly right  
and I am waiting  
for the Age of Anxiety  
to drop dead

and I am waiting  
for the war to be fought  
which will make the world safe  
for anarchy  
and I am waiting  
for the final withering away  
of all governments  
and I am perpetually awaiting  
a rebirth of wonder  
I am waiting for the Second Coming  
and I am waiting  
for a religious revival  
to sweep thru the state of Arizona  
and I am waiting  
for the Grapes of Wrath to be stored and I am waiting  
for them to prove  
that God is really American  
and I ant wailing  
to see God on television  
piped onto church altars  
if only they can find the right channel  
to tune in on  
and I am waiting  
for the Last Supper to be served again with a strange new appetizer  
and I am perpetually awaiting  
a rebirth of wonder  
I am waiting for my number to be called and I am waiting  
for the Salvation Army to take over  
and I ant waiting  
for the meek to be blessed  
and inherit the earth without taxes

and I am waiting  
for forests and animals  
to reclaim the earth as theirs  
and I am waiting  
for a way to be devised  
to destroy all nationalisms  
without killing anybody  
and I am waiting  
for linnets and planets to fall like rain  
and I am waiting for lovers and weepers  
to lie down together again  
in a new rebirth of wonder

I am waiting for the Great Divide to be crossed  
and I am anxiously waiting  
for the secret of eternal life to be discovered  
by an obscure general practitioner  
and I am waiting  
for the storms of life  
to be over  
and I am waiting  
to set sail for happiness  
and I am waiting  
for a reconstructed Mayflower  
to reach America  
with its picture story and tv rights  
sold in advance to the natives  
and I am waiting  
for the lost music to sound again  
in the Lost Continent  
in a new rebirth of wonder

I am waiting for the day  
that maketh all things clear  
and I am awaiting retribution  
for what America did to Tom Sawyer  
and I am waiting  
for the American Boy  
to take off Beauty's clothes  
and get on top of her and I am waiting  
for Alice in Wonderland  
to retransmit to me  
her total dream of innocence  
and I am waiting  
for Childe Roland to come  
to the final darkest tower  
and I am waiting  
for Aphrodite  
to grow live arms  
at a final disarmament conference  
in a new rebirth of wonder  
I am waiting  
to get some intimations  
of immortality  
by recollecting my early childhood  
and I am waiting  
for the green mornings to come again  
youth's dumb green fields come back again  
and I am waiting  
for some strains of unpremeditated art  
to shake my typewriter  
and I am waiting to write  
the peat indelible poem

and I am waiting  
for the last long careless rapture  
and I am perpetually waiting  
for the fleeing lovers on the Grecian Urn  
to catch each other up at last  
and embrace  
and I am awaiting perpetually and forever  
a renaissance of wonder

**Appendix 15 - "For the death of 100 whales" by Michael McClure**

Hung midsea  
Like a boat mid-air  
The liners boiled their pastures:  
The liners of flesh,  
The Arctic steamers  
Brains the size of a teacup  
Mouths the size of a door

The sleek wolves  
Mowers and reapers of sea kine.  
THE GIANT TADPOLES  
(Meat their algae)  
Lept  
Like sheep or children.  
Shot from the sea's bore.

Turned and twisted  
(Goya!!)  
Flung blood and sperm.  
Incense.  
Gnashed at their tails and brothers

Cursed Christ of mammals,  
Snapped at the sun,  
Ran for the Sea's floor.

Goya! Goya!  
Oh Lawrence  
No angels dance those bridges. / OH GUN! OH BOW!  
There are no churches in the waves,  
No holiness,  
No passages or crossings  
From the beasts' wet shore.

### **Appendix 16 - "Peyote Poem, Part I" by Michael McClure**

Clear -- the senses bright -- sitting in the black chair -- Rocker --  
the white walls reflecting the color of clouds  
moving over the sun. Intimacies! The rooms  
not important -- but like divisions of all space  
of all hideousness and beauty. I hear  
the music of myself and write it down  
for no one to read. I pass fantasies as they  
sing to me with Circe-Voices. I visit  
among the peoples of myself and know all  
I need to know.

**I KNOW EVERYTHING! I PASS INTO THE ROOM**

there is a golden bed radiating all light  
the air is full of silver hangings and sheathes  
I smile to myself. I know  
all there is to know. I see all there  
is to feel. I am friendly with the ache  
in my belly. The answer



to love is my voice. There is no time!  
No answers. The answer to feeling is my feeling.

The answer to joy is joy without feeling.

The room is a multicolored cherub  
of air and bright colors. The pain in my stomach  
is warm and tender. I am smiling. The pain  
is many pointed, without anguish.  
Light changes the room from yellows to violet!  
The dark brown space behind the door is precious  
intimate, silent and still. The birthplace  
of Brahms. I know  
all that I need to know. There is no hurry.  
I read the meanings of scratched walls and cracked ceilings.  
I am separate. I close my eyes in divinity and pain.  
I blink in solemnity and unsolemn joy.  
I smile at myself in my movements. Walking  
I step higher in carefulness. I fill  
space with myself. I see the secret and distinct  
patterns of smoke from my mouth  
I am without care part of all. Distinct.  
I am separate from gloom and beauty. I see all.

## Appendix 17 – Selection of songs

1. “A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall” by Bob Dylan released in 1962 on the album “The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan” (Lyrics.com)
2. “What Have They Done to The Rain” by Joan Baez released in 1962 on the album “Joan Baez in Concert, Part 1” (Genius.com)
3. “Pollution” by Tom Lehrer released in 1965 on the album “That Was the Year That Was” (Lyrics.com)
4. “When the Music's Over” by The Doors released in 1967 on the album “Strange Days” (Lyrics.com)
5. “The Eleven” by The Grateful Dead released in 1969 on the album “Live/Dead” (Lyrics.com)
6. “Eskimo Blue day” by Jefferson Airplane released in 1969 on the album “Volunteers” (Lyrics.com)
7. “Big Yellow Taxi” by Joni Mitchell released in 1970 on the album “Ladies of the Canyon” (Lyrics.com)
8. “Whose Garden Was This?” By Tom Paxton released in 1970 on the album “Tom Paxton 6” (Genius.com)
9. “After the Gold Rush” by Neil Young released in 1970 on album “After the Gold Rush” (Lyrics.com)
10. “Hungry Planet” by The Byrds released in 1970 on the album “(Untitled)” (Lyrics.com)
11. “Apeman” by The Kinks released in 1970 on the album “Lola vs. Powerman” (Lyrics.com)
12. “Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)” by Marvin Gaye released in 1971 on the album “What's Going On” (Lyrics.com)
13. “Don't Go Near the Water” by The Beach Boys released in 1971 on the album “Surf's Up” (Lyrics.com)
14. “Rocky Mountain High” by John Denver released in 1972 as a single (Lyrics.com)
15. “Down by the River” by Albert Hammond released in 1972 on the album “It Never Rains in Southern California” (Lyrics.com)

## Appendix 18 – “A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall” by Bob Dylan

Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?  
Oh, where have you been, my darling young one?  
I've stumbled on the side of twelve misty mountains  
I've walked and I've crawled on six crooked highways  
I've stepped in the middle of seven sad forests  
I've been out in front of a dozen dead oceans  
I've been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard  
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, and it's a hard  
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

Oh, what did you see, my blue-eyed son?  
Oh, what did you see, my darling young one?  
I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it  
I saw a highway of diamonds with nobody on it  
I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin'  
I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin'  
I saw a white ladder all covered with water  
I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken  
I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children  
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard  
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

And what did you hear, my blue-eyed son?  
And what did you hear, my darling young one?  
I heard the sound of a thunder, it roared out a warnin'  
Heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world  
Heard one person starve, I heard many people laughin'  
Heard the song of a poet who died in the gutter  
Heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley  
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard

And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

Oh, who did you meet, my blue-eyed son?

Who did you meet, my darling young one?

I met a young child beside a dead pony

I met a white man who walked a black dog

I met a young woman whose body was burning

I met a young girl, she gave me a rainbow

I met one man who was wounded in love

I met another man who was wounded with hatred

And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard

It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

Oh, what'll you do now, my blue-eyed son?

Oh, what'll you do now, my darling young one?

I'm a-goin' back out 'fore the rain starts a-fallin'

I'll walk to the depths of the deepest black forest

Where the people are many and their hands are all empty

Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters

Where the home in the valley meets the damp dirty prison

Where the executioner's face is always well-hidden

Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten

Where black is the color, where none is the number

And I'll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it

And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it

Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin'

But I'll know my song well before I start singin'

And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard

It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

### **Appendix 19 - “What Have They Done to The Rain” by Joan Baez**

Just a little rain falling all around  
The grass lifts its head to the heavenly sound  
Just a little rain, just a little rain  
What have they done to the rain  
Just a little boy standing in the rain  
The gentle rain that falls for years  
And the grass is gone, the boy disappears  
And rain keeps falling like helpless tears  
And what have they done to the rain  
Just a little breeze out of the sky  
The leaves nod their head as the breeze blows by  
Just a little breeze with some smoke in its eye  
What have they done to the rain  
Just a little boy standing in the rain  
The gentle rain that falls for years  
And the grass is gone, the boy disappears  
And rain keeps falling like helpless tears  
And what have they done to the rain  
What have they done to the rain

### **Appendix 20 - “Pollution” by Tom Lehrer**

Time was when an American about to go abroad would be warned by his friends or the guidebooks not to drink the water. But times have changed, and now a foreigner coming to this country might be offered the following advice:

If you visit American city,  
You will find it very pretty.  
Just two things of which you must beware:  
Don't drink the water and don't breathe the air!  
Pollution, pollution!  
They got smog and sewage and mud.

Turn on your tap  
And get hot and cold running crud!

See the halibuts and the sturgeons  
Being wiped out by detergeons.  
Fish gotta swim and birds gotta fly,  
But they don't last long if they try.

Pollution, pollution!  
You can use the latest toothpaste,  
And then rinse your mouth  
With industrial waste.

Just go out for a breath of air  
And you'll be ready for Medicare.  
The city streets are really quite a thrill -  
If the hoods don't get you, the monoxide will.

Pollution, pollution!  
Wear a gas mask and a veil.  
Then you can breathe,  
Long as you don't inhale!

Lots of things there that you can drink,  
But stay away from the kitchen sink!  
The breakfast garbage that you throw into the Bay  
They drink at lunch in San Jose.

So go to the city,  
See the crazy people there.  
Like lambs to the slaughter,

They're drinking the water  
And breathing [cough] the air!

## **Appendix 21 - "When the Music's Over" by The Doors**

Yeah, c'mon

Yeah!

When the music's over

When the music's over, yeah

When the music's over

Turn out the lights

Turn out the lights

Turn out the lights

Yeah

When the music's over

When the music's over

When the music's over

Turn out the lights

Turn out the lights

Turn out the lights

For the music is your special friend

Dance on fire as it intends

Music is your only friend

Until the end

Until the end

Until the end

Cancel my subscription to the resurrection

Send my credentials to the house of detention

I got some friends inside

The face in the mirror won't stop

The girl in the window won't drop

A feast of friends, alive she cried

Waitin' for me  
Outside  
Before I sink  
Into the big sleep  
I want to hear  
I want to hear  
The scream of the butterfly  
Come back, baby, back into my arm  
We're gettin' tired of hangin' around  
Waitin' around with our heads to the ground  
I hear a very gentle sound  
Very near yet very far  
Very soft, yeah, very clear  
Come today, come today  
What have they done to the earth, yeah?  
What have they done to our fair sister?  
Ravaged and plundered and ripped her and bit her  
Stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn and  
Tied her with fences and dragged her down  
I hear a very gentle sound  
With your ear down to the ground  
We want the world and we want it (we want the world and we want it!)  
Now  
Now?  
Now!  
Persian night, babe  
See the light, babe  
Save us  
"Jesus / Save us!"  
So when the music's over  
When the music's over, yeah



When the music's over  
Turn out the lights  
Turn out the lights  
Turn out the lights  
Well the music is your special friend  
Dance on fire as it intends  
Music is your only friend  
Until the end  
Until the end  
Until the end

## **Appendix 22 - "The Eleven" by The Grateful Dead**

High green chilly winds and windy vines  
In loops around the twisted shafts of lavender,  
They're crawling to the sun.  
Underfoot the ground is patched  
With arms of ivy wrapped around the manzanita,  
Stark and shiny in the breeze.  
Wonder who will water all the children of the garden  
When they sigh about the barren lack of rain and  
Droop so hungry neath the sky.  
William Tell has stretched his bow till it won't stretch  
No furthermore and/or it may require a change that hasn't come before.  
No more time to tell how, this is the season of what,  
Now is the time of returning with our thought  
Jewels polished and gleaming.  
Now is the time past believing the child has relinquished the rein,  
Now is the test of the boomerang tossed in the night of redeeming.  
Seven faced marble eyed transitory dream doll,  
Six proud walkers on the jingle bell rainbow,  
Five men writing with fingers of gold,

Four men tracking down the great white sperm whale,  
Three girls waiting in a foreign dominion  
Riding in the whale belly, fade away in moonlight,  
Sink beneath the waters to the coral sands below.

### **Appendix 23 - "Eskimo Blue day" by Jefferson Airplane**

Sun cuts loose from the frozen  
Until it joins with the African sea  
In moving it changes its cold and its name  
The reason I come and I go is the same  
Animal game for me  
You call it rain  
But the human name  
Doesn't mean shit to a tree

And if you don't mind heat in your river and  
Fork tongue talking from me  
Swim like an eel fantastic snake  
Take my love when it's free  
Electric feel with me  
You call it loud  
But the human crowd  
Doesn't mean shit to a tree

Change the strings and notes slide  
Change the bridge and string shift down  
Shift the notes and bridge sings

Fire eating people  
Rising toys of the sun  
Energy dies without body warm

Icicles ruin your gun

Water my roots the natural thing  
Natural spring to the sea  
Sulfur springs make my body float  
Like a ship made of logs from a tree  
Oh, redwoods talk to me  
Say it plainly  
The human name  
Doesn't mean shit to a tree

Snow called water going violent  
Damn the end of the stream  
Too much cold in one place breaks  
That's why you might know what I mean  
Consider how small you are  
Compared to your scream  
The human dream  
Doesn't mean shit to a tree

#### **Appendix 24 - "Big Yellow Taxi: by Joni Mitchell**

They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot  
With a pink hotel, a boutique  
And a swinging hot spot

Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?  
They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot  
Shoo, bop, bop, bop, bop

Shoo, bop, bop, bop, bop

They took all the trees  
Put 'em in a tree museum  
And they charged the people  
A dollar and a half just to see 'em

Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?  
They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot  
Shoo, bop, bop, bop, bop  
Shoo, bop, bop, bop, bop

Hey, farmer, farmer  
Put away the DDT now  
Give me spots on my apples  
But leave me the birds and the bees, please

Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?  
They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot  
Shoo, bop, bop, bop, bop  
Shoo, bop, bop, bop, bop

Late last night  
I heard the screen door slam  
And a big yellow taxi  
Took away my old man

Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?  
They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot  
Shoo, bop, bop, bop, bop

I said, don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone  
They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot  
Shoo, bop, bop, bop, bop

They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot  
Shoo, bop, bop, bop, bop

They paved paradise  
Put up a parking lot

### **Appendix 25 - "Whose Garden Was This?" by Tom Paxton**

Whose garden was this? It must have been lovely  
Did it have flowers? I've seen pictures of flowers  
And I'd love to have smelled one

Tell me again, I need to know  
The forests had trees, the meadows were green  
The oceans were blue and birds really flew  
Can you swear that was true?

Whose garden was this? It must have been lovely  
Did it have flowers? I've seen pictures of flowers

And I'd love to have smelled one

Tell me again, I need to know

The forests had trees, the meadows were green

The oceans were blue, and birds really flew

Can you swear that was true?

Whose river was this? You say it ran freely

Blue was its color, I've seen blue in some pictures

And I'd love to have been there

Tell me again, I need to know

The forests had trees, the meadows were green

The oceans were blue, and birds really flew

Can you swear that was true?

Whose gray sky was this? Or was it a blue one?

At night there were breezes, I've heard records of breezes

And I'd love to have felt one

Tell me again, I need to know

The forests had trees, the meadows were green

The oceans were blue, and birds really flew

Can you swear that was true?

### **Appendix 26 – “After the Gold Rush” by Neil Young**

Well, I dreamed I saw the knights in armor coming

Sayin' something about a queen

There were peasants singin' and drummers drumming

And the archer split the tree

There was a fanfare blowin' to the sun

That floated on the breeze  
Look at mother nature on the run in the nineteen seventies  
Look at mother nature on the run in the nineteen seventies

I was lyin' in a burned out basement  
With a full moon in my eyes  
I was hopin' for a replacement  
When the sun burst through the skies  
There was a band playin' in my head  
And I felt like getting high  
Thinkin' about what a friend had said  
I was hopin' it was a lie  
Thinkin' about what a friend had said  
I was hopin' it was a lie

Well, I dreamed I saw the silver spaceships flying  
In the yellow haze of the sun  
There were children crying and colors flying  
All around the chosen ones  
All in a dream, all in a dream  
The loading had begun  
Flyin' mother nature's silver seed  
To a new home in the sun  
Flyin' mother nature's silver seed  
To a new home

### **Appendix 27 - "Hungry Planet" by The Byrds**

I'm a hungry planet, I had a youthful face  
They were in a hurry to take a lot of space  
They needed bombs and tungsten, ore and iron  
So they climbed right down in and blew a lot of me right through.

I'm a hungry planet, over in the sky  
The things they did to hurt me have gone by and by  
Now here I am all alone, will they ever learn  
Well I had to shake and quake and make their houses burn.

I'm a hungry planet, I had a blue sea  
All the people kept chopping down all my finest trees  
Poisoning my oxygen, digging in my skin  
Takin' more out of my earth than they'll ever put there in.  
I'm a hungry planet.

### **Appendix 28 - "Apeman" by The Kinks**

I think I'm sophisticated 'cause I'm living my life  
Like a good homo sapiens  
But all around me everybody's multiplying  
And they're walking round like flies man  
So I'm no better than the animals sitting  
In the cages in the zoo, man  
'Cause compared to the flowers and the birds and the trees  
I am an apeman

I think I'm so educated and I'm so civilized  
'Cause I'm a strict vegetarian  
But with the over-population and inflation and starvation  
And the crazy politicians  
I don't feel safe in this world no more  
I don't want to die in a nuclear war  
I want to sail away to a distant shore and make like an apeman

I'm an apeman, I'm an ape, apeman, oh I'm an apeman



I'm a King Kong man, I'm a voodoo man, oh I'm an apeman  
'Cause compared to the sun that sits in the sky  
Compared to the clouds as they roll by  
Compared to the bugs and the spiders and flies I am an apeman

In man's evolution he's created the city and the motor traffic rumble  
But give me half a chance and I'd be taking off my clothes  
And living in the jungle  
'Cause the only time that I feel at ease  
Is swinging up and down in a coconut tree  
Oh what a life of luxury to be like an apeman

I'm an apeman, I'm an ape, apeman, oh I'm an apeman  
I'm a King Kong man, I'm a voodoo man, oh I'm an apeman  
I look out the window but I can't see the sky  
The air pollution is a-fogging up my eyes  
I want to get out of this city alive and make like an apeman

Oh come on and love me, be my apeman girl  
And we'll be so happy in my apeman world

I'm an apeman, I'm an ape, apeman, oh I'm an apeman  
I'm a King Kong man, I'm a voodoo man, oh I'm an apeman  
I'll be your Tarzan, you'll be my Jane  
I'll keep you warm and you'll keep me sane  
We'll sit in the trees and eat bananas all day, just like an apeman

I'm an apeman, I'm an ape, apeman, oh I'm an apeman  
I'm a King Kong man, I'm a voodoo man, oh I'm an apeman  
I don't feel safe in this world no more  
I don't want to die in a nuclear war

I want to sail away to a distant shore and make like an apeman

### **Appendix 29 - "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)" by Marvin Gaye**

Whoa, ah, mercy, mercy me

Oh things ain't what they used to be, no no

Where did all the blue skies go?

Poison is the wind that blows from the north and south and east (Father)

Whoa mercy, mercy me (oh mercy)

Oh things ain't what they used to be, no, no (mercy Father)

Oil wasted on the oceans and upon our seas, fish full of mercury

Ah, oh mercy, mercy me

Ah, things ain't what they used to be, no, no (help us, Father)

Radiation underground and in the sky

Animals and birds who live nearby are dying (help us, help us, Father)

Oh mercy, mercy me (mercy Father, please help us)

Oh things ain't what they used to be (mercy Father)

What about this overcrowded land (oh, have mercy Father)

How much more abuse from man can she stand? Ooh

Oh, no, no, no, nah, nah, nah (Ooh-ooh my sweet Lord)

My sweet Lord, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah (my, my sweet Lord)

My, my Lord, my sweet Lord, ooh-ooh (help us Father, please help us)

### **Appendix 30 - "Don't Go Near the Water" by The Beach Boys**

Don't go near the water

Don't you think it's sad

What's happened to the water

Our water's going bad

Oceans, rivers, lakes and streams  
Have all been touched by man  
The poison floating out to sea  
Now threatens life on land

Don't go near the water  
Ain't it sad  
What's happened to the water  
It's going bad

Don't go near the water  
Don't go near the water

Toothpaste and soap will make our oceans a bubble bath  
So let's avoid an ecological aftermath  
Beginning with me  
Beginning with you

Don't go near the water  
To do it any wrong  
To be cool with the water  
Is the message of this song

Let's all help the water  
Right away  
Do what we can and ought to  
Let's start today

### **Appendix 31 - “Rocky Mountain High” by John Denver**

He was born in the summer of his 27th year  
Coming home to a place he'd never been before  
He left yesterday behind him, you might say he was born again  
You might say he found a key for every door

When he first came to the mountains his life was far away  
On the road and hanging by a song  
But the string's already broken and he doesn't really care  
It keeps changing fast and it don't last for long

But the Colorado rocky mountain high  
I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky  
The shadow from the starlight is softer than a lullaby  
Rocky mountain high (Colorado)

He climbed cathedral mountains, he saw silver clouds below  
He saw everything as far as you can see  
And they say that he got crazy once and he tried to touch the sun  
And he lost a friend but kept his memory

Now he walks in quiet solitude the forest and the streams  
Seeking grace in every step he takes  
His sight has turned inside himself to try and understand  
The serenity of a clear blue mountain lake

And the Colorado rocky mountain high  
I've seen it raining fire in the sky  
You can talk to God and listen to the casual reply  
Rocky mountain high

Now his life is full of wonder but his heart still knows some fear  
Of a simple thing he cannot comprehend  
Why they try to tear the mountains down to bring in a couple more  
More people, more scars upon the land

And the Colorado rocky mountain high  
I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky  
I know he'd be a poorer man if he never saw an eagle fly  
Rocky mountain high

It's Colorado rocky mountain high  
I've seen it rainin' fire in the sky  
Friends around the campfire and everybody's high  
Rocky mountain high  
Rocky mountain high  
Rocky mountain high  
Rocky mountain high  
Rocky mountain high  
Rocky mountain high

### **Appendix 32 - "Down by the River" by Albert Hammond**

City life was getting us down so we spent a weekend out town  
Pitched our tent on a patch of ground down by the river  
Lit a fire and drank some wine you put your jeans on top of mine  
I said: Come in  
The water's fine

Down by the river  
Down by the river  
Down by the river

Said: Come in the water's fine down by the river  
Didn't feel too good all night  
So we took a walk in the morning light  
And came across the strangest sight down by the river  
Silver fish lay on its side it was washed up by the early tide  
I wonder how it died?

Down by the river  
Down by the river  
Down by the river, silver fish lay on its side

The doctor put us both to bed  
He doosed us up and he shook his head  
Only foolish people go  
He said  
Down by the river  
The mighty willows weep  
Said he

Because they're dying gradually  
From the waste from the factories

Down by the river  
Down by the river  
Down by the river

The mighty willows weep, said he down by the river

And in time the riverbanks will die  
The reeds will wilt and the ducks won't fly  
There'll be a tear in the otter's eye down by the river

The banks will soon be black and dead  
And where the otter raised his head  
Will be a clean  
White skull instead

Down by the river  
Down by the river  
Down by the river, the banks will soon be black and dead

Down by the river  
Down by the river  
The banks will soon be black and dead, down by the river