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Romantic Perceptions of Nature in Popular  
Music“

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*To all my friends and family for your endless support,  
encouragement, faith and love. You are the best.*



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## 1. Introduction

The physical world as well as the various concepts of nature have always been sources of inspiration for artists of all genres. This paper is, therefore, interested in how nature is perceived by musicians and in how far this understanding influences their creative work. In detail, this academic work wants to investigate how not only the physical world but also a romantic understanding of nature influences and inspires the chosen artist in their creativity and in how far this influence manifests itself in their creative output. As will be revealed, the chosen musicians have a romantic understanding of nature. This means that concepts such as the sublime or the picturesque – which are concepts developed during the Romantic period – are very popular today. Also Johns-Putra refers to this fact when she says that

[t]oday's widespread environmentally informed attitude to nature as a source of imaginative inspiration and moral value, and therefore something to be admired, appreciated and preserved, has its seeds in Romantic conceptualizations of the external world (106).

Therefore, it is not surprising that this paper uses the approach of Romanticism to analyse the chosen artists. Generally speaking, Romanticism refers to the period between the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. As this work solely deals with artists stemming from English speaking countries, the focus will lie on British and American Romanticism.

The Romantic period was a time in which changes in perceiving the world took place. This is especially true for the perception of nature. Different to the preceding period of Enlightenment, nature was then perceived as a

[...] privileged material for expressing a human subject emancipated from the traditional restrictions of religion and society and experiencing the unfathomable depth of the soul (H. Schneider 92).

This means that nature was appreciated as a resort for the soul where one could feel free from all restrictions imposed by society. It is important to note that this idea of nature is a concept and has got nothing to do with the physical world. Nevertheless, Romanticism can be understood as the predecessor of the theoretical approach of ecocriticism which is very popular today. This not only becomes evident when reading the most important definition of the term coined by Cheryll Glotfelty in the introductory part of *The Ecocriticism Reader* – “[...]”

[E]cocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii) – but also by other works published in this realm including one by Laurence Coupe called *The Green Studies Reader* which deals with the development of the Green Studies – the British term for ecocriticism – from British Romanticism to where Green Studies were in the year 2000. Other important works in this respect are *Romantic Ecology* by Jonathan Bate written in 1991 which was the first book to use the term *ecocriticism* in the British context (Kerridge 530) or the already mentioned *The Ecocriticism Reader* by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm which can be understood as the point of reference in the whole area of environmentalism (Buell 96). Of course, there have been works dealing with the environment and literature before the term was coined by Rueckert in 1978, for instance Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* from 1962 or Raymond Williams’s *The Country and the City* from 1973 (Kerridge 530; 533). Another well researched and comprehensibly written book is Greg Garrard’s *Ecocriticism* from 2004. It gives an overview of the main topics covered by ecocriticism as well as further reading tips and an outline of the history of this genre. As Buell rightly mentions in his essay, only in the past years has the work on non-literary media outside literature characterised itself as ecocritical (104). This means that other areas besides literary studies refer in their analyses to themselves as being ecocritical. Works in this ‘newly developed’ area are, among others, Christoph Irmscher and Alan Braddock’s *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History* (2009), or David Ingram’s *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (2000).

Returning now to the topic of research dealt with in this paper, my hypothesis is that nature has always been a main source of inspiration for musicians and other artists and that this influence is visible not only in their music as such but also in the way musicians style their homepages or how they fashion their CD artworks etc. I argue that, by doing so, these artists not only show their personal understanding of nature, but also create a star-image which they believe to be most favourable in these times of global warming and natural disasters. However, one has to bear in mind that not only the physical world but rather the romantic understanding of nature can be found in the musician’s work.

To answer my research questions and to prove my hypothesis, the following eleven musicians have been chosen to support the main argument: Firstly, *Sting*



who is known for his involvement in saving the tropical forests in South America; *Bono* from U2 who is well known for his public talks about the need to change mankind's behaviour to save resources and human lives; *Melissa Etheridge* who uses her new found spirituality to bring the urge of doing something against climate change home to the people; *Radiohead* which has always been understood as a political band and which now tries to minimise its carbon footprint; *Coldplay* which tries to counteract the large amount of carbon dioxide produced by its CD production by planting trees; *Dave Matthews Band* which is known for its political commitment towards social and environmental grievances; *Willie Nelson*, the country legend who has its own bio diesel brand named after him; *Jack Johnson*, the surfer and musician who demands a simpler lifestyle; *KT Tunstall*, a British singer-songwriter who is interested in a peaceful coexistence with the environment; *Pearl Jam*, an American rock band which is known for its social and environmental criticism; and last but not least, *Maroon 5*, a pop band interested in saving the environment. It did not happen on purpose that most of the chosen artists are male; it just happened that these eleven bands and individuals are the most prominent ones in the music business who are openly concerned with environmental issues (see Costcarelli 2010; "Environment" 2013) which is a strong indicator of a tight musician-nature connection. The focus of this analysis does not lie on the music and song lyrics produced by these artists alone, it also uses a close reading of CD artworks, of the way the musicians (re-)present themselves and their relationship to nature online, how their music videos are implemented and designed – with a focus on the role of nature playing in these clips. However, it is important to note that this academic work only wants to give the reader an overview on this topic.

Before starting the main body of this paper, an introduction to the relationship of celebrities and charity is reasonable. Here, pop bands generally hold an important position as they seem to use this topic to gain more positive publicity.

Even though the main aim of this paper is to find out more about the connection between musicians and nature, one has, nevertheless, to bear in mind that musicians work in a hard business in which only those survive who sell enough of their music or have enough fans that support them. This means that PR strategies as well as marketing in general play an important role in the success of

their careers. The importance of marketing becomes even more evident since the introduction of MTV in 1981 when music videos became introduced to promote not only a certain star and his/her image as well as their music, but mostly to promote record sales (Cashmore 41). The popularity of music videos has various advantages for the music industry as outlined by Schmidt et al:

Das kommerzielle Musikvideo garantiert [...] eine kostengünstige (im Vergleich zu Tourneen), globale und reichenweitenintensive (durch die Verbreitung via TV), vernetzte und integrierte (Visualisierung schafft ein größeres Potential für Strategien der *Cross-Media-Promotion*) sowie kontrollierbare (aufgrund höherer vertikaler Integration) Form der *Promotion* von Popmusik (24f.).<sup>1</sup>

It can be said that as music videos have a great range of influence and are relatively cheap to produce, they are the perfect advertising tools. However, to create a certain image and to attract as much attention as possible to the music or rather to a particular artist, other marketing methods are needed as well. This is where so-called *Cause-Related Marketing* – also known as CRM – comes into play. This method can be understood as a hybrid of corporate public relations and product advertisement invented in the 1980ies (Stole 2006). According to Littler, the reason why artists or celebrities in general want to publicly show their connection to a certain cause is because they want to “raise their profile above the zone of the crudely commercial into the sanctified, quasi-religious realm of altruism and charity” while at the same time adding the dimension of compassion and caring to their portfolio (239). This connection of celebrities with charity is not necessarily something bad; for example, they help raising the profile of a campaign by attracting new audiences (Littler 241). However, there are also downsides to such a cooperation. The most striking downside of such an alliance is definitely the fact of unequal financial benefits resulting from such a connection. It is known that the budget “devoted to celebrity-related promotions siphons off money from the work of aid” (Littler 242). Another problem is that celebrities have the power to move interest to and from particular causes (Littler 243). This means that attention is taken from campaigns/organisations that do great and vital work, but which might not fit into the portfolio of an artist or might not bring enough free publicity and/or increased sales (Stole 2006). Of course, the

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<sup>1</sup> The commercial music video guarantees a cost efficient (compared to tours), global, influential, connected, integrated as well as controllable (due to higher vertical integration) form of *promotion* of pop music. This is achieved by a distribution of these music videos via TV as visualisation guarantees a greater potential for *cross-media-promotion* strategies (trans. by author).

question that arises is, if artists/celebrities publicly plea to support a certain cause/campaign, do they do this because they are seriously concerned about it or do they just support it because it helps them maintaining a positive public image. As Blackburn rightly says in his article, “media sells celebrity sells charity sells business” (24). It is therefore difficult to say if an artist is only involved in a campaign just to elevate his/her profile or because they are actually interested in it. However, in the following analysis, it is generally assumed that the artists chosen are actually interested into the environment.

A term that needs to be discussed as well at this point is *popular music*. It is, however, not an easy term to define as there are various definitions circulating. The most appealing definition is the following coined by Frith (1983):

Essentially, all popular music consists of a hybrid of musical traditions, styles, and influences, and is also an economic product which is invested with ideological significance by many of its consumers. At the heart of the majority of various forms of popular music is a fundamental tension between the essential creativity of the act of “making music” and the commercial nature of the bulk of its production and dissemination (qtd. in Shuker 7).

This means that popular music is not restricted to a particular genre. On the contrary, popular music is rather defined by the tension of being a creative person wanting to create something unique and the need of selling this product to as many people as possible and, therefore, to make this product as appealing to the mainstream taste as possible. This, of course, links up with the topic of image making discussed previously in respect of charity. Further, this definition is also given at this point because despite the music genres the eleven musicians are thought to belong to, all of them belong to the realm of popular or contemporary music.

Returning now to the outline of this paper. The musicians chosen for the analysis are grouped together according to the music genres they are believed to belong to. This is done due to the importance of genre conventions playing in this analysis. The artists discussed in this paper are thought to belong to the genres of Country, Folk, Rock, and Pop Music. The last one, however, can be understood as a counter example for the other music genres.

Summing up, the paper starts with a discussion of the approach of Romanticism and its most important concepts such as the *Sublime* or the *Picturesque* which are supported by examples of the fine arts, literature, and

music. This theoretical part is then followed by the analysis which will be summed up by the main findings of this analysis and possible further research. However, before starting with the theoretical part of this paper, a short overview on the concept of nature and its connection to religion as well as to music shall be given.

Nature has always been an integral part of man's life. Over the centuries, humanity even used to worship nature as the source of all animate and inanimate things existing on this planet. This worship has always been done in the form of rituals with dance and, essentially, music. This music would usually consist of simply drumming; a certain kind of rhythm to bring all participants in an ecstatic mood or hypnotic trance which made people feel closer to nature, the environment, and the gods who were thought responsible for the people's survival and well-being. It has to be noted that at the beginning the concept of 'nature' as an entity did not exist. Early cultures venerated individual natural phenomena like stars, animals, or rain and not 'nature' as such. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "[n]ature as an entity in itself, in contrast with human society and culture or even with God, is a philosophical or poetic conception that has been developed among advanced civilizations" ("nature worship" 4 Oct. 2013). There are ancient cultures, however, which believed that there is a high god residing in heaven and who delegated all work on earth to so-called 'nature spirits' which were assumed to be the personifications and forces of nature ("nature worship" 4 Oct. 2013). As we know today, these religious belief systems changed over the centuries and millennia. Today, several big monotheistic religions (among others Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism) exist, but there are still polytheistic religions existing as well which worship nature in one way or the other.

These facts are mentioned because they show humanity's close relationship to its environment and that music has always been used as a means of expressing one's gratitude as well as celebrating nature's beauty and power. Therefore, it is not surprising that besides writers and painters also musicians have always found a source of inspiration in nature.

## **2. Romanticism – History, Arts and Concepts**

Romanticism names the time between the late eighteenth and the early to mid nineteenth century. It can generally be perceived as a time of change. This

becomes particularly evident considering that industrialisation was in full swing and has changed society significantly not only in terms of work but also has resulted in enormous urbanisation. Further, not only did the French Revolution take place in that period (1789-1799) which had considerable effect on every European country especially in terms of world perception, legal/personal rights, or power relations between the ruling class and the rest of a nation's population, but also the Napoleonic wars occurred (1803-1815) which again changed the landscape of Europe considerably. However, the effects of these events were visible also in Britain. Here, this impact could be traced in the ideas of individualism or the consideration of emotions being of higher importance than reason. These ideas are, of course, also characteristics of the romantic era.

In general, romanticism can be understood as an “intellectual orientation that characterized many works of literature, painting, music, architecture, criticism, and historiography” (“Romanticism” 8 Feb. 2014). It is a period in which the self and the human personality in general became of interest, especially a focus of passions and inner struggles can be detected. Also imagination received more attention as it is understood to be a “gateway to transcendent experience and truth” (“Romanticism” 8 Feb. 2014). It was seen as a “victory of the instinctive over the ratiocinative, and that this was very much a reaction against neo-classical or Enlightenment emphases on knowing the world through logical induction and deduction, or empiricism” (Johns-Putra 108). Further, there is a strong interest in folk culture, the medieval era, the mysterious, the occult, and the monstrous (“Romanticism” 8 Feb. 2014). However, what is most important to note is the fact that the Romantics had a strong appreciation for nature and its phenomena. This is also visible in the appreciation of untouched landscape by the Romantics. These areas became places of “almost sacred refuge for the Romantic poets and a place of escape for people who could afford to enjoy these locations recreationally” (Chaplin 40). This resulted in an “aestheticization of the land that was related to concepts of national heritage and personal, spiritual development” (Chaplin 40) as well as into something that can be called landscape tourism. These ideas are not only visible in Romantic poetry, but also in the emerging travel literature, Romantic-era novel, landscape painting, as well as in the genre of guidebook writing (Chaplin 40).

This shift of focus towards these topics must be understood as an opposition to the ideas represented or lived during the preceding Classical and Neo-Classical period as well as the period of Enlightenment which directly precedes the time of Romanticism. In this context, the Enlightenment has to be understood as a period affected strongly by capitalism and its ideas. As Romanticism was strongly interested in the beauty of nature, it is important to point out that this perception is also a rebellion against the Enlightenment which understood nature only as a resource that could be exploited. Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick therefore rightly highlight this difference in nature perception when they state that

[...] while the Enlightenment was interested in nature as a source of reason and order [...], the Romantic found in it organic growth and diversity. For the Romantic, the natural and the supernatural are entwined, giving nature an emotional and spiritual force that is alien to Enlightenment thinking. In addition, romanticism marked a renewed interest in medieval and even pagan culture (300).

Closely linked to this romantic understanding of nature are the concepts of the picturesque, the sublime, and the pastoral. These ideas are discussed in the following subsections. Also discussed in these subsections are the nostalgia for the past which is another characteristic of the Romantic age, and the connection of femininity with romanticism.

### 2.1. The Pastoral and the Wilderness

The concept of the pastoral perceives nature as a “stable, enduring counterpoint to the disruptive energy and change of human societies” (Garrard 56). This means that nature is perceived as a never-changing, beautiful, and self-regenerating entity. This is, of course, a paradox as climate change and unimaginable environmental catastrophes indicate the opposite and rather prove that nature is far from being a stable component. Nevertheless, what is important to note is that this romantic idea of nature is still very strong today and very visible not only in literature, but also in the fine arts as well as in music.

According to Terry Gifford, there are, however, three different ways of defining the pastoral.

[First, there is] the specifically literary tradition, involving a retreat from the city to the countryside, that originates in ancient Alexandria and becomes a key poetic form in Europe during the Renaissance;

[second] more generally [speaking], [the term can define] ‘any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban’; and [third, there is] the pejorative sense in which ‘pastoral’ implies an idealisation of rural life [...] (qtd. in Garrard 33).

Generally speaking, pastoral always defines nature according to the binary opposition of city and countryside. It is important to note that nature is understood as not a place being wild and untouched by mankind but rather as a place rural, but still used by man to nourish it. Another interesting aspect with regards to seeing nature in a pastoral light is the idea of nature responding to human emotions. This is especially true for literature in which natural objects such as trees, rivers, or mountains can feel human emotions; this is called *pathetic fallacy* (Garrard 36).

Furthermore, the difference between American and British pastoral is crucial to remember. While the first emphasises agrarianism and a rather working oriented relationship with the land, the second is more interested in the sublime and the wilderness (Garrard 49) which was most likely influenced by the discovery and colonisation of the American continent as news of the Grand Canyon or the Rocky Mountains reached the Old World (Garrard 66). What is fascinating about this concept of ‘wilderness’ is that it is a fictive construct the roots of which can be found in religion. As Garrard mentions in his book, this idea of an untouched area of nature has a sacramental value as it promises purity and a renewed authentic relationship between man and earth (59). This concept derives, of course, from the Judeo-Christian idea of Garden Eden, although the place of wilderness here holds the function of being an exile after humanity has been rejected from Eden. In addition to that, wilderness is also associated in this tradition with trial and danger as it can also be understood as a place where the devil has his home (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, Matt. 4.1). In consequence, this conception of wilderness, then, combines notions of purity, freedom, and redemption with connotations of danger and trial which can still be found today, in varying degrees, in the understanding of wilderness (Garrard 61). This notion of perceiving nature as an ideal place was a popular theme in literature of the Romantic period in all European countries. Due to the brevity of this paper, the focus of the following examples lies on English speaking literature of this time.

Even before terms such as *nature writing* existed did writers occupy themselves with nature and its phenomena as well as its beauty and its influence on humanity. In the British context, William Wordsworth is probably the most prominent example of a strong influence of nature and the environment on an artist. Especially his famous *Lyrical Ballads*, as well as the preface for the second edition of this compendium of poems which includes his understanding of good poetry to be a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth 2014) is understood to be a classic of this time. Other famous poems by Wordsworth are: *I wandered Lonely as a Cloud* (written between 1804 and 1807), *My Heart Leaps Up* (written in 1802), or *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (completed 1804) all of which have a strong connection to nature; it is either the topic of these poems or it is used as a means of metaphor. Here, Wordsworth’s focus upon rural and simple life is striking. In the *Preface* of his *Lyrical Ballads*, he mentions the reasons for this:

Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and [...] because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature (Wordsworth 2014).

He basically prefers the simpler, rural lifestyle to the urban because by being closer to nature one is able to appreciate the wonders of nature more while also being the source of inspiration and imagination for the beholder at the same time. Wordsworth, however, did not only write poems, he also wrote praised ballads and even a traveller’s guidebook called *Guide to the Lakes* (1810) – as he lived in and loved the Lake District in Cumbria, United Kingdom.

Besides Wordsworth, there are, of course, other writers well known to have been inspired by nature. John Keats and his famous poem *Bright Star* (1819), for example, or Samuel Coleridge’s *Frost at Midnight* (1798) are evidence for this strong influence on writers.

In this Romantic age, artists longed for an idealised and simpler past as the society they lived in had dramatically changed due to the Industrial Revolution. This change of living and of working conditions also demanded a paradigm shift. This change in perceiving the world becomes visible in the way the above mentioned writers used nature in their work as well as in their growing interest in



mythology and the medieval times (Rahn 2011). Therefore, it is not surprising that artists in general tried to emphasise the need for a balance between humanity and nature and that the latter one should not be seen as a source of materialist wealth only, but rather as a source of inspiration and recovery for the exhausted human body and mind (information partly taken from N. Schneider 191).

Of course, there are also famous American writers who are known for their praise of nature. The most prominent one is Henry David Thoreau. His love for nature and his vivid descriptions of it had a strong influence not only on other writers, but even on visual artists.

The correspondence of Thoreau's works and aesthetics with the visual arts even surpasses the American landscapists and is said to pertain to the nineteenth-century artistic movements of both the Old and the New World, ranging from the conventional aesthetics of the picturesque to the sublime as employed by artists of the Hudson River School, the Luminist aesthetics, and even to the revolutionary techniques of late nineteenth-century European Impressionism (Keck 71).

One of Thoreau's most influential works in this respect is *Walden* (1854) in which he contemplates about closeness to nature or solitude and the reason why nature is of such importance to humanity.

Not only did these concepts of the pastoral and wilderness find their entrance into literature, this idea is also very present in music. As Dorak rightly says, “[i]n the Romantic era, music acquired poetic or philosophical meaning” (“Romantic (Period) Music” 2008). As being an era of revolt against classicist ideals of “order, equilibrium, control, and perfection” (Dorak “Romantic (Period) Music”), Romanticism was more interested in “expression, movement, passion, and endless pursuit of the unattainable (fantasy and imagination)” (Dorak “Romantic (Period) Music”). Not only did music become more interested in the above mentioned topics, in addition, music has also started to turn to other arts for inspiration, especially literature which had not been the case before.

All these characteristics can be found among others in the following works: one famous example is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's song *Das Veilchen* (1785). Even though it is the musical representation of Goethe's poem, it links up with the idea of romantic music being poetic and looking for inspiration in literary works. Another very famous example would be Ludwig van Beethoven's 6<sup>th</sup> *Symphony* also known as the *Pastoral Symphony*, as it musically depicts the arrival at a beautiful countryside and the simple country life in general which is interrupted

by a heavy thunderstorm. The symphony ends with the Shepherd's song that expresses thankfulness for having survived this storm. What is also of importance here is the fact that not only human feelings are depicted by the music but also the sounds of nature – animals or weather conditions – are represented by it as well. Also Franz Schubert's songs *Die Forelle* (1817) or *Der Lindenbaum* (1827) are good examples of nature's influence on classical musicians and the wish of the composer to musically represent natural sounds as lifelike as possible. Other well known classical composers are Joseph Joachim Raff and his symphonies number 8 to 11 with names such as *Frühlingsklänge* or *Im Sommer* (written between 1876 and 1879), Richard Strauss II and his *Alpine Symphony* (1915), or even Serjei Prokofjew's *Peter and the Wolf* (1936) where animals are represented by specific instruments and their sounds.

## 2.2. Nostalgia

Nostalgia is an important term in this paper as it has always influenced as well as characterised the pastoral. Already Raymond Williams pointed in this direction in his influential book *The Country and the City*. This strong influence on the pastoral means that the past is glorified to be the place of happiness and peace and is, therefore, preferable to the present (Williams ch. 2). This yearning for a better past is not only true for music - which was fascinated by the idea of a fabulous, utopian past, as well as a fascination for irrational natural and spiritual powers, the unnatural, and the mysticism of fairytales and legends ("Romantik" 76) – but especially for literature of the romantic age. Here, the childhood often becomes the vehicle for nostalgia. The interest lies especially within the innocence of childhood, but more frequently the focus is on an overall "mythologized past" (Chaplin 41). In general, this yearning for one's childhood further "mediate[s] Romantic anxieties concerning a perceived cultural 'loss of innocence' in the context of growing industrialization and urbanization" (Chaplin 41).

Also, H. Schneider points in this direction when he analyses the perception of nature in his work. He mentions that "[r]omantic nostalgia developed in a period which saw a rapidly acceleratory modernisation in all domains of society and life – cultural, political, technological, economic, etc." (92). Especially the

French Revolution had a strong impact in this period as it marks an “irreversible break with the old order and the advent of a yet unshaped, unpredictable future, bristling with promise and at the same time deeply frightening” (H. Schneider 93). Therefore, nature became the representative or the “suggestive shibboleth for the lost past and everything it seemed to embody [...]” (H. Schneider 93).

### 2.3. The Picturesque and the Sublime

The aesthetic principle of the *Picturesque* was born with paintings by Claude Lorrain. The term itself “defines an object or view worthy of being included in a picture” (“American Scenery” 2014). In the eighteenth century, this principle was further used as a conceptual framework to help viewing an actual landscape. It became a visual ideal which stimulated tourism of the untamed areas of the British Isles (“American Scenery” 2014). This was also rightly perceived by Johns-Putra:

[t]he school of the picturesque [...] placed much emphasis on the pleasurable capacities of certain types of landscape, specifically those marked by ‘rugged’ or ‘interesting’ qualities, not so smooth as to be dull, but not so rough as to induce sublime terror. It encouraged travel expressly with the aim of appreciating landscape, and highlighted the significance of painting and poetry as a way of capturing the beauty of landscape (107).

With regards to the picturesque tradition in the fine arts, landscape art is the most important type of painting for this paper. However, besides portraiture, history painting, and genre painting landscape art is one of the most influential genres within the fine arts, as well. The term *landscape* or *landscape art/painting* generally defines a painting in which the depicted natural sceneries such as forests, trees, rivers, or mountains are of integral interest for the artist. The term is also known to be used to define a genre of painting at least since the eighteenth century (N. Schneider 13). According to Norbert Schneider, landscape painting as we know it today started to exist by the end of the medieval times (15) although natural sceneries have already been used by the Egyptians or the ancient Greeks to emphasise the plot of their paintings (“Landschaftsmalerei” 2013). However, only in the seventeenth century landscape art became a separate category in painting. Before that, landscape functioned as a mere background for religious compositions (Radford 1).

The first painters known to paint landscape for its own sake are Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) and the already mentioned Claude Lorrain (1600-1682). Even though they followed the tradition of creating an ideal landscape rather than depicting ‘real’ landscapes, they are the one who created an influential type of classic or heroic landscape art for the years to come (N. Schneider 131). Lorrain is also of importance with regards to English artists, as well as the aesthetics of the English landscape garden (also referred to as the English garden) as antique buildings, lakes, and trees play an important role in it.

In the Romantic period not only literature or music formed a reaction against the rigidity of Neoclassicism and the Enlightenment. The same is also true for the fine arts. As Valescchi rightly observed, people felt the need to “return to nature without the mediation of religion, history, class or academic structures” (33). The most prominent painters of the eighteenth century are Thomas Gainsborough, Joseph Wright of Derby, and Richard Wilson (1714-1782). The last one was strongly influenced by Claude Lorrain and his heroic-idealistic landscape paintings. He applied this idealistic way of representing landscape to his homeland-landscape of Wales. Here, it is also important to note that Wilson reduced or eliminated civilisation or elements of civilisation from many of his paintings to highlight the moment of the untouched and mystic wild nature (N. Schneider 183). See below the painting *Lydford Waterfall, Tavistock* from 1771 (fig. 1) which is currently exhibited at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff.



Fig. 1. *Lydford Waterfall, Tavistock* by Richard Wilson.

Other than Wilson, the most important landscapists are John Constable (1776-1837) and Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851). Constable is known today as the “quintessential English landscape artist of all time” (Radford 5). However, what is especially interesting regarding Constable is the importance of the sky in his paintings. One only has to think of his painting *Flatford Mill from the lock* (1811). Here, the saying that for him the sky was the “organ of sentiment” (Ward 19) becomes verified. Turner, on the other hand, had become more and more interested in the display of atmosphere and light over the years. Therefore, he can be considered as the forerunner of impressionism as well as of abstract painting due to the almost formlessness of what is depicted in his paintings (Valescchi 35). For a better understanding view his painting below: *Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway* from 1844 (fig. 2) – currently exhibited at the National Gallery of London.



Fig. 2. *Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway* by Joseph Mallord William Turner.

Another significant romanticist painting landscapes who is also important for the American landscapists soon to be discussed is the German painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840). He approached landscape spiritually. It is to say, he saw the work of God in nature. Therefore, he can be understood as the representative of a special kind of romanticism in which “mysticism and realism, detailed representation and cosmic vagueness, love of creation and fear of the unknown combine” (Valescchi 35f.). A perfect example of this understanding is the *Wanderer above the Sea of Mist* painted in 1817.

Turning now to the American continent, the Hudson River School of the nineteenth century is probably the best known native painting school devoted to

landscape art in the United States. The most important representatives of this school are Thomas Cole (1801-1848) and Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900). When reflecting nineteenth century American landscape painting the idea of the *Sublime* immediately comes to one's mind as the term

[...] describes the imaginative response to immensity or boundlessness, a 'delightful horror' when faced by phenomena of great magnitude, by potential danger or the unknown (Wilton and Barringer 67).

Also Johns-Putra points in this direction when she says that

[t]he sublime in nature may be defined as that which induces awe and wonder, but that experience of awe and wonder encapsulates a complicated response to sublime objects, scenes and experiences, such as mountainous or stormy landscapes. This response involves not simply an intense rapture at feeling physically dwarfed or threatened, but includes a concomitant or consequent sense of transcendence from the physical, a sensation of being lifted out of the scene and into a mediation on the vastness of the natural world and thus of the universe (107).

This is exactly what the paintings of this time wanted the viewer to experience. Especially Church manages to create such a sublime atmosphere for his audience as he displayed his paintings separately with architectural frames and velvet curtains which gave the viewer the feeling of looking out onto this landscape presented from a window (Ward 25).

In his work, Cole criticises civilisation as such while nature – especially wilderness – represents originality, artistic authenticity, and creative flux (Keck 81, 84). For him, the American wilderness represented an untouched Eden which, of course, has its roots in European Romanticism and represents its longing for wilderness to escape the constriction of the city (Barringer 49).

Nevertheless, it can be argued that nature, "the unsurpassed grandeur of the unique, immense land, was the greatest source of national pride" (Valescchi 38). Besides, also the strong influence of religion on the understanding and perception of nature has to be taken into account when discussing American landscape art. Especially the aspects of being the "chosen people" and America being the "promised land" (Fluck 271) plays an important role in the American self-image. However, as the idea of the sublime represented in the paintings of the Hudson River School points out, there is an unknown power incomprehensible for man. Therefore, hardly any sign of human existence can be found in the work of the

artists of the Hudson River School. If there is, however, a figure present in the painting, it is usually only a small item in the vast representation of landscape. The perfect example for such an insignificant small person in a painting is Church's *Niagara Falls from the American Side* painted in 1867 (fig. 3) which is currently exhibited at the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh. Only if one looks very closely, a small figure at the right side looking onto the Niagara Falls can be detected.



Fig. 3. *Niagara Falls from the American Side* by Frederic Edwin Church.

Other important facts when examining American landscape paintings are that

[...] one finds oneself more within nature rather than overlooking the scenery from a highly elevated or distanced standpoint which is a common perspective of European landscapes in the nineteenth century (Keck 89),

and, further, that a strong focus lies on the representation of the sky. Barbara Novak points out that

in the iconography of American art, the sky allies art with science and the transcendental feelings of “purity of renewal, the colors of hope and desire, heavenly reflections of earthly nostalgias” (qtd. in Keck 85).

In Church's painting *Twilight in the Wilderness* (1860) below (fig. 4), which currently belongs to the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, this emphasis on the sky and the colourful representation of a twilight scenery is perfectly exemplified.



Fig. 4. *Twilight in the Wilderness* by Frederic Edwin Church.

Not only is nature perceived as being a picturesque, sublime and/or pastoral place; it is usually also connected to femininity.

#### 2.4. Femininity and Romanticism

As the romantic era was more interested in feelings and imagination and further in the rights of the individual, the time was perfect for women to demand equal rights for themselves. What feminists of this time tried to change first were social standards only afterwards other things were demanded, as well. In this context Mary Wollstonecraft and her essay *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* written in 1792 needs to be mentioned here as it is still today considered one of the first and most important works in this field. However, the topic which was usually addressed at that time by feminists was the education of women. They claimed that “improper education was the source of [all] the problem[s]” (Powell 2014) as they were generally taught only how to behave well and how to dress. They were further “encouraged to pay more attention to their bodies rather than their minds” (Powell 2014). Especially women writers of that time addressed this topic in their works by preoccupying themselves with the home and women’s position in it as well as with the “increasingly influential notion of separate spheres” (Johns-Putra 105). The main argument for these writers to demand equal education for men and women was that a better education would make women more rational and intelligent and in consequence better mothers and wives (Johns-Putra 105). Even though these feminist writers did not succeed in changing the societies they lived in during their live time, they paved the ground for later feminist thinkers as well as for the achievement of equal rights of men and women.



Returning now to the understanding of nature in the Romantic era, a connection can be drawn between the idea of female characteristics and nature. Ecofeminism especially points in this direction as it links the association of women with nature. It argues that this association is not only a religious or a romantic notion but that its roots can also be traced back to the oppression of women in patriarchal societies. In her book, Kate Soper mentions that there are two ways of representing nature as female: first, nature is the body of laws, processes and principles which can be regarded as the object of scientific scrutiny and, second, 'she' can also be comprehended as spatial territory which has to be tamed and tilled in agriculture (103).

In both these conceptions, nature is allegorized as either a powerful maternal force, the womb of all human production, or as the site of sexual enticement and ultimate seduction. Nature is both the generative source, but also the potential spouse of science, to be wooed, won, and if necessary forced to submit to intercourse (Soper 103).

This last understanding of nature being a place that needs to be tilled in agriculture is a very common one in today's western cultures as it tends to exploit nature and its natural resources without a guilty conscience or considering later consequences.

In the following analysis section, the eleven chosen musicians are analysed in terms of the understandings of nature which can be found in their creative work and how these understandings manifest themselves accordingly.

### **3. Analysis**

Musicians of popular music have always been fascinated by nature. Traces of this fascination can be found in their music. It is, nevertheless, true that today musicians of popular music express their connection towards nature differently than classical musicians. While in classical music one can find traces of nature in the lyrics as well as in the music itself – with its imitation of natural sounds like birds singing or mimicking rain storms or the sounds of rivers – in today's popular music nature usually finds its way only into the lyrics of songs and seldom into the music itself. This might raise the question if nature is still as important as a source of inspiration for musicians like it used to be in the past. I argue that nature

is still an influential source of inspiration for musicians. However, the way this is expressed has changed. While classical music represented nature in a quite idealistic way, today's popular music also emphasises problems that come along with humanity living on this planet i.e. pollution or exploitation of natural resources. Notwithstanding the shift of expression, nature is still an important topic in popular music. This becomes obvious when having a look at the visual representation of musicians as well as of their music. However, one has to bear in mind that in the music business music alone is not enough; also the image of an artist is crucial for their success. Therefore, certain topics are more frequently used in songs than others. This is especially true for those music genres which are defined as being generally critical. Here, themes such as natural disasters or exploitation of natural resources are common and well accepted. However, also other music genres usually not associated with interest in nature feature elements that link up with the environment such as for example pop music.

However, in the following, the musicians and in consequence the music genres are discussed in the following order: country-, folk-, rock-, and pop music.

### 3.1. Country Music

Country music can be understood as a subgenre of folk music. Its roots lie in “popular songs, Irish and Celtic fiddle tunes, traditional ballads, and cowboy songs” (Neal 2014) as well as in various musical traditions brought to the United States by European immigrants and in African American blues (Neal 2014). The main themes covered by this music genre are the celebration of a working-class identity, an imagined rural idealism – which perfectly links this with the concept of a golden age in Romanticism –, “an iconography drawn from traditions of the American cowboy, and a predominantly Southern, white, Christian, socially conservative and patriotic philosophy” (Neal 2014). Even though country music has a strong connection to the past as well as to tradition in general, contemporary country music is clearly influenced by pop music rather than by folk music (Ruehl 2014). This fact is underlined by the genre's strong interest in record sales and image compared to folk music which is rather interested in speaking for the people and in community involvement (Ruehl 2014). Nevertheless its interest in profit, a connection to Romanticism or to a romantic understanding of the

world/past can still be detected in this music as it “embraces [the] key Romantic mythology of the sacredness of the folkloric ordinary” (Fox 43f.). This interest in ordinary, simple life which is closely linked to nature is a theme that can already be found in eighteenth and nineteenth century literature for instance in Wordsworth’s poetry. This means that in contrast to folk music which is more socially critical and political than country music and can, therefore, be associated with an ecocritical understanding of nature, country music has a romantic and nostalgic view on rural life which can be understood as a pastoral understanding of the rural lifestyle.

### 3.1.1. Willie Nelson

Willie Nelson is not only famous among country music lovers. With being part of the music business since the 1950ies and with releasing more than 100 albums, he is rightly considered to be not only a veteran of the music business but also one of the most influential musicians in this business. While at the beginning of his career he mostly wrote songs for other country musicians, only in the mid 1970ies after aligning with the outlaw country movement (Erlewine 2013) – a “non-Nashville alliance between “redneck” country musicians and “hippie” rock musicians” (Kemp 2013) – he became a star himself. Although he is a part of this non-conformist strand of country music, the topics he refers to in his songs are very traditional: love, hate, “the home, the family and the ‘older’ ways of life they seem to represent” (Fenster 118) are only some of his repertoire. Nevertheless, his songs are always affected by a nostalgic or pastoral view on nature. They are not only influenced by these views, he also uses nature in a metaphorical way to describe his feelings or situations in his life. The song *December Day* is a good example of nature references in his songs.

This looks like a December day  
 This looks like a time to remember day  
 And I remember a spring, such a sweet tender thing  
 And love’s summer college where the green leaves of knowledge  
 Were waiting to fall with the fall

And where September wine  
 Numbed a measure of time  
 Through the tears of October, now November’s over  
 And this looks like a December day (1-9).

He uses the seasons in this song to describe the ‘seasons’ of life and love. Like the life of a man goes through stages/seasons so does love. At the beginning it is sweet as spring, blossoms are in full bloom and everything is new and beautiful. Then, summer follows which is characterised by beauty and knowledge. When love comes to an end, denial (September) is followed by hurt (October) and then by the final breakup (November); and in December (the end) one remembers what one once had and then lost – which is, of course, a strong nostalgic notion of the past as being seen as a happier time than the present. Love and life are perceived in this song as subject to change(s). Although in this song Nelson sees these changes not necessarily as something good, he still feels them necessary and natural like the seasons of nature themselves. Interestingly, this natural cycle can also be traced in the way the song lyrics are arranged. With the repeating line “This looks like a December day” (*December Day* 1; 9) at the beginning and at the end of the quoted stanzas, the natural cycle is completed.

This theme of life being equated with the natural cycle is a recurring topic in Nelson’s songs. Another one which picks up this theme is *Seasons of my heart*.

As it all is in nature[‘]s plan  
No season gets the upper hand, oh  
How I tried to keep this fact in mind  
The trees are bare, the cold wind blows  
And by experience I know  
That winter comes but the spring is close behind (11-16).

The seasons are here used to describe Nelson’s feelings but, different to *December day*, this song has a hopeful tone to it; it suggests in the end of the song that happier times are following soon. With his references to nature in this song Nelson underlines that change is something natural and not necessarily bad as winter is always followed by spring – “And by experience I know / That winter comes but the spring is close behind” (*Seasons of my heart* 15-16).

Natural elements do also play an important role when it comes to sell his records. Besides the artwork of his albums, his website as well as his music videos are full of references to a romantic as well as nostalgic understanding of nature and rural life. Before starting to discuss the CD artwork in detail, it is important to bear in mind that every musician is subject to the music genre they are thought to belong to. This fact is mentioned because Nelson’s CD covers follow the genre conventions of country music. When having a look at various CD artwork by

many country musicians, it becomes obvious what the most important conventions are; they are: reference to one or more main topics usually covered by country music, such as for instance religion, authenticity, or cowboys; simplicity, or references to a glorified, simple past life style; and most strikingly the always present artist on the cover – either shown via a photograph to the audience or only referred to via symbols for example Kinky Friedman's *Sold American*.<sup>2</sup> In addition, nature plays an important part on them as well. This is also true for the artwork of Willie Nelson.

The following three CD cover artworks must be understood as extracts taken from a vast amount of covers which fulfil the additional purpose of drawing a connection between the artist and his environment.



Fig. 5. Album Cover *Both Sides Now*.

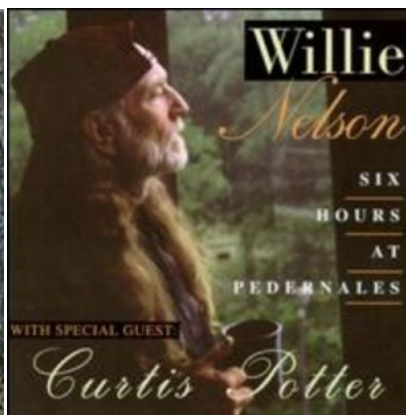


Fig. 6. Album Cover *Six Hours at Pedernales*.

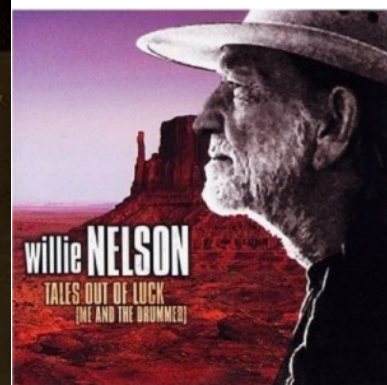


Fig. 7. Album Cover *Tales out of Luck (Me and the Drummer)*.

These three artworks can be understood as a timeline and how Nelson developed himself and his image over the decades. In 1970 when his album *Both Sides Now* (fig. 5) was published, he had short hair and was dressed like an everyday person and not as someone would expect a country singer to look like. This must not only be understood in terms of Nelson's personal development as an artist, but also in terms of the development of the music genre as such. However, standing in between trees already suggests a connection to nature. This cover perfectly represents the notion of nature being a place of solitude and recovery for man. Also the vastness of nature is implied here as Nelson is the only civilised item in it while the rest is landscape surrounding him. This idea of nature being sublime – a vast and rough but at the same time beautiful landscape – is

<sup>2</sup> Silva, Robert. "Top 20 Country Album Covers of All Time". *Countrymusic.about.com*. About.com, n.d. Web. 20 Feb. 2014.

further expressed by Nelson's album *Tales out of Luck (Me and the Drummer)* published in 2010 (fig. 7). Although the cover is a montage of a photograph of a part of the Grand Canyon as well as Nelson's face in profile, the roots of these aesthetics can be traced back to American landscape art. The same way as in said paintings, this cover wants to underline the immense proportions of the American landscape, its beauty, as well as its capacity of being a place of peace and recovery for mankind. Another factor which points to a connection between this artwork and American landscape art is the fact that while Nelson's face is kept in black and white, the Grand Canyon in the background, on the other hand, is represented in bright colours. This colourful representation of nature is a particular characteristic of American landscape paintings – see for instance paintings by Frederic Edwin Church who also used bright colours to emphasise the sublime characteristic of nature. This cover wants to do the same, to point to the sublimity of this landscape; this is done for example by highlighting the sky with various shades of purple. Besides this sublime understanding of nature in this photograph, the CD artwork comprises the notion of adventure in it. Nelson seems to look over the vast, uninhabited landscape which promises him adventure and new discoveries.

While *Tales out of Luck (Me and the Drummer)* depicts nature as a place of risk and adventure, the artwork for *Six Hours at Pedernales* (fig. 6) shows a more romantic and calm relationship of a man with his environment. Here, Nelson with his long, open hair and his mug in his right hand is looking out of his (home) window onto the surrounding nature. All of these elements suggest peace and recovery from the hectic and fast life of today's world. By the way Nelson looks out of the window, it seems as if nature not only calms him down but also that he is looking for some inspiration 'out there'. While nature is represented in these three CD covers as a sublime as well as picturesque place, another important aspect used to underline the romantic notion of these artworks can be found in the usage of perspective. While in *Both Sides Now* and *Six Hours at Pedernales* Nelson looks into the off to the right side of the photograph which suggests him looking into the future, on the cover for *Tales out of Luck (Me and the Drummer)* he looks in the opposite direction. It is a rather nostalgic idea to present an old Nelson who arrived at a point in his life where he can look back onto a beautiful,

successful, and fulfilled life. Besides his CD covers, also his music videos refer to classical country topics as well as to a romanticised nature.

One video clip that needs to be highlighted as being a very classic country music video with strong natural influences is *Mendocino County Line*. The song is a duet with country singer Lee Ann Womack. The video itself is a b/w clip starting out with Nelson singing in front of a stereotypical Southern American country house while Womack sings sitting in the kitchen of this house. The fact that the female singer is set in the kitchen is not only a matter of story telling in the song but also a matter of stereotypical gender roles still strongly present in country music. As mentioned earlier, one major topic within country songs is nostalgia for the past. This perfectly links these stereotypical understandings of gender roles as it suggests that everything in the past – even the gender roles or the way public and private life were divided up – used to be better then. Another factor that leads in this direction of stereotypical gender roles is the scene in the clip in which both are standing in the garden at night underneath a sea of lanterns. He is playing his acoustic guitar – which is by itself already a very common stylistic device in country videos – while she is standing right next to him singing and wearing a very feminine, white outfit which suggests purity and innocence. However, besides these gender stereotypes, what is also striking is the way horses are used in this video clip.

In minute 0:43 two horses are shown running side by side in the dark while in the second half of the video Nelson as well as Womack are riding on horseback through a crowded city. Here, horses do not only represent wild, untamed nature, they also stand for the singers. They are used as metaphorical devices to represent the singers as wild and untameable as these horses. In this way, they are seen as being a part of nature. Using these horses is, of course, a common device in country music videos as they, as already mentioned, represent wild nature. Obviously, this is a quite pastoral as well as a nostalgic way of representing nature and the simple country life. This becomes visible at the latest when both artists are riding on horseback through a city. This orchestration suggests an equation of simple life close to nature with the ability to love and to be happy after all.

Another important aspect is the position the camera occupies in this video. There are hardly shots with a static camera angle; most of the time the camera is in motion. It either pans from one side to the other or moves up and down or it

even zooms in and out to make the video seem more dynamic. However, the movement is often hardly visible as these movements are usually kept in small scale. Besides the camera movement, the fact that the musicians are often shown in a close-up shot is a stylistic device to establish a connection with the viewer, but also to suggest an intimate look on the artists expressing their feelings in this video.

Nostalgia as well as a romantic view on nature and on a past way of living is also a major topic in the music video for the song *She is gone*. Again, it is a love song. However, the approach to the topic is different this time. This video can be categorised as a performance video with semi-narrative elements – a pure performance video is a clip in which the musical performance is at the focus of the video while in a semi-narrative music video elements which are referring to the text are included (Springlee qtd. in Rötter 268). This combination of performance and concept video is a very successful frame used for country videos (Fenster 116). However, in this clip we see Nelson standing on a hill playing his guitar while supposedly memories of a woman and a young girl interrupt the performance. Already the sepia colour used for this music video suggests nostalgia or at least old times. Also the device of overlapping picture sequences which are fading in and out make the video appear romantic. Further, the fact that close-ups of Nelson's face as well as of his guitar are frequently shown, gives the viewer the impression of being close to the artist; to be able to watch him closely which, further, suggests intimacy. Of course, the reason for these close-ups is not only to suggest intimacy; they are also intended to capture the emotions of Nelson's face as well as his abilities as a guitar player. When it comes to nature representations in the clip as well as nature's influence on how the clip has been executed, it is to say that nature plays an important role in this video. Already the fact that Nelson is standing on a hill while playing this sad song on his guitar implies a close connection between the artist and nature. Also the beginning of the clip when treetops or parts of a landscape are shown to the viewer implies a harmonic and pastoral understanding of nature. Further, while nature is introduced to the viewer in this clip, the camera is always in motion. While always panning from left to right, the camera wants to convey the impression that the viewer of the clip is looking around him-/herself, being part of this video. In addition to that,



this moving camera wants to point out to the viewer that nature surrounds us all; that it is omnipresent and that we should appreciate this fact.

In total, by analysing his work, it can be said that Nelson sees nature as an omnipresent and magical place that makes it possible for man to find solitude. Further, his understanding of nature is a pastoral as well as a nostalgic one as a life close to nature seems to be the ideal way of living for him. Also a picturesque perspective of nature can be found especially in his CD artworks.

### 3.2. Folk Music

Folk music is a “style of music that is universal within a community and can be performed by people who aren’t necessarily trained musicians, using whatever instruments are available” (Ruehl 2014). This definition refers to the fact that this is the kind of music closest to the (ordinary) people, dealing with topics most important to these people. As the history of this genre shows, its focus has always lain on political topics ranging from civil rights to work, war and even economic hardship (Ruehl 2013). However, according to the definition of the term coined by the International Folk Music Council (IFMC) in 1955, it is a product of “continuity, variation, and selection” (Carlin 2) which means that it is music that has been created by an individual composer but has subsequently been absorbed into the living and unwritten tradition of a community or group of people. In other words, it has been fashioned and re-fashioned over time by the community according to lack of knowledge of the complete lyrics or even due to stylistic decisions made regarding melody or presentation (N. Cohen 2014; Carlin 2).

However, music today becomes referred to as folk music not only by the music industry but also by customers if

it is acoustic music performed by a solo act or small ensemble, often written by the performer(s), rendered in very simple arrangements, and dealing with society or personal issues to which most lay persons can easily relate (N. Cohen 2014).

Of course, not necessarily all of these factors can be found in every folk musician’s work. Nevertheless, these are basic guidelines according to which musicians become understood as folk artists. However, especially the last attribute of this definition is most important as folk music usually “define[s] [itself] in terms of politics” (Street 433).

Even though these definitions show a tendency towards an ecocritical understanding of nature/the environment, the fact that it is a music style understood to be the genre closest to people as well as one mostly using acoustic instruments also suggests romantic concepts of nature, as for instance the pastoral idea that the simple lifestyle of ordinary people is the desirable way of living or the fact that acoustic instruments compared to electronic-based instruments are perceived as being more traditional and therefore closer to the roots of music.

### 3.2.1. Melissa Etheridge

As I have mentioned in the introduction, I did not choose the artists for this paper according to their sex, it rather happened that most of the musicians interested in nature – at least communicating this in public – are male. Melissa Etheridge can, therefore, be seen as an exception (so can KT Tunstall as you will see later on). She has always been interested in nature or inspired by it – according to an interview, she already became aware of the beauty of nature and recycling at a young age (Mark 2009) – but only after her breast cancer diagnosis and her fight against the cancer has she started to see the world in a different light; “[a]fter that, when my perspective and my life had changed, I realised that I am not on an island” (WENN 2006). It is to say that due to her coming out during the 1990ies, Melissa Etheridge is considered to have been an activist for gay and lesbian rights ever since. Today, she is also known for her environmental activism. This does not only become obvious through her interviews, also her homepage shows this commitment. Especially here the column *Green Tips* deserves mentioning. This section gives tips on how to live more environmentally friendly on an everyday basis e.g. advising to buy rechargeable batteries.

Moving on now to Etheridge’s music, it becomes visible that over the last years her music has become more inspired by nature as well as by environmental topics in general. The song which comes right to one’s mind is, of course, *I need to wake up*. Etheridge wrote this song for the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore in 2006. This documentary intends to draw attention to the topic of global warming. A summary on the online platform IMDb refers to the fact that this film is not interested in scaring people but it is rather “a cry to protect the one earth we all share” (Plantation Productions 2013). It is true, of course, when famous and

influential politicians and/or celebrities start to commit themselves to a charitable cause it is not always about this cause but rather about the celebrity/politician him-/herself. Nevertheless, environmental issues are important to Etheridge as the following analysis will show. The song *I need to wake up* is, of course, a very ecocritical song questioning humanity's carelessness and its lack of taking responsibility for its actions.

I am not an island  
 I am not alone  
 I am my intentions  
 Trapped here in this flesh and bone

And I need to move  
 I need to wake up  
 I need to change  
 I need to shake up  
 I need to speak out  
 Something's got to break up  
 I've been asleep  
 And I need to wake up  
 Now (33-45).

When looking at the first two lines of the first stanza, one is inevitably reminded of John Donne's essay *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* in which the famous line "No Man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe" (87) can be found. Even though in the sixteenth century Donne wanted to underline the connection between all people on earth as being one unit – brothers – and not enemies, Etheridge uses this metaphor in her song as a means to point to the fact that the human race is a part of the environment which surrounds it and of which mankind is not the master. In this sense, she says that we are all one, belonging together, and not enemies that fight each other; especially that the human race should not harm the planet which nurtures it. In the chorus she sings about her need to start to change things. She does not refer to a specific thing she needs to change or what has to change in general – "*Somethings* got to break up" (emphasis added; *I need to wake up* 42) –, she rather keeps it open for interpretations. When considering that the song has been written for the documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, the chorus can be understood as Etheridge's plea to the reader/listener of the song (lyrics) that mankind has been sleeping for so long and has been ignoring the consequences of its doings for so long that it is now time to wake up and start changing its behaviour and its way of living before it is too late.

Another song referring unintentionally to environmental issues as well as to nostalgic perceptions of experiencing nature is the song *My Back Door*. Right in the first stanza, Etheridge talks about a childhood experience which has left a permanent impression on her.

When I was a child  
 I dreamed like a child of wonder  
 With my back in the grass  
 My eyes to the sky to see  
 I believed in the stars  
 I knew they cast a spell that I was under  
 With my fingers in the dirt  
 I was part of the earth  
 Every living thing was part of me (1-9).

She describes her innocence, her believe in wonders, and her strong connection to nature; especially with the lines “With my fingers in the dirt / I was part of the earth / Every living thing was part of me” (7-9). With these lines, she suggests that when she was a child she was closer connected to nature than she is now as an adult. There was not only a stronger connection to nature as such, but she was part of this nature, she was whole. In the chorus, she then talks about this loss of being strongly connected to nature – “Must’ve found a way out my back door / Must’ve run away out my back door / Because it’s gone, gone, gone” (*My Back Door* 14-16). This longing for a reunion with her environment is, according to psychoanalysis, a natural one which every human being experiences. According to Lacan, people search their whole lives for a person or an object which makes them feel complete again (see Storey 104). As this theory suggests that the mother is the object which made people feel whole in their early childhood while as an adult one is longing for something similar to fill this emptiness and because nature is often associated with being the mother of all living things, Lacan’s theory can be applied here as well.

Another song which deals with environmental problems as well as the understanding of nature being female is *The Heart of a Woman* from the Album *Fearless Love* published 2010. With lines such as “Mother Earth is weary now” (41) she points to the fact that this planet is running out of resources and that we need to change our way of living to ensure the survival of the human race. What is also of interest in this line is the reference to the ‘Mother Earth’. This phrase is a hint to the stereotypical understanding of nature being female. In another part of

the song, Etheridge refers to the earth as being a goddess which underlines this perception of nature being associated with femininity. This idea of a feminine nature stems from religions where such goddesses represented fertility (“nature worship” 4 Oct. 2013). However, in lines such as “We’ve been asleep 2000 years” (*The Heart of a Woman* 27) also taken from the song, Etheridge further points to the fact that women have also been exploited by patriarchal societies for centuries. According to the definition provided by Soper referred to in chapter 2.4 of this paper, this subordination of women in these kind of societies can also be linked to the fact that nature is often associated with femininity. Another reason why femininity is often associated with nature is given by Mary Mellor. She mentions that women are regarded as being closer to nature not due to “some elemental physiological or spiritual affinity”, but rather because of “the social circumstances in which they find themselves” (114). Further, women have always been regarded as ‘primitive’ or potentially ‘monstrous’ but at the same time being part of that nature which has to be mastered by rational men which is also viewed as the place to which “rational man simultaneously longs to return” (Rigby 164). This last point of man longing to return to a life more closely linked to nature has, of course, its roots in Romanticism where nature was understood to be a place of regeneration for the civilised white man (Rigby 164). However, what Etheridge proposes in her song is that femininity is the key to solve all the (ecological) problems on this planet: “In our time the pain will cease / ‘Cause woman holds the missing piece” (*The Heart of a Woman* 42-43). The pain she is talking about here – she refers to this pain various times in this song – is the one which women felt for centuries when having been suppressed in patriarchal societies. The second line, however, promises change and happiness due to Etheridge’s belief in women being able to change the world (order) when only overcoming their fear – “Don’t be afraid / The new world is on its way” (*The Heart of a Woman* 10-11).

Despite this strong influence of Romanticism as well as ecocriticism/-feminism in her songs, the topics Etheridge chooses to sing about as well as the way she refers to topics are not only her personal decisions; she has to consider genre conventions as well. Even though she is considered to be a famous folk musician who among others made this genre more attractive for the mainstream market, she is still bound to these genre conventions. These conventions do not only influence the choice of topics, but also the way she visually presents her

work and herself in public. However, despite the need to follow these genre conventions – for instance being critical as well as dealing with issues closely linked to ordinary life – it is apparent that Etheridge’s CD artworks are strongly influenced by a romantic understanding of nature. Here, the CD cover of the album *The Awakening* published in 2007 (fig. 8) needs to be pointed out as it not only perfectly represents the main theme of the album – ‘back-to-the-roots’ – but also because it is strongly influenced by nature.

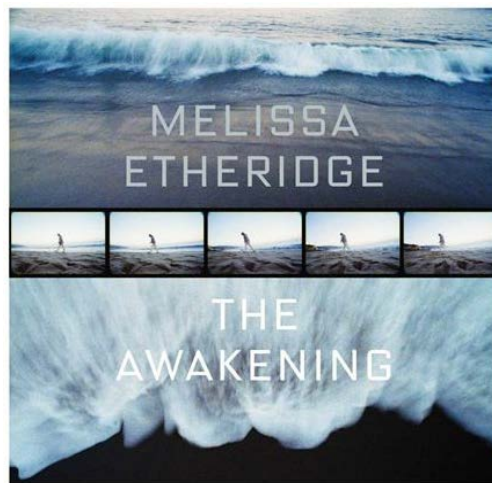


Fig. 8. Album Cover *The Awakening*.

What underlines the theme of the album is the association of the sea with the (new) beginning. It is easy to draw this connection as humanity started out as a protozoon in the primeval ocean and only later managed to survive on land. Therefore, water is considered to be the element which makes life on earth even possible. So it is understandable why Etheridge chose this element for her album cover. What further underlines the theme of the album is the association of immense strength and water. It is not only the basis of all life, it has also the power to kill and destroy. Therefore, I argue that the cover implies that the destruction of the old is needed before a new start is possible. This becomes interesting when considering that this album was the first Etheridge published after successfully fighting her breast cancer disease which had turned her life upside-down.

This water-theme being associated with strength is further underlined by the camera angle used to depict this element. On the photo above, the waves are perceived from a rather low position, close to the ground which makes it possible to photograph the waves from the front. In this way, they seem to hold back, to

wait, to gain energy for them to come forward in the photograph below. Here, the viewpoint has changed from being in front of the waves to looking down onto the breaking waves. This new perspective has the advantage to being able to capture the strength of the waves as well as to further capture the movement of the waves in this photograph. These different points of view taken to depict the movement of the ocean also underline the idea of this CD cover pointing to Etheridge's fight against her disease. While the first photograph stands for the singer's fight against breast cancer and her time of regeneration, the second one visually represents her full-force comeback.

Another interesting aspect regarding the cover is the time of day at which the photographs used for the cover have been taken. According to the rather bluish light as well as the pink colour reflected on the ocean surface on the upper part of the CD cover, it must have been dawn when the photographs were taken. This daytime also represents a new beginning as it is the beginning of a new day of which no one knows what it holds for the individual. Besides the colour or the time the photos were taken, also the beach plays an important role. When considering the small photographs in the middle which show Etheridge walking along the beach, one is instantly reminded of nineteenth-century-landscape paintings. Like then, this part of the landscape – beach or coast – is perceived as a sanctuary where man can relax and recharge its energy. Maybe this has even been the place where Etheridge went during her struggle with breast cancer. However, when looking at the cover as a totality it suggests an overpowering nature in which humanity occupies just a small part. This understanding of nature being sublime can especially be found in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich. His painting *The Monk by the Sea* (fig. 9) painted between 1808 and 1809 shows a monk standing on the edge of a cliff or on the beach close to the sea. In comparison to the sea in the background, the monk is just a small figure. This emphasises the fact that nature is, although beautiful, wild and frightening. It further implies that mankind makes up just a small amount of nature's creation and that we are just tolerated here on this planet than being the master of it all. Even though the monk in this painting is looking onto the sea while Etheridge on the CD cover is not looking out on the sea but rather walking beside it, there is still a connection between these two works of art, as they both underline the

solitude one can feel when being close to an ocean as well as the sublime character of nature.

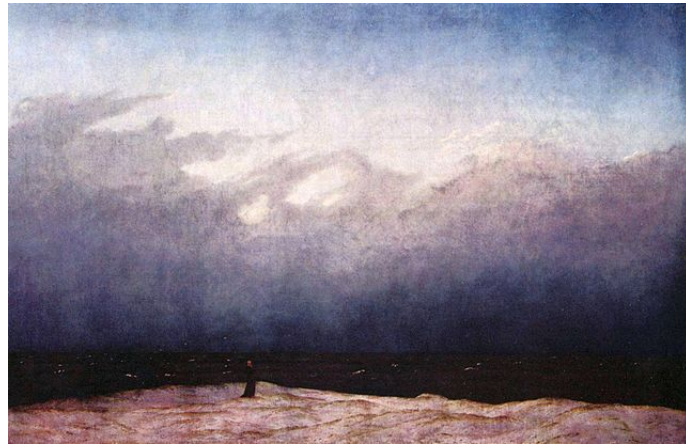


Fig. 9. *The Monk by the Sea* by Caspar David Friedrich.

Another CD cover which shows nature to be a strong inspirational source for Etheridge is the USA promo single CD *Christmas in America* published 2008. Even though it is a Christmas album, it is an unusually calm cover for a Christmas CD.



Fig. 10. CD Cover *Christmas in America*.

The adjective ‘calm’ is consciously used here as most of the time the illustrations for Christmas CDs are overloaded with stereotypical items like Father Christmas, angels, Christmas presents etc. All of these associations with Christmas have been avoided in this photograph. It rather shows a winter landscape, a snow-covered hill on which two trees are located. This reminds one of the photographs taken by the twentieth century American photographer Walker Evans. Besides the deep focus used for this photograph as well as the lack of



colour – b/w –, another characteristic that reminds of Evans' photography is the fact that reality and not artificially created scenery becomes depicted. As Fonvielle rightly says about Evan's photography which can also be applied to this photograph, "[his] images are disarmingly quiet, with an unsettling insistence [...]" (22). This unsettling emotion is underlined in Etheridge's CD cover by the reduction to the essential elements of a so-called 'winter wonderland' which further adds to this mysticism. This atmosphere is even further emphasised by the cloudy sky which is as important for the created atmosphere in the photograph as the depicted landscape. With the dark clouds in the right hand corner, the sky seems rather gloomy while in the left hand corner the sun already manages to shine through the cloudy sky. In consequence, this sky does not only influence the atmosphere of the photograph considerably, it is also a very natural depiction of how nature actually is: changeful.

For Melissa Etheridge, nature is clearly a place of solitude and retreat where one can find peace and strength for the fast life of today's society. It is a sublime and picturesque place to which mankind is inevitably connected. However, she also refers to nature as being feminine and that women have been suppressed by patriarchy for millennia. This leads to the conclusion that not only an ecocritical but also an ecofeminist approach can be found in her work.

### 3.2.2. Dave Matthews Band

The Dave Matthews Band is an ideal example of a folk band. Not only does it deal with topics of social injustice in its music, it also deals with environmental topics such as pollution or destruction of nature. In its songs, the band demands solutions, actions, and no empty words from the people in charge. This becomes clear in a CNN-interview with the singer, Dave Matthews. Here, he says:

We spend a lot of time bickering at great cost, and very little time actually coming up with solutions. And I think we misuse our ambition for our own gains and rarely for the betterment of ourselves, and people around us and our environment. And I think that's sort of pathetic and desperate (Wynter and Quan 2012).

In this interview he also mentions that he is angry all the time especially because of the fact that people tend to blame each other for the problems existing in our world rather than blaming themselves. If people would take responsibility

for their own doings, we would “maybe get more things done” (Wynter and Quan 2012).

This critical look on society and on the environment and its destruction is not only visible in the band’s music but also in the way the homepage is designed.

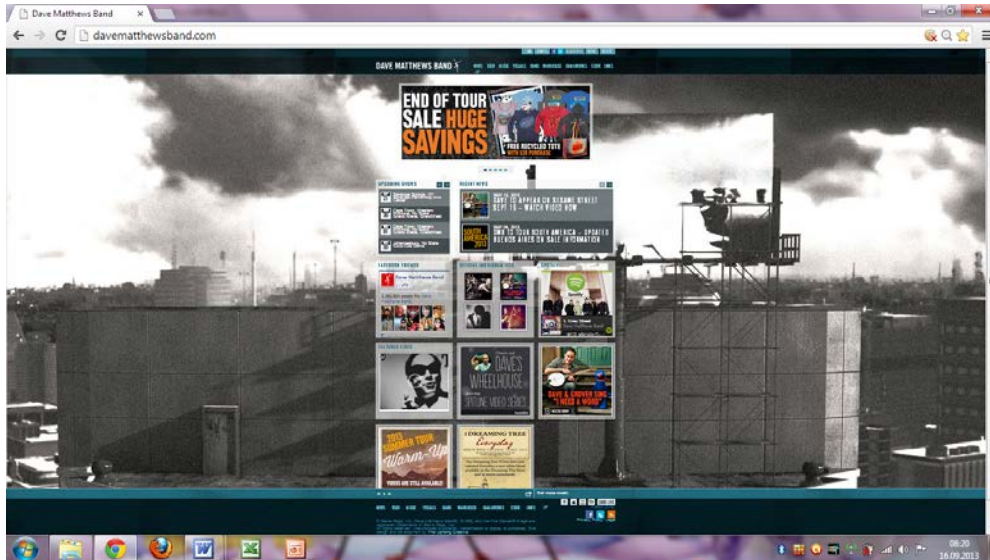


Fig. 11. *Screenshot Homepage Dave Matthews Band* by Cornelia Hetzel.

The background of the page shows a b/w city-rooftop scenery. The photographer used a wide angle lens to shoot this scenery and capture as many details in it as possible – long shot – as well as to give the impression of this scene being omnipresent; no escape possible. While the concrete constructions already suggest themes like industrialisation, isolation, destruction of nature, or loneliness, these feelings become even more emphasised by the cloudy sky depicted in this photograph. The dark clouds give the impression of being a herald of some kind of calamity approaching. Also the lack of colours in this photograph emphasises the feeling of an approaching, inevitable disaster, if we keep on living the way we have over the last decade. This photograph, therefore, underlines the band’s thematic interest in the harmonic coexistence of humanity with its environment. As a city rather than nature is depicted in this photograph, it suggests a focus on culture rather than on nature. However, culture is not represented at its best which further points to the social and ecological criticism of the band.

Turning now to the bands music, the theme of change which can only occur if people start to act is very present in the song *Gaucha*. In the stanzas all achievements of humanity – from making fire and tools out of rocks to building

rockets which bring people to the moon – are enumerated. This self-adulation which takes place in the stanzas is, however, interrupted by the chorus which consists of the lines

We gotta do much more than believe if we really  
wanna change things  
We gotta do much more than believe if we wanna  
see the world change (9-12).

These lines, of course, imply that if change should in any way occur, it is the people who have to make it possible by first changing themselves. At another point in the song, the band further pleads “[p]lease wake up / [p]lease wake up / [p]lease wake up” (*Gaacho* 32-34) which additionally underlines the band’s interest in environmental as well as social change; they want people to start to understand – to wake up – and start acting. In the last three lines, the band again points to the fact that change is possible if we only want it to happen: “I know its hard to imagine / But we could do anything / Under the stars” (*Gaacho* 48-50). Besides the strongly emphasised theme of a need for change, there is also the rather plain use of language use which is particularly striking in this song. On the one hand, this can, of course, be seen as a typical characteristic of folk music as this type of music is supposed to be understood by everyone. On the other hand, the usage of rather simple language and hardly any metaphors can further be understood as a means of pointing out that change is already overdue and, thus, there is no time for romanticised language usage.

Another song that shows the Dave Matthews Band’s strong involvement with the environment and social issues is *Mother Father* where a child’s voice/persona is asking its parents over and over again why the world is the way it is. Among other questions, it asks:

Mother, Father, please explain to me  
Why forests march to desert speed  
While snowcapped mountains melt away  
[...]  
Oh, what’s all the talk about?  
All this talk about it  
Spinning down, down, down, down, down  
All this talk about  
Oh, endless words without  
Nothing’s done (5-7; 27-32).

In the first stanza the child wants to know why climate change is happening while in the second stanza it comes to the sad conclusion that there is a lot of talk going on on how to stop climate change but nothing actually happens to resolve the problem. Later in the song, the child's voice again pleads for taking responsibility:

There's no God above  
And no Hell below  
Oh, it's here with us  
It's up to us to keep afloat  
[...] (*Mother Father* 53-55).

This stanza wants to remind the listener that religion does not have anything to do with climate change and that it cannot help humankind with this issue. Rather, mankind has to take action on its own if it wants to survive. The fact that the band uses a child's perspective in this song is a well thought-through device as people tend to be more touched and moved by a child pleading for a change than by another adult who demands the same kind of changes.

When it comes to the visual layer of the band's work, one would not associate the band's creativity drawn from nature or the way it incorporates nature into its art with the way nature used to be incorporated into nineteenth century art. However, the Dave Matthews Band as well as many folk musicians in general can, nevertheless, be seen as descendents of nineteenth century British Romanticism. Although the folk musicians discussed in this paper are mostly American artists, they can still be understood as descendents of the British strand of Romanticism as it used to be more critical of the relationship between humanity and the environment than the American strand was. Moreover, it also used to point to social- and environmental problems while the Americans were rather interested in the relationship between nature and culture and in the way land could be used in agricultural terms.

Even though British Romanticism has a strong influence on folk musicians, and particularly on the Dave Matthews Band, the American strand of romanticism also found its way into the band's art, especially into its artwork for its CDs. When looking at the following three examples, a strong connection to American landscape art becomes visible, so does the notion of American Romanticism of discovering new territory and pushing back frontiers.

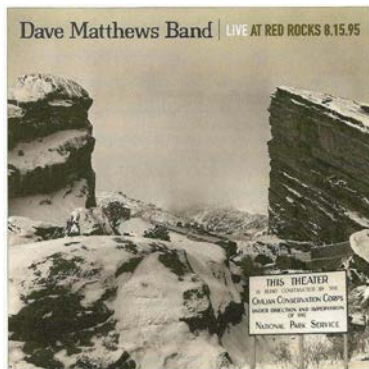


Fig. 12. CD Artwork  
*Live at Red Rocks*  
8.15.95.

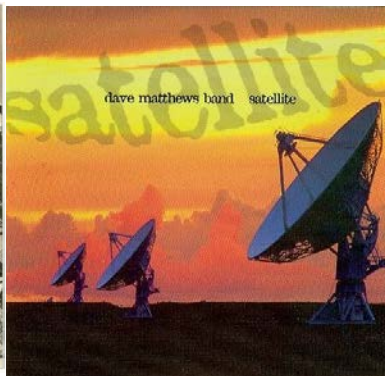


Fig. 13. CD Artwork  
*Satellite*.



Fig. 14. CD Artwork *Live at Atlantic City*.

The artwork for *Live at Red Rocks 8.15.95* (fig. 12) is strongly influenced by American landscape painting. Not only does this photograph depict the famous Red Rocks Amphitheatre – according to the homepage, it is the “only naturally occurring, acoustically perfect amphitheatre in the world” (“History & Geology” 2013) –, it also represents the wild and rough beauty of the mystical and (supposedly) undiscovered American landscape. This understanding or representation of nature is, of course, one of a sublime nature.

However, what is also of interest is the fact that (human) civilisation is hardly found in this photograph. The only hints are the sign in the front-right corner and the amphitheatre’s wooden construction right above the sign. Nature and its beauty are, therefore, the main focus in this photograph. The band does not only use this photograph for this CD because it depicts the location where the album has been recorded, it also shows how beautiful and ‘creative’ nature is and its ability to create irreproducible areas and phenomena for man. This picture suggests that this nature is worth being protected.

Also the artwork for the CD *Satellite* (fig. 13) follows the rules of American landscape art. Especially the colours of the sky in this photograph as well as the amount of space the sky occupies in it refer to this fact. Besides the picture’s link to landscape painting, it also draws a connection to the myth of the American frontier. While the term satellite does not only describe the natural satellites i.e. moons, or links up with the satellite dishes depicted on the cover, it also refers to artificial satellites which have been sent into the earth’s orbit by humans. These objects do not only fulfil the purpose of making calls via mobile phones possible, some of them are out there to collect information, not only on our planet but also

on the universe surrounding the earth. By doing so, man tries to push its frontiers further back after there are no real (geographical) frontiers left on this planet. These themes of exploration as well as of adventure can also be traced back to the (American) Romantic period when settlers as well as adventurers were keen to explore the up to that time unexplored as well as untouched (at least by ‘civilised’ white man) landscape. Another interesting aspect raised by the CD Artwork *Live at Atlantic City* (fig. 14) is the supposed binary opposition between nature and culture. While the starlit night sky represents nature, the great wheel stands for culture. Here, it is important to note that most of the time people use “the term ‘nature’ [to] refer[] to everything which is not human and [which is] distinguished from the work of humanity” (Soper 15). This means that nature is perceived as being ‘the other’ which directly opposes civilisation; this is exactly what this cover implies.

Up to now, it has only been highlighted that the Dave Matthews Band is very critical when it comes to the relationship between nature and humanity. Now, it is time to show that the band can also see nature in a rather romantic way. In the video clip to the song *Crash into me* this romantic and mystical understanding of nature becomes evident. What is striking right from the beginning when watching the video is the fact that many sequences in this clip seem to be shot by a hand-held camera. As the video seems to represent a dream, also the stop-motion technique partly used in the clip is another interesting aspect of representing romantic or dream-like ideas. Not only the way the video is shot, but also the elements that appear in the clip lead to this conclusion. There are women appearing to be fairies dancing in long, light-coloured dresses in the woods and on grass while Dave Matthews, the singer, is singing the song. Also the fact that people in skeleton outfits wearing horse skulls are also present in this clip as well as the bass guitar player sitting on and, at the same time, playing his contrabass while it is floating on the surface of a lake further underline the fact that this scenery is a dream. However, all of these supernatural elements described point to the idea that nature is a place full of mysteries and wonders. It is a place where supernatural beings such as fairies exist. These fairies also represent the notion of nature being female. Nevertheless, as nature – woods, grassland, and a lake – are the main places the video is set in as well as the fact that this place is the setting of a dream, the video implies that nature is a place where dreams come true or rather

where the individual can dream and dangle its soul. It is a place of comfort and inspiration.

In conclusion, the Dave Matthews Band is definitely a very critical band which demands changes in environmental politics. Nevertheless, romantic perceptions of nature can still be detected in its creative work as the video analysis above shows.

### 3.2.3. KT Tunstall

Scottish singer-songwriter KT Tunstall is a well-known musician who can be understood as an advocate for a peaceful and sober-minded coexistence with nature. The love of being outside and experiencing the environment on foot has been with her since her childhood (information taken from McLean 2010 and The Star Scoop 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that nature also plays an important part in her music or art in general. Although she says about her songs that they hardly deal with environmental topics, a trace of nature can still be found in them. Usually, she uses nature references or metaphors to describe phenomena important to her for instance destruction of nature or humanity's relationship to its environment.

In her song *Under the Weather* from her debut album *Eye to the Telescope* released 2005, criticism regarding the current environmental situation as well as man's helplessness regarding how to resolve these problems are the main themes of the song.

Under this national rain cloud  
I'm getting soaked to the skin  
Trying to find my umbrella  
But I don't know where to begin (1-4).

The first stanza of this song already shows an ecocritical notion as Tunstall is talking about a "national rain cloud" which stands for all the (environmental) problems present in her home country – the UK – which, of course, affect her as well; implied by the second line of the stanza. In the third line in which she is talking about her looking for an umbrella, this umbrella can be understood as a metaphor for the possible solutions to prevent or even solve further environmental damages. However, in the last line she complains that she does not know where to start her search as there are too many problems in need to be solved.

Another song in which she uses natural elements to describe current environmental problems is the song *White Bird*. Here, she broaches the issue of oil drilling and using.

White bird, white bird  
With your face so pale  
White bird, white bird  
Where'd you get that tail?  
White bird, white bird  
With a black tail

White feathers dipped in tar  
[...] (9-15).

The white bird sung about in this song represents the innocent planet earth which becomes spoilt by man's oil drilling and greed for profit. Another possible interpretation would be that the white bird stands for humanity which spills its 'white vest' with oil which, then, represents greed.

The next song also uses nature metaphors but in a quite different way. In *Feel it all* from her latest album *Invisible Empire/Crescent Moon*, Tunstall uses nature in a more romantic way as she tries to describe her feelings with these nature metaphors.

I'm growing like a seed  
rain's been falling on me  
[...]  
you made my branches grow  
now they can play with the wind  
and they can carry the snow (1-2; 18-20).

These lines taken from the song suggest a close relationship of the composer with nature as well as an understanding of how nature develops or rather how a tree grows from a seed to a bigger tree. At the same time, she compares her personal development to that of a tree in these lines – from the seed to the stage in which it is able to carry heavy snow in winter. It is possible to understand this snow as representing problems in general with which one has to deal with or which one has to endure during adult life in frequent intervals.

The romantic understanding of the environment where one can 'recharge one's batteries' is visible in some of Tunstall's CD cover artworks. Especially the photograph taken for the cover of her latest album *Invisible Empire/Crescent Moon* (fig. 15) needs to be highlighted at this point.





Fig. 15. Album Cover *Invisible Empire/Crescent Moon*.

Obviously, this photograph has not been taken in her homeland but rather in the desert of Tuscon, Arizona, USA, where she also recorded the album. The themes pictured in this photograph are plain as well; they depict wilderness, the appreciation of the wild, uninhabited west in connection with adventure and taking risks, but also enjoying the silence of a raw and to a large extend untouched landscape. In this sense, the album cover stands for a new beginning, a tackling of challenges ahead of her. This all further has to be put in the light of the musician's father's death as well as her split from her husband while recording the album (Earnshaw 2013).

Not only does the photograph imply adventures, it also presents a picturesque landscape to the viewer which even though being meagre and rough can still be considered beautiful. This cover also underlines the idea of nature being a place of relaxation as well as inspiration. This theme is even pointed to by the clothes Tunstall wears in this photograph. Especially the fact that she is carrying her jacket over one shoulder implies that she is relaxed in this moment and enjoying the surrounding environment as well as the view of untamed and rough nature. Also the cowboy hat has a nostalgic touch to it as it represents the adventurous and romanticised past lives of cowboys. Even though nature is not the main focus in this photograph, it still helps to transport certain emotions which create a link between the emotions present in the songs on this album and the reader of the cover.

Moreover, this emotional association of a desert with freedom, adventure, and even loneliness can be found in the music video to the song *Feel it all*, as well. It is a very simple video which shows KT Tunstall and a man standing on a

plank. While the song progresses, they move simultaneously to each end of the plank where they have to hold their balance – the end on which Tunstall stands protrudes over a precipice.

As the main theme of the clip is partnership/balance between two seemingly opposite poles, Tunstall (female) can be seen as nature while the man (male) represents humanity. The balance between her and the man in the music video is essential as they stand on each side of the plank and if the man only moves too fast or does an unpredictable move, Tunstall would fall. This is also true for the relationship between humanity and nature; if one side – especially humanity – moves unpredictably, not only the balance but also nature as such would be lost forever. What further underlines simplicity in this video as well as its nature-based theme is the fact that from minute 3:20, there are intercuts of the landscape in which this balancing act takes place; a snake which moves over the dry floor, trees and the sky as well as a tree which grows out of this rocky landscape while the sun shines through its branches – a very picturesque and harmonic way of seeing these elements. Further, a bee is shown to the viewer that just lands on a flower which suggests that even the seemingly most meagre landscape is full of life. As Muir rightly mentions in his work, every living thing “down to the smallest transmicroscopic creature has intrinsic value” even though it has no apparent use for humanity and its industry (qtd. in Garrard 68). This is absolutely true for the nature depicted in this video as it is a meagre environment which cannot be used for any human means but is still worth being protected from devastation.

KT Tunstall does not only perceive nature as a place of adventure or wilderness. In her artwork for the cover to her single *If only* (fig. 16), nature is rather depicted as a place of fantasy, creativity, and naïveté.



Fig. 16. Single Artwork *If only*.

It is a very colourfully drawn artwork on which Tunstall is depicted, surrounded by plants and flowers while seemingly walking through this vegetation. What is especially striking in this artwork is the naïveté with which flowers are drawn all over it, also in places where they could hardly grow by themselves. The way of using natural elements in this drawing perfectly illustrates the kind of underlying perception of nature. It is an understanding of nature as a place of simplicity as well as of immense creativity which is full of colours and wonders worth being explored. Also the colours used for background – yellow and orange – present an open and bright place; not only because these are the colours of the sun but also because they evoke feelings of happiness in the viewer.

The cover also manages to evoke the feeling of wanting to explore this landscape in the reader. Also the way Tunstall is depicted in this drawing while maybe whistling a song looking over her shoulder implying that she is waiting for someone to follow her in this magical world points in this direction. This simple way of creating a pleasant and happy atmosphere is astonishing especially as nothing particularly exciting or eye-catching is presented in this artwork. It is this simplicity and cheerfulness represented by the colours used and the plants depicted in the artwork that manage to touch the viewer as it is this understanding of nature – being a place of inspiration and relaxation – that is congruent with the perception of nature most people have.

Tunstall is obviously interested in a harmonic coexistence of mankind with its environment. She perceives nature as being a place of solitude where a person can find inspiration and peace. Besides her understanding of the American landscape being a place of wilderness and of adventure which perfectly follows

the idea of the Romantic era when the new continent was perceived as the place of risk, adventure, and untouched/-tamed nature, it is the perception of nature also being a place of inspiration, bright colours, and magic that is most striking in her work.

#### 3.2.4. Jack Johnson

After releasing songs like *Taylor* or *Upside Down*, Jack Johnson became known to more people around the world than just a handful of people within the surfing/skating community. With his simplicity – not only in the way he does music but also in the way he appears in public (usually wearing a T-Shirt, simple pants, and flip-flops) – he does not only charm his audience, but further exudes a love of life that takes a hold on everyone listening to his music or watching him perform live on stage. Not only when having a closer look at his song lyrics does it become obvious that Johnson is interested in and concerned about environmental issues; also the cover artworks of his CDs as well as the way his homepage is designed underline the fact that nature is a source of inspiration for him.

Many of his songs are heavily inspired by nature, a picturesque view on landscape as such, nostalgia, and the complex relationship between humanity and its environment. The song *The Horizon has been defeated* is a perfect example for Johnson's concern about the environment and its exploitation as well as man's relationship to nature as such.

[F]uture complications  
 in the strings between the cans  
 but no prints can come from fingers  
 if machines become our hands  
 and then our feet become the wheels  
 and then the wheels become the cars  
 and then the rigs begin to drill  
 until the drillings goes too far (9-16).

In this stanza, Johnson uses a machine imagery to describe the moral downfall of humanity. For him, it seems as if mankind slowly turns into a soulless machine which is only interested in further progress without thinking about the consequences of this development – “until the drillings goes too far” (*The Horizon has been defeated* 16). Another interesting aspect in these lines is the metaphors

he uses. For example with the first two lines, he refers to the fact that the world becomes more complicated every day and to emphasize this he uses the idea of a tin-can-telephone. While using the machine imagery, he also points to the fact that if we become machines we do not leave (personal) traces behind – “but no prints can come from fingers / if machines become our hands” (*The Horizon has been defeated* 11). What he wants to say is that we lose our individuality and become a mass which will not be remembered by anyone in the future. A few lines later, he further criticises capitalism as well as consumerism in a more direct way.

[...]  
 [B]ecause people are lonely and only  
 animals with too many tools  
 that can build all the junk that we sell  
 sometimes it makes you want to yell  
 (*The Horizon has been defeated* 28-31).

Especially in the last line one becomes aware that Johnson disagrees with a life style that solely focuses on how much and what one owns. I argue that the quoted lines are a plea for a simpler way of life which is oriented towards a closer relationship between people and their environment. What is of interest as well is the fact that Johnson equates people with animals. In this way he indirectly points to the fact that humanity is part and not master of this planet and that one has to adjust to the environment one lives in and not try to change it for one's own needs – which is, of course, a very environmentalist thought.

Johnson's songs not only tell from the relationship between people and their environment but also have a heavy nostalgic tone to them. This tone is perfectly visible in the song *Constellations* from his third album *In Between Dreams*. One of its stanzas reads as follows:

And it was just another night  
 With a sunset and a moonrise  
 Not too far behind to give us just enough light  
 To lay down underneath the stars  
 We listened to Papa's translations  
 Of the stories across the sky  
 We drew our own constellations (6-12).

Here, Johnson was clearly influenced by childhood events. He describes how the night has been, with its stars and the diffident light of the moon above them. This event – lying underneath the stars with his father who told them stories – is clearly a beautiful memory to him. It is obvious that his view back on this

event is a nostalgic one. In the following two lines, this nostalgic notion becomes even more evident: “The west winds often last too long / And when they calm down, nothing ever feels the same” (*Constellations* 12-13). The west winds here stand for change in general; and he complains that everything changes and nothing ever stays the same. This is an apparent longing for the past which seems to have been much better – especially because he used to be a child then – than the present. This longing for his childhood can also be interpreted as the longing for a simple and untroubled life which does not know any responsibilities or sorrows. It is a romantic transfiguration of the past. This nostalgic tone in his songs stems from the fact that he grew up in Oahu, Hawaii, where he went surfing with his father in their free time. This way he learned to appreciate nature. In an online article he mentions a boat tour in traditional Hawaiian canoes he experienced with his father which made him aware of the beauty of simple life.

Those canoes are only as wide as your hips, as long as six people, and with just a little leg space between you and the person in front of you [...]. Everything you'd bring would have to fit into that space. It couldn't spill over. You couldn't pay more to bring extra baggage. [...] It wasn't about being overloaded with Christmas presents (J. Cohen 2008).<sup>3</sup>

This simplicity and the nostalgia are not only visible in his song lyrics, they can also be traced in the way his homepage is designed.

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<sup>3</sup> Information on Johnson's past are also taken from: McLean, Craig. “Jack Johnson: solar-powered pop star”. *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, 9 June 2010. Web. 20 Aug. 2013. and Abhishek, Seth. “Exclusive: Jack Johnson talks eco-activism, solar power and charity”. *Look to the Stars*. Look to the Stars, 5 July 2012. Web. 20 Aug. 2013.



Fig. 17. *Screenshot Homepage Jack Johnson* by Cornelia Hetzel.

As one can see, the design of the homepage is quite an organic one. This is underlined by the background which looks like it had been made of wood and the main colours used – brown, white, and turquoise – remind of a life close to the ocean. This is an interesting aspect as such a cupboard can be understood as an analogue medium which is now represented by a digital medium (the internet). By doing so, the dichotomy between nature and culture is tried to be overcome. As cupboards seem to be closer to nature (handmade) than the internet – which is far away from being connected to nature – this is a modern way to bring culture and nature together.

However, the design of the page not only refers to simplicity, it also links up with a nostalgic view on the past as well as Johnson's personal past experiences – he started out as a film director, therefore, the old hand-held camera and film reel are items that can be associated with his past. These nostalgic elements on this site are the old camera in the bottom-right corner or the b/w photograph or the tin-can-telephone in the bottom-left corner of this supposed wooden cupboard. All of these elements underline Johnson's lifestyle as it suggests an orientation towards the past – his mentality as well as his way of living ('back-to-the-roots'). Another interesting aspect that can be detected on this homepage is the small heap of earth of which a little plant grows out. It not only visually suggests a link to nature, it might further imply hope that the current global situation can be changed or that



starting anew, in general, is always possible – on the page, this plant functions as a link to Johnson's green touring.

Nostalgia and the connection between man and nature is also a crucial topic in the designs of his album covers. In the following, I will present two covers – *On and On* (fig. 18) released 2003 and *From Here to Now to You* (fig. 19) released 2013 – which include these themes in a very specific way.

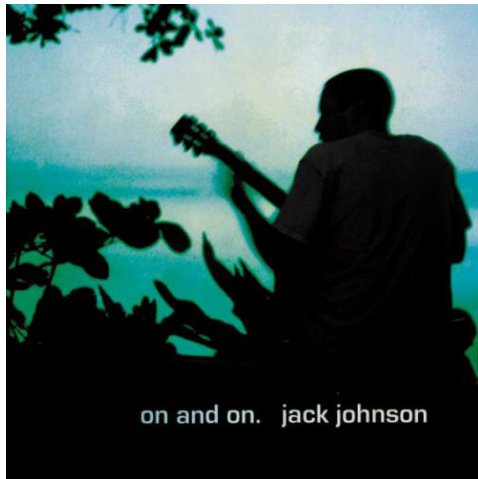


Fig. 18. Album Cover *On and On*.

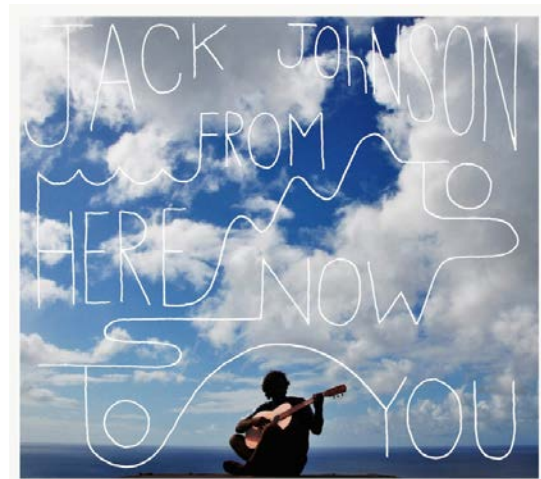


Fig. 19. Album Cover *From Here to Now to You*.

What is striking at the first glance is the fact that in both of these covers Johnson is sitting somewhere outside, close to the ocean, playing his acoustic guitar. In the artwork for *On and On* (fig. 18) he sits on a bench or a wooden seat at the beach, surrounded by plants of all sorts, and looks out onto the ocean while in the photograph for the CD *From Here to Now to You* (fig. 19) he probably sits on a rock with his back turned to the sea. Another interesting fact is that the cover for *On and On* plays very much with light and darkness – the viewer seems to be in the dark somewhere behind Johnson who faces the bright beach scenery. Not only is the setting of this picture itself romantic, this play with shadows also has something magical to it. In total, this CD cover evokes feelings of loneliness or separation as well as desire for such a remote place where one can relax and find to oneself again. It is this mystic and nostalgic atmosphere which makes us associate this picture with the stereotypical and picturesque perception of nature being a place where humanity can forget all sorrows and recharge its energies.

*From Here to Now to You*, on the other hand, plays with feelings of happiness and joy of life. Here, as most of the picture is comprised of a cloudy,



blue sky while Johnson is merely a small figure, it suggests that humanity is only a small piece in the whole ecosystem and that there is more to nature than water or plants. Spirituality is the term which comes to one's mind when looking at this CD cover.

This photograph can also be linked to the painting tradition of landscape art where – if at all present in the picture – people are usually depicted in a smaller scale than the landscape in which the scenery takes place. Especially in the American strand of landscape art the sky makes up an important part of such paintings which is also the case in this CD cover. It is a sublime nature in which humanity plays only an insignificant part. As already suggested, this photograph implies spirituality while at the same time the letters on the cover are designed to remind us of romantic or even child-like writing. With its undulated elements in it and the fact that all words of the CD title are connected, the viewer not only gets the impression of a romantic-themed artwork but also that the content of this artwork might be linked to topics such as connectedness or love or even environmental consciousness.

In total, compared to the cover for *On and On* (fig. 18), the photograph for *From Here to Now to You* (fig. 19) is a much more open, happier and accessible photograph with its blue sky and sunshine. This difference between these two album covers also suggests a development of Johnson in terms of personality as well as his musical ability. Not only the fact that *On and On* is much more gloomy than *From Here to Now to You*, the latter one further communicates a shift of his focus in terms of the environment. While in *On and On* Johnson and his feelings are dominating the album, in *From Here to Now to You* it is the topic of connectedness and enjoying life while being conscious of one's environment which form the main idea of the album.

Summing up, Jack Johnson is a person conscious of environmental problems while seeing nature as a place of solitude which is needed by man to recharge his energies. In all of his creative work, a longing for a life style closely oriented towards nature becomes evident.

### 3.3. Rock Music

As Frith (1981) rightly mentions,

[m]an kann Rockmusik zwar musikalisch als ein Pop-Genre [...] definieren, aber <<Rock>> hat auch ideologische Bedeutung. Das Suffix Rock bei einer musikalischen Kategorisierung (Folk-Rock, Country-Rock, Punk-Rock) verweist nicht nur auf einen bestimmten Sound oder Beat, sondern auch auf eine Intention und eine Wirkung. Im Gegensatz zu Pop beinhaltet Rock Begriffe wie Ehrlichkeit, Authentizität, Kunst und nicht-kommerzielle Interessen (qtd. in Reichert 230).<sup>4</sup>

Also Harron refers to this aspect of non-commercialism when arguing that

[r]ock is about the search for permanence within the freefloating values of the marketplace. It is about tradition (blues, country, and folk roots), and it is hierarchical in that it believes in geniuses and heroes ... originality and self-expression in defiance of crass commercialism (qtd. in Middleton 2014).

On the one hand, rock musicians try to be authentic, creative, and expressive while, on the other hand, they try to become appealing for as many people as possible to make a living from their music. This dichotomy leads to the understanding of rock musicians being Byronic characters. This is not only the case because they are charismatic, mysterious, or sophisticated. But it is rather due to their rebellious, moody, and larger-than-life attitude that they are the personified conflict between art and commercialism; or even between good and evil. It is this opposition that makes rock musicians so attractive and appealing, as they are not the perfect hero/pop star without any rough edges but, instead, personify reality with all its complications and dark sides. This Romantic (anti-) hero, in consequence, directly links rock music to Romanticism.

Besides the Byronic characteristics of rock musicians, also the topics dealt with in this music genre have a Romantic and even ecocritical touch to them as songs cover topics not only of love or war, but also of environmental damages done to the earth. Even the Encyclopaedia Britannica refers to the fact that rock music often deals with critical issues such as social or environmental problems. It mentions that rock music can be seen as the “most democratic of mass media” as

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<sup>4</sup> Even though one can define rock music as musically being a pop-genre, <<rock>> has an additional ideological meaning. The suffix rock added to a music category (folk-rock, country-rock, punk-rock) does not only hint towards a particular sound or beat but also towards an intention and effect. In contrast to pop rock does comprise terms like honesty, authenticity, art and non-commercial interests (trans. by author).

it is the only one today which gives voice to the margins of society (“Rock” 17 Jan. 2014). It is therefore not surprising that in terms of CD artworks or homepage design rock musicians are also influenced by natural elements as well as by romantic ideas of nature.

### 3.3.1. U2/Bono

U2 is the most famous Irish rock band on this planet. It is, however, not only famous for its music, it is also known to have always been a band concerned with political and social issues. This is, of course, not only visible in the band’s appearance in videos or on stage but also in its songs. Although U2’s commitment to environmental issues is not as well known as its social commitment, it is still obvious that nature plays an important part in the band’s music as well as in its creative work as such.

Generally, it can be said that the language the band uses in its songs is a very picturesque one and, in consequence, creates dramatic and intense pictures for the listener. Also the pathetic fallacy used in the lyrics points in this direction as it supports the creation of certain kind of images in the reader’s/listener’s heads. Another characteristic of U2 songs is the usage of biblical or at least catholic topics or references. All of these characteristics can be found, for example, in the song *White as Snow*.

Now this dry ground it bears no fruit at all  
Only poppies laugh under the crescent moon  
The road refuses strangers  
The land the seeds we sow  
Where might we find the lamb as white as snow (13-17).

The most obvious examples in the text of pathetic fallacy are, of course, the laughing poppies and the street that refuses strangers as well as the land is refusing seeds. Besides the strong pictures created by aspects such as pathetic fallacies and metaphors, it is fascinating that the language used is simple and comprehensible. However, one has to be familiar with metaphors like “lamb as white as snow” to understand the stanza in its entirety. This line is not only a reference to the bible where the lamb is usually used to refer to Christ (“lamb” 2013). It can also refer to the nursery rhyme *Mary had a little Lamb* in which this lamb is described as having a “fleece as white as snow” (Hale qtd. on

kids.niehs.nih.gov, 27 Dec. 2013). However, the more fitting reference is definitely the one referring to the bible as the singer is looking for the lamb in this line; especially as in the lines before Bono is complaining that the soil is dry and no seed grows on it and he is now looking for help in a higher power which could provide water/aid.

Another song clearly inspired by nature is *No Line on the Horizon*. Here, Bono equates a girl to the sea:

I know a girl who's like the sea  
I watch her changing every day for me  
[...]  
One day she's still, the next she swells  
[...] (1-2; 5).

He compares this girl to the tides of the sea which change the appearance of the ocean and make it move to and fro. This means that his girl is as changeful in his perception as the ocean although one has to note the regularity that goes with it as well. So, even though it is a regularly happening event, it is still fascinating and beautiful to watch. These themes of the ability to change and regularity found in nature can also be found in the line “[...] the seasons change and so do I” (21) of the song *Indian Summer Sky*. It is the natural cycle through which nature goes during one year which Bono uses to describe himself as well as his emotions and his own changefulness in terms of feelings and behaviour. This leads to the conclusion that nature is a sublime place; fascinating and beautiful, while at the same time dangerous due to its changefulness.

Also on the visual level U2 uses nature; especially in terms of CD covers where nature not only emphasises the song meanings on the disk but also the band's personal opinions. It is important to note that not only romantic traditions or ideas play a significant part here but also the actual physical environment. Already as early as 1984 with the album *The Unforgettable Fire* (fig. 20) U2 shows that the environment as well as a picturesque understanding of nature is an important source of inspiration to the band.

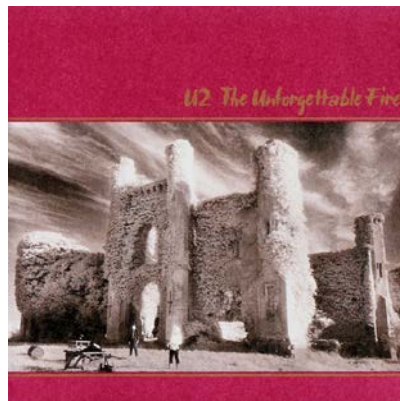


Fig. 20. Album Cover *The Unforgettable Fire*.

The photograph on the cover shows the ruin of Moydrum Castle, Ireland, which was burned down by I.R.A. activists in 1921 (Coplen 2009). Together with the dramatic looking sky, the sunshine that lightens the top as well as the right part of the ruin, and the fact that the photograph is a b/w photo emphasise the gothic as well as the sublime character of the scenery. Also the perspective adds to this intense experience; it is a long shot taken from a slightly tilted angle which is a common feature used to emphasise a dramatic atmosphere. As there are also two people standing in front of the castle together with what looks like bulky waste, the drama which must have taken place during the burning of the castle is underlined.

What is, however, especially interesting about the photograph is the sky. It does not only add drama to the scenery, it further gives the picture an atmosphere of mysticism. The sky together with the overgrown walls of the castle further imply the presence of the power of nature. It is not only beautiful to look at, but it is also frightening as well as powerful enough to demand back what once had been its (the overgrown ruin). In addition to that, also the natural cycle of birth, life, and death is referred to by the ruin: it has once been build (birth), then lived a couple of centuries and in the end died by being burned down. However, this 'death' was the rebirth or the chance for nature to re-conquer the area of the castle. The fact that this photograph loaded with emotions is surrounded by a pink and golden frame alludes to the idea that the band must have been afraid that the CD would have stayed unnoticed by customers if it had only used the photograph for its cover. Therefore U2 must have chosen to use some colour on their cover to attract more attention.

Another interesting artwork is the one for the single *Magnificent* released in 2009 (fig. 21).



Fig. 21. Single Cover *Magnificent*.

Different to the cover for *The Unforgettable Fire*, here the viewer only sees a small city at the bottom of the cover while most of the space is occupied by the white coloured sky. Also the two birds on the right which fly upwards refer to the fact that this white area is supposed to be the sky. Besides white, all the other colours present in the artwork are purple and olive green. Replacing the original colours of the artwork with these three colours reduces the realism of the picture while, at the same time, adding a layer of fantasy. By doing so, it gives the cover a certain naïveté and naturalness even though the colours are far from realistic.

What is also interesting is the meaning of the two birds. As they are flying and playing with each other in the sky, the themes of freedom, happiness, and adventure are conceived, especially, as birds have always been associated with freedom and adventure. This is a picturesque perception of nature which equates purity, happiness, and freedom with nature.

The next cover chosen for the analysis is the artwork of the album *No Line on the Horizon* published in 2009 (fig. 22).



Fig. 22. Album Cover *No Line on the Horizon*.

It is definitely the simplest cover as it only shows a b/w coloured landscape containing only a lake or sea and a sky. The fact that the photograph is blurred not only gives the photograph an impressionist look, it, further, underlines the title of the album as the exact identification of where the water ends and where the sky begins is not possible. What the image also conveys is the idea of nature being a place of purity; this is, of course, a picturesque as well as a sublime understanding of nature. Water has always been a mystical element for mankind, as it is not only the element most important to it – life as we know it would not be possible without water –, it can also be a powerful force of destruction. However, as it is presented in the image, a calm and safe lake, the landscape becomes a place of solitude and relaxation for the viewer. A tranquil place that allows for dreaming.

The last cover discussed here is completely different from those above but not less worth mentioning. It is the cover of the 1992 single *One* (fig. 23).

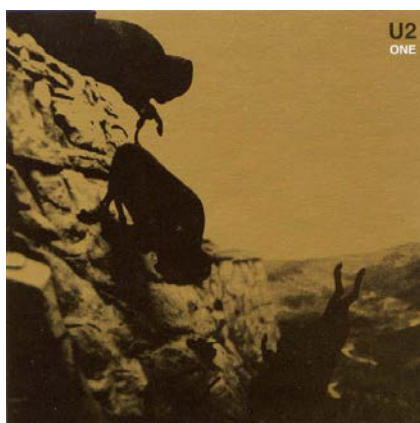


Fig. 23. Single Cover *One*.

Here, U2 took a part of the famous and untitled photograph by David Wojnarowicz. This photograph is today known as a masterpiece of criticism of the Ronald Reagan era in the United States during the 1980ies. It represents the end

of American values and culture.<sup>5</sup> It is, therefore, interesting but not astonishing that U2 chose it for its single as not only Wojnarowicz died the same year the single was released, but also because the song itself is a plea for a more tolerant world in which people care for each other and not only for themselves – “One life with each other. sisters, brothers / One life, but we’re not the same. / We get to carry each other, carry each other” (*One* 23-25).

What makes the cover interesting for this analysis is not only the equation of American culture with the buffalo, but also the fact that this buffalo can at the same time stand for mankind and its downfall, in general. This downfall is not only one in terms of cultural and humanitarian aspects but also one of possible self-extinction through exploitation of natural resources and a rapid climate change for which mankind is responsible. This brings an additional ecocritical layer to the artwork.

Nevertheless, U2’s understanding of nature is a sublime while at the same time picturesque one. On the one hand, it is a place of wonder and mysticism worth being protected but, on the other hand, can be so powerful as to destroy the human race in an instant.

### 3.3.2. Radiohead

Radiohead is known for its socio-political criticism in its songs since its formation in 1985; one only needs to remember songs like *Fake Plastic Tree* or *Karma Police*. The band, however, is not only critical when it comes to social phenomena. It is also concerned about environmental issues. Especially the singer, Thom Yorke, does not only talk about these problems but actually gets involved in campaigns such as *Save the Arctic* by Greenpeace which is interested in stopping oil drilling companies from drilling oil in the Arctic. Yorke also used to work with *Friends of the Earth* to get the first Climate Change Act passed in Britain during the Blair government which would demand a ninety per cent reduction of carbon emissions by the year 2050 (Baldwin 2013).

Another interesting aspect is the fact that Radiohead changed facet of its touring due to environmental reasons. While in an interview in 2006 Yorke said

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<sup>5</sup> For further information on the photograph and its meaning see Sevigny, John. “John Sevigny: Twenty Years later: David Wojnarowicz’ buffalo photograph”. *guernicamag.com*. Guernica / A Magazine of Art & Politics, 25 July 2009. Web. 28 Dec. 2013.



that he “would consider refusing to tour on environmental grounds, if nothing started happening to change the way the touring operates” (Adam 2006), by the year 2010 the band is still touring; Radiohead found a way of reducing its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and, by doing so, its impact on the environment. It managed to replace its entire lighting equipment with LED lighting which makes an annual reduction of 440 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions possible (fizanur 2010).

Even though the band is clearly interested in reducing their carbon footprint as well as making people/the public aware of the crisis in which we find ourselves, themes of nature are hardly visible in Radiohead’s lyrics. In only a handful of songs one finds nature metaphors, such as in the song *All I need*. Already in the first stanza, the singer refers to himself as an animal “[t]rapped in your hot car” (4). This animal is most likely a dog as they are often locked into cars by their owners during hot days. So, the singer equates himself with a pet which is owned by another person. Another striking aspect can be found in the chorus which goes as follows: “I’m in the middle of your picture / Lying in the reeds” (*All I need* 9-10). The first thing that comes to mind here is the Pre-Raphaelite painting called *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais painted between 1851-52. Even though Ophelia is not lying literally in the reeds, she is, nevertheless, floating in a river next to sea weed right in the middle of the painting. However, it is not Ophelia’s accident which in consequence will lead to her death that is most interesting for this paper; rather, the way nature is depicted in this painting. It is a very realistic as well as minimalistic representation of nature with all its rich details. Even the flowers that are floating next to Ophelia in the river are painted in such detail that it is possible to differentiate the various types of flowers. This reference to the painting in the song is a clear commitment of the band to a romantic/picturesque idea of nature.

In the next stanza, Yorke sings the following lines:

I am a moth  
Who just wants to share your light  
I’m just an insect  
Trying to get out of the night (*All I need* 11-14).

Here, he equates himself with a moth or insects in general – which are considered inferior animals – which underlines the singer’s devotion to the object of his cravings. He further equates his loved one with a source of light – the sun – that makes life possible or worth living. This is, again, a romanticised perception

of nature as it implies feelings between the insect and the source of light which can then be further used as a metaphor for the singer and his loved one.

While nature is not very present in Radiohead's songs, it, however, found its way into the band's visual representations. This is especially true for its homepage. The first thing one sees on the page is the band's name written in black letters on a white background (fig. 24). Even though this does not seem being worth mentioned at all, what happens next, however, is. After some seconds, black grass or branches grow out of the bottom of the page (fig. 25). As this would not stop, it results in the page suddenly being completely black and one can not see the band's name any longer. Then, the name of the band appears again in white colour and the growing of branches/grass starts anew with the difference that the colour of the lines is white this time (fig. 26).

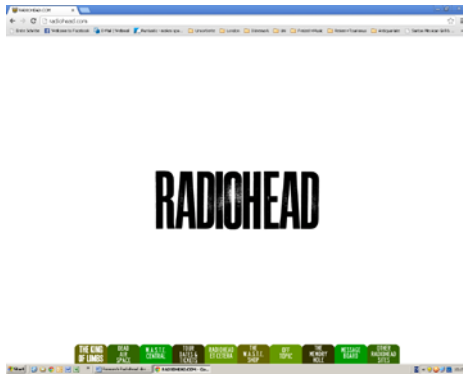


Fig. 24. *Screenshot 1 Homepage Radiohead* by Cornelia Hetzel.



Fig. 25. *Screenshot 2 Homepage Radiohead* by Cornelia Hetzel.



Fig. 26. *Screenshot 3 Homepage Radiohead* by Cornelia Hetzel.



Fig. 27. *Screenshot Radiohead Logo* by Cornelia Hetzel.

I argue that this supposedly growing of grass or branches out of the page's bottom stands for nature which should not be underestimated, as it is able to cover up or destroy culture; in this case represented by Radiohead's logo. In a way, nature demands back its supremacy. The fact that the band consciously chose to make the homepage of its web page look like this and the way it chose to frame its logo by woods/trees on the rest of the web page (fig. 27) makes a close connection between the band and nature visible. It is further an obvious sign that nature is an important source of inspiration for the band and that it feels confident that nature is almighty while humanity is just a small item living on this planet.

This theme of nature finding/fighting its way back to one's consciousness is also repeated in some of Radiohead's music videos. This is especially true for the video to the song *Go to sleep*. Here, the viewer sees a computer generated Yorke who sits on a park bench under a tree in a strongly frequented city centre, next to a red rose which was able to grow through the concrete floor. Interestingly, this flower is also the main protagonist of this clip. This becomes especially obvious considering the fact that the first and the last thing the viewer sees in this music video is this red rose. At the beginning as well as at the end of this clip we see the flower swaying in the wind through a close-up. In addition, as the main theme of the video is the destruction and the reassembling of old houses in this city centre while none of the people passing by seem to notice, this flower not only represents nature's ability to adapt itself to most adverse conditions, it also stands for humanity's loss of being able to consciously perceive its environment and to appreciate the wonders of nature; this becomes evident in the clip as not a single (computer generated) person seems to notice the beautiful red rose or the crumbling/rebuild buildings. Only Yorke seems to care as he sits right next to the plant singing his song.

Radiohead's CD artworks have also been influenced by nature. First, there is the album cover of *Pablo Honey* (fig. 28). Even though one might think that the title is an allusion to Pablo Picasso, it is, however, a phrase taken from a prank call series from the 1990ies by a group called *The Jerky Boys*. In the prank call which is responsible for the album title, the caller would repeatedly ask "Pablo, honey? Please come to Florida!" (Cavanagh 1993). However, the cover itself has an obvious connection to nature as the yellow flower depicted on it indicates. In addition, right in the centre of this flower a baby's face can be detected. While the

flower seems to be painted, the baby's face is definitely a b/w photograph. Mixing different styles and media has always been characteristic for Radiohead; not only in musical sense but also in terms of artworks. Not only is the mix of photograph and painting a stylistic one which underlines the binary opposition of nature and culture; in addition, with the baby's head in the centre of the flower, the idea of this flower being a child of Mother Nature becomes clear. In consequence, nature becomes equated with motherhood.

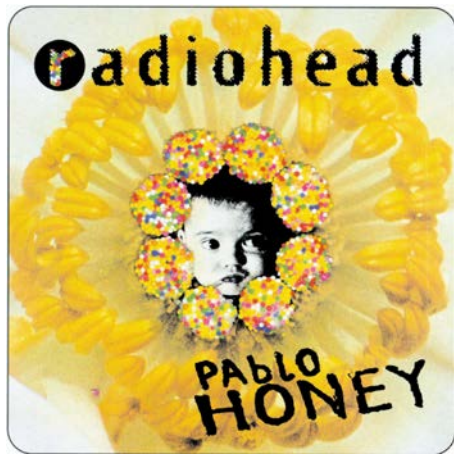


Fig. 28. Album Cover *Pablo Honey*.



Fig. 29. Album Cover *Kid A*.

Also the cover of the album *Kid A* shows a strong influence of nature on Radiohead (fig. 29). Here, mountains are depicted in white and blue colour while the sky is represented in dark red. It is a sublime understanding of nature that is represented here as not only the sky but also the mountains – of which some are volcanoes – appear to be dangerous. In addition, this red sky brings an apocalyptic touch to the artwork, as it suggests fire or even hell fire which can be associated with the end of the world. Interesting are also the stripes on the lower part of the artwork. They do not only bring a three-dimensional perspective to it, they also represent technology of the modern age, as they appear to be part of a computer program. This means, as in the cover of *Pablo Honey*, the binary opposition of nature and culture is a reoccurring theme in the band's artworks.

For Radiohead, playing with the apparent opposition of nature and culture is a device consciously used by the band to make people think about their own relationship towards nature. Also, a clear sublime understanding of nature is visible in the band's creative work. It is, nevertheless, a very pessimistic scenario which the band draws for the future of the world.

### 3.3.3. Pearl Jam

Starting out as a Grunge-band, Pearl Jam has since its formation in 1990 been known to highlight social problems as well as injustice in its music. The band has also an interest in protecting the environment as their donation of \$ 100,000 to non-governmental organisations as well as its winning the Planet Defender Award in 2011 prove (“Pearl Jam donates green” 2006; Castellanos 2011). This interest in the protection of the environment is also visible in the 1998 song *Do the Evolution* which criticises consumerism and reckless handling of natural resources.

I'm ahead, I'm a man  
 I'm the first mammal to wear pants, yeah  
 [...]
 This land is mine, this land is free  
 I'll do what I want but irresponsibly  
 [...] (2-3; 16-17).

These lines are, of course, also cynical comments on humanity's belief to be the master race of this planet and, therefore, allowed to do whatever it wants without fearing the consequences.

Another song that takes the same line is *Insignificance*. “All in all,... it's no one's fault ... / Excuses turn to carbon walls ... / Blame it all on chemical intercourse” (1-3). Here, Pearl Jam sarcastically comments on mankind's lack of taking responsibility for its actions. The phrase “carbon walls” refers to the anthropogenic pollution of the air with carbon dioxide. The last line again highlights the ‘innocence’ of mankind as it is not its fault that the environment is polluted but it is the result/the fault of chemical elements which are reacting with each other in a way no one did foresee. By singing these lines, the band points to man's responsibility of its doings and that further polluting the air/earth can be stopped if only wanted.

The band even uses nature and its rule of only the survival of the fittest in its songs to highlight the greed of a few individuals that leads to the destruction of the whole (eco-)system.

And like weeds,.. with big leaves  
 Stealing light from what's beneath  
 Where they have more,...  
 Still they take more (*Green Disease* 4-7).

The metaphor of weeds is used here to describe the behaviour of a minority that lives on the expanses of many while destroying the living environment of everyone. The same topic is described a few lines later in the song by using the metaphor of a ship on a rough sea.

Tell the captain  
‘This boat’s not safe  
And we’re drowning.’  
Turns out  
He’s the one making waves (*Green Disease* 20-24).

This reference not only describes the previous idea of a handful of people living on the expanses of others. It, further, uses the metaphor of a sinking ship to point out that the people in charge – the captain – are responsible for the current situation as well.

Up to now, the songs discussed are a mere criticism of the current environmental situation. It is a rebellious way of expressing one’s opinion which is, of course, a trade of the rock music genre as it is known to be the music of outsiders, dissidents, and rebels. Nevertheless, in some songs a picturesque idea of nature as being a place of retreat becomes visible. This becomes particularly evident in the song *In my Tree*. Here, the tree is the symbol of a quiet place where the hectic city life can be forgotten.

Up here in my tree, yeah  
Newspapers matter not to me, yeah  
No more crowbars to my head, yeah  
I’m trading stories with the leaves instead, yeah (1-4).

The tree can be understood as a place of retreat from culture represented here by newspapers. The song even compares news with crowbars which suggests an understanding of news being ideas that force their way into the heads of innocent individuals who only want to be left alone and be themselves while not being bothered with all the information circling around in today’s societies. Therefore, this tree can also be understood as a place of solitude that is needed to stay oneself in this hectic world. Also the song *½ Full* deals with the idea of leaving the city – culture – to enjoy the sublimity of nature.

Climbing on a mountain  
Floating out on the sea  
Far from lights of a city  
The elements they speak to me... (1-4).

The singer suggests that when being outside and enjoying nature, one becomes whole again with his/her environment. Again, also the idea of nature being a place of solitude is emphasised here as well as mountains and the sea have always been equated – especially in the fine arts – with solitude as well as sublime nature.

This notion of nature being a place of joy, fun, and peace is also supported by the video to the song *Oceans*. The main plot of the video is the band enjoying its free time at the sea; surfing and swimming which is interrupted by live footage taken from a concert. It is a b/w video that starts with an establishing shot taken in the morning. The camera looks out onto the sea, waves are breaking while a surfer is riding the waves from the right side of the frame to the left. Later on in the video it turns out that this surfer must have been Eddie Vedder, the singer of the band, who is a passionate surfer and who wrote this song. However, the following six shots show us a view onto the sea from a higher lookout, a man jumping into the water from a rocky cliff, a cloudy sky passing by (probably filmed out of a moving convertible), a man paddles out on the sea on his surf board, the camera watches a single-engine aircraft taking off from an airstrip, and a man is jumping in front of the camera in different styles with only the cloudy sky in the background. This short introduction of the place the video is taking place is followed by the introduction of every single band member individually. All of these scenes in combination can be understood as the introduction of the landscape and the band to the audience which in the following can watch the band enjoying itself at the sea.

What is interesting in terms of cuts and transitions of the scenes is the fact that after every shot the picture is fading out followed by a short darkness which is then brought to an end by the fading in of the next shot. This technique gives the impression of the shots being desultory from each other. It underlines the main idea of the video to show the fans excerpts of a day out with the band as the shots seem to be separate entities marked-off by the darkness following after each shot. These transitions can further be understood as an imitation of blinking eyes which after each time they have closed open to a new scenery. Besides the transitions, the idea of the ocean/nature being a stable entity is also presented in the video. This is done by first showing a young blond boy in shorts walking on the beach next to the water. This shot is immediately followed by two elderly men standing

in the left corner of another shot while looking out onto the sea which fills the rest of the frame. With showing a young and two old people enjoying themselves close to the ocean, the band hints towards a sublime nature older than mankind. By doing so, the sublimity of nature is made aware. Even though there are many more shots of the band having fun and enjoying the water and themselves, this underlines the idea of nature being a place of retreat and relaxation.

What is also interesting about the music video are the intercuts of live footage taken from the band while performing on stage. This is, of course, a typical characteristic of rock music videos in which playing instruments underlines the authenticity of the band. As Grossberg rightly says, “[t]he demand for live performance has always expressed the desire for the visual mark (and proof) of authenticity” (204). Meaning, that especially in the genre of rock music playing live instruments is important to point to the band’s authenticity. This is also done in this video with these intercuts of live footage. However, by doing so, the band not only does its bit with regard to genre conventions, but it also plays with the binary opposition of culture being represented here by the live performance and nature. In this way, nature becomes even more characterised as being a place of retreat and relaxation.

This connection or rather this contrast between live performance – culture – and nature is also used in the music video to the song *Amongst the Waves*. Also here, nature shots are intercut with the band performing the song on stage. However, what is striking is that the main theme of enjoying the water/ocean is the same as in the previously discussed video. Nevertheless, the difference to this video is that it only deals with the topic of the ocean; its beauty and the joy it brings to people of all ages. This joy is underlined by the colours used in the clip. While the performance scenes are kept in b/w, the nature shots are in full colour to not only emphasise its beauty but also its superiority over humanity and culture which are kept colourless in this video. To underline the beauty of the oceans, many underwater shots can be observed in this clip which also point to the picturesque in nature. This is especially true when the camera shows the viewer four dolphins swimming under water which has shades of blue and turquoise. In total, nature is in this video represented as a place of immense beauty and wonders which brings joy and peace to people. The end of the video, however, brings an abrupt end to this idea of picturesque nature when photographs of



polluted water and beaches by leaked oil are presented to the viewer. The first photograph shown depicts a ship surrounded by red-coloured water full of oil taken from the bird perspective. After a second, the line “There is only one Ocean for everyone” (Pearl Jam *Amongst the Waves*) appears. The next photograph shows several people in white overalls cleaning a polluted beach from oil. Also here, a sentence appears at the bottom of the picture: “Look after it for present and future generations” (Pearl Jam *Amongst the Waves*). This is followed by a photograph showing a pelican looking right into the camera swimming and at the same time completely covered in oil. While being shown to the audience, these pictures are accompanied by sounds of the sea. At the end of the clip, a URL of the band’s campaign is presented which underlines the urgency of the previous pictures of the polluted sea. Even though it started out as a video of praising nature and particularly the oceans, the music video turns out to be a criticism of the pollution of the oceans as well as a plea of stopping such disasters from happening. This can be understood as an ecocritical view on mankind treating its environment as being inferior as well as humanity’s irresponsible behaviour towards nature/oceans.

Another great example of Pearl Jam’s visual representation of its concern and reverence for nature is the CD artwork for its single *Holiday 1991* (fig. 30). Here, the in watercolour painted head of a rhinoceros in profile is shown to the buyer.



Fig. 30. Single Cover *Holiday 1991*.

The head of the animal is surrounded by green colour indicating nature. This artwork, of course, shows that the band feels clearly linked to nature and by

depicting a rhinoceros in its supposed habitat indicates towards Pearl Jam's understanding for the need of protecting the environment and of appreciating the simple things in life; such as a rhinoceros being able to live in freedom and peace.

On the other hand, the band also uses animals on its CD covers to provoke as well as to underline the problematic of mankind living with nature; visible in the artwork for the single *Holiday 1992* (Fig. 31).



Fig. 31. Single Cover *Holiday 1992*.

Here, the photograph shows a dead deer that seems to have been hit by a car as it is lying in the middle of a road. Pearl Jam not only wants to provoke with this picture, it further wants to make the viewer understand that there is a problem regarding mankind's interference with innocent life and its reckless handling of nature and its resources. This photograph further indicates the binary opposition of nature – the dead deer – and culture – the road, which might end deadly if humankind does not change its behaviour.

Summing up, it can be said that Pearl Jam is a very environmentally conscious band which does not hesitate to show the horrible truth of environmental damage to its audience. However, besides this radical position this analysis also points out that the band appreciates nature in its totality – a connection to Romanticism is present here – and wishes to bring awareness to people's minds.

### 3.4. Pop Music

Different to rock music which is thought to be more authentic and closer to art, pop music can be considered to be a softer and more arranged genre that is usually associated with young people (Middleton et al. 2014). Also the focus of the genre rather lies on entertainment and on selling records than on authenticity. These facts become underlined by Harron when she claims

[p]op stands for mutability and glitter ... and its value is measured by record sales and the charts. Pop is about dreams and escapism and ecstatic moments; it believes in clichés and its philosophy is ‘give the people what they want’. It is egalitarian by nature (qtd. in Middleton 2014).

This focus on maximising profits can be seen as the main characteristic of pop music. In this respect one also needs to see the recent development of some of its representatives in participating in charity projects; especially in projects interested in fighting for environmental issues. Therefore, the question why pop musicians become involved in this kind of charity is justifiable. The artists chosen for the analysis of this music genre are publicly displaying their concern about the pollution of the earth. However, the question if this concern is true or if this is just another PR strategy to maximise attention and, in consequence, profit cannot be answered satisfactory in this paper.

Therefore, the following analysis wants to point out the musician’s romantic perceptions of nature as well as the influence of these ideas on their creative work. On the other hand, this analysis wants to highlight possible other (commercial) reasons why nature finds its way into pop musician’s work.

#### 3.4.1. Sting

Like Willie Nelson or U2, Sting is a long and well-known member of the music industry. He started out as the bass guitar player and singer of the band *The Police*. After its split in early 1984, Sting is now a very successful solo artist. Not only his solo career but also his commitment to environmental issues, especially concerning the deforestation of the rainforests, has grown over the years. After seeing the destruction of the rainforests in the Amazon area first-hand, Sting and his wife founded the *Rainforest Foundation* in 1989 (“Who\_we\_are” 2013). With this foundation still running today and its success in 1993 regarding “legal

recognition for 37,000 sq miles of Amazonian territory for the Kayapo Indians” as well as being the name patron of a tree frog species – *Dendropsophus stingi* – (Pilkington 2008), Sting is without question one of those famous people who are really interested in saving nature. Nevertheless, one should not forget that Sting is a person of public interest who needs to stay in the public’s mind. It is, therefore, not surprising that his public plea for a stop of deforestation often go hand in hand with a release of a new CD (minutes 1:56 to 2:20 in the video “Campaigns To Save Rainforests-Sting on BBC” 2009).

Even though Sting is named a hypocrite by many people due to this above mentioned PR strategy, his creative work is, nevertheless, undoubtedly inspired by nature. This also becomes apparent in his song lyrics. One only needs to think of his famous song *Fields of Gold*. Even though the main theme behind the nature metaphors is a love story – “In his arms she fell as her hair came down / Among the fields of gold” (7-8) – the song is not only about this love per se but one can also detect a pastoral understanding of nature in it. As barley – which the song refers to by “fields of gold” – is used for nurturing purposes, the landscape which is consequently created by such fields of cereal perfectly represents such a pastoral understanding of nature as it visually represents the relationship between nature and culture. Here, culture is represented by the fields of barley. What is also interesting is the fact that like Jack Johnson, Sting uses the metaphor of the west wind to describe ongoing change – “You’ll remember me when the west wind moves” (*Fields of Gold* 1) – which stands for the constant change to which life is bound. Besides the understanding of the fields of barley being a pastoral landscape and the west wind representing change, the song also implies nostalgia for the past.

Many years have passed since those summer days  
 Among the fields of barley  
 See the children run as the sun goes down  
 Among the fields of gold  
 You’ll remember me when the west wind moves  
 Upon the fields of barley  
 You can tell the sun in his jealous sky  
 When we walked in fields of gold  
 [...] (*Fields of Gold* 22-29).

He clearly remembers a past summer in which the love story of the first stanza took place. Also the mentioning of the children running through the fields

at sunset implies nostalgia for the past. These children can even stand for his own childhood when he was running through such fields himself.

Another aspect that needs to be mentioned is the way the sun and the sky are referred to in this song. The last two lines imply the sun being jealous of the two people and their love. This is an obvious pathetic fallacy as the sun stands for other people being jealous for the love the couple shares.

In general, it can be said that Sting uses a lot of nature metaphors as well as pathetic fallacy in his songs. Therefore, an analysis of all his songs in which such items occur is not possible. However, the analysis of the two songs, *Love is the Seventh Wave* and *I was brought to my Senses* should give a rough overview on how Sting uses these elements in his songs. These songs further underline his close connection to nature. In the song *I was brought to my Senses* for example, a picturesque understanding of nature becomes visible.

The two birds did rise up to fly  
And where the two birds were flying  
I swear I saw you and I  
I swear I saw you and I (12-15).

Especially here, the equation of the singer and his lover to two birds suggests this sentimental notion represented by nature. Also the fact that birds are usually associated with freedom or adventure is important to note here as well as a romantic understanding of ‘true’ nature always includes wilderness, adventure, and freedom. Another interesting aspect of the song is the allusion to religion and spirituality: “For the first time I saw the work of heaven / In the line where the hills had been married to the sky” (*I was brought to my Senses* 18-19). The phrase “work of heaven” is a clear reference to a kind of god who created the world or nature.

Furthermore, this theme or association to a spiritual or mystic element outside of man’s perception is also present in the song *Love is the Seventh Wave*. Here, spirituality is present in the lines:

[...]  
Every ripple on the ocean  
Every leaf on every tree  
Every sand dune in the desert  
Every power we never see  
There is a deeper wave than this, swelling in the world  
There is a deeper wave than this, listen to me girl (7-13).

This enumeration of all rather small items in the world should emphasise his argument that behind all these things a bigger truth/meaning is hidden. I argue that this “deeper wave” is the fact that every element on this planet is connected to each other. In consequence, everything and everyone is part of a bigger entity which is nature; all is part of or belongs to nature with no species controlling it. Of course, this mystic element in the songs must also be seen in the light of Sting’s personal believe system as he is known to be a very spiritual person with a soft spot for Yoga.

Returning to the romantic notion of nature, the title of this song is also of interest as it is a play on words/a pun that uses the phrase ‘seventh heaven’ which means being completely in love. Sting replaces the word ‘heaven’ with the word ‘wave’ to make it fit the theme of the song. Of course, this metaphor of love being a wave is also a sublime understanding of nature where the ocean of love is too deep for any human being to understand; which is true for the real oceans, as well, as no one actually knows how deep they are or what kind of creatures live in these depths.

A short look on the CD artworks further points out that Sting is heavily influenced by nature. In all the covers chosen, Sting is placed in a rather silent as well as meditative environment in which he is the only hint towards human existence. This means that one usually sees him thinking or contemplating within an idealised environment. For example, on the cover to the CD *If on a Winter’s Night ...* (fig. 32) Sting walks along a snow-covered road through the woods with his dog. In comparison to the trees which occupy most of the space, he is depicted rather small which underlines the importance of nature to him as well as mankind’s insignificance in comparison to the environment. One even feels that Sting and his dog are intruders that take away nature’s purity even though this cannot be true as the road on which they are walking has already been there before and definitely had a more profound impact on this environment and it’s purity than Sting and his dog. However, the idea of purity and untouched nature is also underlined by the colours present in the photograph. Here, the main colours used are white and blue which can also be understood as colours standing not only for chilliness but also purity. Nevertheless, the idea of walking one’s dog in a place like this suggests a bond between the singer and this location or nature as such. Besides the theme of the photograph, the atmosphere created by it is a calm one

which implies that nature is a place of relaxation and spirituality; where one can find to oneself again.



Fig. 32. CD Cover *If on a Winter's Night ....*



Fig. 33. CD Cover *Sting: The Best of 25 Years.*

The other cover chosen is the one of his Best-of Album *Sting: The Best of 25 Years* (fig. 33). Here, the viewer only sees Sting from behind while he is standing in a lake, knee-deep in water only wearing pants and his acoustic guitar. This time, the photograph is kept in b/w. What is especially interesting in this cover is the fact that there is no trace of movement in it besides the small waves on the surface of the water which suggest that Sting moved his legs before the photograph had been taken. Besides this trace, everything else is still. Further, even though one does not see the other side of the lake or the surrounding that frames the lake, the viewer, however, sees the reflection of it on the water. This helps to locate the scene in a larger environment which must be, according to the reflections, an area abundantly covered with vegetation. In consequence, the location of the lake within an untouched environment suggests not only a closeness to nature, it further conveys an atmosphere of spirituality as well as of creativity, as Sting seems to find inspiration in this landscape. This is, of course, further emphasised by him holding his acoustic guitar. Additionally, the atmosphere created by the photograph is also an intimate one which is suggested by the point of view held by the viewer. The photographer's perspective is a tilted one that looks down on the artist which must be the result of the photographer standing on the edge of the lake looking down on Sting. This fact as well as the

actuality that the singer does not wear a shirt and, further, him standing in the lake also underlines an intimate situation which the viewer is allowed to participate in from a voyeuristic position.

To complete this section, the video to the song *Whenever I Say Your Name* which is a duet with R&B singer Mary J. Blige needs to be mentioned. The most striking fact when watching the clip is the seemingly binary opposition between the two singers emphasised by Mary J. Blige only being shown within a city environment while Sting is shown in more romantic settings such as a small house at a lake or while walking through an autumn landscape. Especially interesting here is the fact that Sting and not his female partner is shown within nature even though usually nature is associated with femininity. I argue that this has been done consciously to emphasise Sting's vulnerability which he expresses through the lyrics, as well. Besides these binary oppositions of man/woman and nature/culture, also the way nature is presented to the viewer or rather what aspects of nature are shown are interesting as well. The clip opens with a long shot of a lake scene. The camera pans from left to right to introduce the setting to the viewer followed by a medium close-up of Sting who is apparently standing in front of this lake scenery, singing his song. Interestingly, while he sings the shot fades out and what the viewer sees next is flowing water full of sea weed. In the next shot, the camera even shows the viewer a close-up of the sea weed and its movement in the water. This moving sea weed has, of course, a picturesque touch to it floats elegantly; in addition, it is a reminder of (landscape) paintings in which water plays an important role such as for example *Ophelia* by Sir John Everett Millais, which has already been discussed earlier. However, also the fact that Sting is further shown playing his acoustic guitar in a Spanish manner while seemingly thinking of and longing for his love interest underlines this romanticism. In another shot, Sting is shown singing in front of a background that shows a red flower on the left while on the right side a solar eclipse is presented to the viewer. This background brings spirituality to the video as solar eclipses have always been mystical as well as frightening phenomena for people. This mysticism is repeated in the shots where Sting mysteriously lies on top of the moving sea weed without getting wet. However, what is also fascinating is the way spiritual symbols also found their way into the video. Mostly, they appear as part of the background when either Mary J. Blige or Sting sing. This not only



links up the association of love being a mystical thing to Sting's personal believe system, but also with the consideration of nature being a place of spirituality.

In total, the nature that becomes represented in Sting's work is mostly a mystical/spiritual or a pastoral one. Nevertheless, it is always a place of retreat, love, and inspiration.

### 3.4.2. Coldplay

With being one of the worlds most famous and praised pop bands, Coldplay is known to everyone who listens to the radio. Even though the band is very successful, it is one of a handful of bands that is interested in changing the world in terms of social as well as environmental aspects. Besides having donated ten per cent of the band's profits to charity since its existence (Rose 2012), Coldplay even announced recently that its next album will be the world's first carbon neutrally produced long player ("Coldplay" 2013). These examples show that Coldplay is seemingly concerned about the environmental damages done to this planet and, therefore, wants to minimize its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as well as support organisations that are working for the protection of the environment. However, it is of course not easy to find out if this commitment is a true one or if the band only uses a current trend in environmental charity to gain publicity; especially when being aware of the fact that even the singer of the band, Chris Martin, equates his charity work with every other kind of advertisement: "'It's just the same as when you see ... Britney Spears advertising Pepsi ... I'm confident in the *product* we're advertising [...]"' (emphasis added; Lee-Potter 33).

Besides the charity work, romantic nature also found its way into the band's creative work; for instance in its song lyrics. Here, nature is used as a metaphor to describe feelings or problems.

To my surprise  
And my delight  
I saw sunrise  
I saw sunlight

I am nothing  
In the dark  
And the clouds burst  
To show daylight (*Daylight* 1-8).

These lines perfectly outline the use of nature to describe inward processes and feelings. Here, Martin sings about love which is being described as the sun or the sunlight without which he would be nothing. It is interesting that love becomes equated to the sun as the latter one is probably the most important aspect when it comes to maintaining or creating new life on this planet, as every living thing depends on it. Bearing this fact in mind, love, in this song, is seen as an absolute necessity for (a beautiful and fulfilled) life.

Also in the song *Twisted Logic* the sun becomes an important metaphor: “Sunlight opened up my eyes” (1). Here, the sun represents the moment when one realises something. In this case, it is the fact that nature is endangered. This is also alluded to by the next line of the song: “Created then drilled and invaded” (*Twisted Logic* 18). This line refers to the fact that mankind is exploiting all natural resources of this planet. This is, of course, a very ecocritical aspect which is unusual when bearing in mind that the pop genre is usually interested in entertaining its audience rather than in criticising current environmental political situations. Also in the song *Clocks* such ecocritical lines can be found.

Come out upon the seas  
Cursed missed opportunities  
Am I part of the cure?  
Or am I part of the disease? Singing (15-18).

Here, Martin sings about missed opportunities which could have improved the current situation of environmental pollution or could have helped to slow down climate change. He is further contemplating about his position or his role in this complex situation; he is wondering if he can help improving this situation or if he is just part of the problem.

In the song *The World turned upside down* the topic of criticism towards humanity’s treatment of its environment is strongly represented as well. However, Martin also points out that every being on this planet is connected to and part of its surrounding and environment.

[...]  
The land, sea, rivers, trees, the stars, the sky  
That and this  
We’re part of a bigger plan  
Don’t know what it is  
Don’t know what it is (2-6).

Even though this idea of a bigger plan is a religious thought, this stanza, nevertheless, underlines the fact that everything on this planet is linked to each other. This notion is especially highlighted by the enumeration in the first line. Also the second line, by mentioning “That and this”, implies that not only what has been listed in the first line but also other items are part of nature. In the last stanza criticism and cynicism are presented to the reader/listener again:

And you don't know that you've been born  
 Can't see the calm until the storm  
 Can't tell your right side from your wrong  
 Can't see the wave you're riding on  
 (*The World turned upside down* 40-43).

These lines describe the inability to assess the consequences of one's doing. Especially the last line strongly refers to this by using the metaphor of riding on a particular wave without seeing it and knowing where it might take you. Also the storm metaphor in the second line hints in the same direction by saying that at first everything seems fine but in the end the consequences will be devastating.

Not only do Coldplay's song lyrics use nature references or metaphors. Also the following CD artworks were inspired by nature. The artwork for the EP *Left Right Left Right Left* (fig. 34) is a good example when it comes to nature references. Here, one sees a green butterfly on a black background in the middle of the artwork while the name of the band as well as the title of the CD are placed right underneath the butterfly in blue colour.



Fig. 34. EP Cover *Left Right Left Right Left*.

This artwork instantly reminds one of a paper cutting technique which makes it possible to create entirely symmetrical designs with only one cut at the

folded edge – called *Faltschnitt* in German. It is also interesting that the design of a butterfly has been chosen for the cover instead of another symbol more appealing to the title of the EP which rather suggests some kind of militaristic artwork with its repetition of the same words. However, a link to a romantic perception of nature is definitely given as butterflies have always been a curiosity especially for children – with its birth as a caterpillar followed by turning into a cocoon out of which the beautiful butterfly emerges. It is this naïveté and fascination for the miracles of nature which become visible in this artwork as well as the sublime understanding of nature that goes hand in hand with such a fascination for nature's ways.

This perception of nature being sublime is also visible in the CD artwork of the single *Yellow* (fig. 35). Here, as the name of the song already provides a colour spectrum, the colours used for the cover are a dark yellow or orange and white.



Fig. 35. Single Cover *Yellow*.

The cover is further interesting as the sun seems to back-light a dandelion. It appears as if this little dandelion stands alone on a clearing where the rising or setting sun lightens this plant with its last rays of light for the day. Like the butterfly discussed with regards to the EP cover *Left Right Left Right Left* (fig. 34), the dandelion does also go through a kind of metamorphosis; from the bright yellow, sun-like plant changing to the fluffy, greyish dandelion which children love to pick and blow all its grey seeds off/away. It is, therefore, also this fascination with nature and its creativity when inventing such unique creations that is implied in this work of art. What is further interesting is the fact that a

sunset, in general, is perceived as being the most majestic and romantic time/event. This is especially true for couples in love. However, as such a sunset marks the end of a day while at the same time gives hope for a new day to come after a cold and dark night, the natural cycle of day-night-day is alluded to here, as well. Therefore, the feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and hope felt when looking at the image are normal even though consciously aroused here by the artists.

The best example of a Coldplay video in which nature plays an important part is definitely the clip to the song *Paradise*. Here, the main plot is about an elephant who manages to escape from London Zoo to return to Africa to see his family/friends again. He flees right at the beginning of the video and travels by underground, plane, and by unicycle – to afford this vehicle, he earned money by dancing on the street – to see his friends again. As this elephant is the singer, Chris Martin, in a costume – he once takes the head of his costume off due to the immense heat in Africa – the underlying theme of a hard journey to return to one's family and friends becomes the main topic in this clip. Interesting for this paper is the fact that long shots as well as other shots of nature and the landscape appear frequently in the video. The clip already starts with four long shots of various African sceneries. In the first, we see a single tree in the right corner standing on an otherwise seemingly deserted plain while the morning sky in the background occupies most of the shot. Before the shot ends, however, a bird leaves the tree and flies across this scenery. As no other animals are present in this shot, this bird suggests life in an otherwise meagre landscape. The second shot shows an open prairie while the sun manages to shine through a thick layer of clouds. Meanwhile, in the foreground, at the bottom of the shot, the viewer is shown a herd of cattle crossing the landscape from the right to the left corner. The following third shot shows a very typical and romantic view over the African land at the end of which the sun rises. The last shot, however, shows the wild herd of cattle again. This time, it is a medium shot of the herd which is walking past in the foreground while being lit by the red rising sun from the background. These shots not only introduce the topics of romantic African landscape to the viewer, they also function as introductory elements for the music label, the director, the band, and for the title of the clip. These introductory shots do not only show a beautiful and very picturesque sunrise, but also a landscape which is not only a meagre and

rough one, but which is, nevertheless, full of life e.g. bird, cattle herd. During the clip, there are many shots that underline this theme of a rough, meagre but still beautiful landscape, for instance when Martin is cycling on a highway through this prairie. However, when Martin finally finds his friends, this romantic clip is interrupted by a change of setting to a stadium concert where the band is performing in front of thousands of fans still wearing parts of their elephant costumes. Nevertheless, in the last shot the band is running through the African landscape again. They are running in full costume towards the camera which is itself moving backwards during sunset. This again underlines this picturesque idea of African nature.

Of course, one has to bear in mind that the African continent has always been fascinating for so-called western or 'civilized' man. Like the American landscape, also the African flora and fauna were perceived as places of wilderness, adventure, and untouched nature where civilized man could return to its roots and gain inspiration. This notion is also used in the video clip to the song *Paradise*. However, this idea is not taken seriously but the director rather plays with it as well as with the emotions evoked by the clip in the viewer.

While the video to the song *Paradise* is a good example of how picturesque understandings of nature can influence creative work, what is also striking is the fact that this is the only video clip by Coldplay which deals with nature and the environment. This and also the fact that nature references on the level of lyrics are only found in the previously discussed songs, in consequence, underline the fact that the pop music genre is rather interested in entertainment than in raising awareness for important social or political topics. Even though one can believe that Coldplay is actually interested in supporting charity projects because of the cause they represent, it should not be left unnoticed that the band also profits from such a commitment.

Summing up, even though not doing so very frequently, Coldplay uses nature references in its work of art. When mentioned or used, it is usually a picturesque as well as sublime understanding of nature that found its way into the band's work. Nevertheless, also criticism regarding the environmental situation can be recognized in the band's work.

### 3.4.3. Maroon 5

Maroon 5 is one of today's most famous and popular pop bands, especially after releasing its big hit *Moves like Jagger* and the vote of the singer, Adam Levine, to become People Magazine's Sexiest Man Alive 2013 (Jordan and Coulton 2013). However, the fact that the band is strongly involved in supporting non-governmental organisations that are interested in saving the environment is a fact not known to everyone. Maroon 5 even won the EMA Futures Award for its commitment to the environment in 2006 (EMA-staff 2013). Like all the other bands and artists referred to in this paper, Maroon 5 seems to feel a strong responsibility towards nature which is visible in the band's support of various organisations, for instance *Reverb* or *Global Cool*. This commitment leads to the question, if there is a connection visible in the band's creative work and nature. Different to the previously discussed musicians, with Maroon 5 it becomes obvious that its interest in environmental issues is more a tactic to gain attention than actual interest in the cause. This becomes visible when analysing the band's work; traces of nature or the environment are hardly visible. This is especially true for the song lyrics, as most of them deal with love, sex, and having fun than with criticising humanity's treatment of nature or the exploitation of natural resources. One, therefore, needs to consider the possibility that Maroon 5's interest in nature is just a PR strategy to gain publicity.

However, nature can still be found in the lyrics of two songs and in one video clip. The lyrics that suggest a connection between Maroon 5 and its environment are those of the songs *Fortune Teller* and *Sunday Morning*. In the former, nature is used metaphorically as the following lines point out:

But I just think we should just stay  
Stuck in the moment today  
And as the seasons roll by no matter how hard I try  
Summer will end and the leaves will turn again (11-14).

These lines can be seen as representative for the whole song as it deals with a romance coming to an end. Even though nature references are very thin, nature is used here as a metaphor for the end of this love by describing the natural cycle of life/love. Here, the cycle is referred to by the mentioning of the seasons which cannot be stopped and the fact that summer is always followed by autumn which is indicated here by the mentioning of the turning leaves. Of course, this reference

to nature is used metaphorically to describe the ‘natural’ cycle of a love relationship at the end of which the death of love is always found – autumn that is followed by winter. However, even though not mentioned in the text, the death of one love can also be understood as the possible birth of another. Therefore, hope is appropriate.

Using nature as a metaphor to describe feelings is also done in the song *Sunday Morning*. Here, fighting and changed moods become equated to a storm and weather in general: “Back and forth we sway like branches in a storm / Change the weather still together when it ends” (18-19).

Also in the band’s video to the song *Runaway* nature is again used as a vehicle to describe feelings. The main plot of the video is a man surfing on the sea while remembering his (former) girlfriend which is suggested by the intercuts showing that girl. Here, the wild sea in front of the Irish coast stands for the surfer’s emotions as he is confused, angry, and sad all at the same time. Not only does the clip represent the main character’s emotions, it also wants to provide evidence of Maroon 5’s supposed connection to nature, especially to the ocean. It is interesting that the band chose this particular location or theme to visually represent its song, especially as this is the only music video of the band that first, does not include any member of the band and second, that suggests such an intense connection to nature.

The landscape shown to the viewer is a rough sea coast at which heavy waves brake. It is a sublime landscape, as it is beautiful but at the same time dangerous and frightening. This understanding is supported by the way pictures of the landscape and the rough sea are shown in the clip. The atmosphere is further underlined by the colour of the light. It is a bluish light which not only suggests early morning but also points to the protagonist’s emotions, especially to his loneliness as the intercuts of the girl, on the other hand, are filmed in a warmer light which suggests comfort, happiness, and love. Also the fact that the girl is lit from the back and the fact that this back-lighting produces a halo on her head further underlines the idea that these scenes with the girl are the surfer’s beautiful memories. Another interesting aspect is the fact when the protagonist is first shown in the music video already wearing his wetsuit on his way to the sea. In the end, on the other hand, he returns from his surfing experience fully clothed, carrying the wetsuit. This suggests that the surfing at the sea in general represents



a trip to the man's emotions and thoughts from which he returns stronger and steadier than he was before the surfing session. Summing up, the clip uses nature or a particular landscape to support or describe an emotional state. In addition, it is a place of solitude where man can let his feelings and thoughts flow.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, it is difficult to analyse Maroon 5 and its creative work without noticing that this involvement into campaigns of saving the environment only seems to be a PR strategy than actual interest into the topic. Still, it is, of course, not possible to clarify if this is actually the case in this paper due to its brevity as well as due to the focus of this paper on romantic perceptions of nature in popular music. However, one can assume as there are hardly any traces of nature in the band's music or artwork, that Maroon 5 uses this current hype of being green to up-value its image.

#### **4. Conclusion**

As referred to in the introductory part of this paper, the aim of this project was to draw a connection between the romanticist understandings of nature and popular music. This was successful as every artist discussed in this paper has an idea of nature which is clearly inspired by romanticist thought. It does not matter to what music genre one artist is thought to belong to, all of them share the idea of nature being a sublime as well as picturesque place which brings joy and peace to the individual. This fact is underlined by the presence of nostalgia in the work of many of the analysed artists; especially those musicians thought to belong to folk as well as country music share their longing for a return to a simpler lifestyle closely connected to nature. This does not only become evident when considering Willie Nelson's nostalgic view on country life, also Jack Johnson or KT Tunstall feel the need for a harmonic coexistence with their environment which includes a return to basic values and lifestyles. Even the Dave Matthews Band demands a return to a harmonic coexistence with the environment.

Besides that shared understanding of nature being a sublime place and the nostalgic view on the past way of living, also the concept of a picturesque nature plays an important part in popular music's understanding of the same. Especially when considering the visual representations discussed in this paper, this idea of picturesque landscapes becomes striking. Here, a connection between the discussed artworks, music videos, as well as homepages and landscape art of the

Romantic era can be drawn; especially since the idea of the picturesque emerged in that time period as well. However, particular attention should be paid here to Willie Nelson and his CD artworks discussed in this paper as well as to KT Tunstall's music videos and CD covers analysed. They do not only manage to represent nature in a sublime manner, but also chose particularly beautiful/picturesque landscapes for their visuals.

In this respect also the idea of nature being a mysterious and spiritual place full of wonders needs to be considered. This idea not only emerged when discussing Sting and his music, but also when having a closer look at Tunstall's as well as Coldplay's artistic work. In all of these cases, nature is perceived as a place of small wonders and miracles – see Coldplay's reference in its artwork to the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to a butterfly – which, in consequence, manages to inspire artists to their work. In this respect, nature is seen as a source of inspiration for artists in general.

Besides the concepts of nostalgia, the picturesque, and the sublime, also the idea of the pastoral could be detected during the discussion. Especially Willie Nelson, but also Sting used this concept in their music; while it is an ever-present idea in Nelson's work, it only appears at times within Sting's art. The latter one mostly uses it as a means of metaphor or as a setting for love stories in his songs while in Nelson's case this idea of the pastoral is closely linked to his nostalgia for a simpler lifestyle as well as to his praise of rural/country life.

Even though, as outlined in the introduction to this paper, the analysis managed to link natural elements in popular music to the era of Romanticism and its perceptions of nature and landscape, also the fact pointed to in the introductory part that these references might be PR strategies has become proved to some extent, as well. Although charity work is present in all music genres involved in this paper, especially pop music artists tend to use the current interest in environmental issues to gain publicity. Even though this paper could not proof that there is a connection between charity work and popularity or to a particular music genre, as it did not set out to do so, it was still able to highlight facts – like Sting's CD releases while visiting the indigenous people of the rainforest or Maroon 5's supposedly green touring while hardly ever mentioning environmental issues in its music – which could be used for further research on that connection.

Concluding, it must be mentioned that this paper was interested in giving an overview on the topic of romantic perceptions of nature in popular music. However, this discussion has shown that a more detailed and thorough analysis of this topic as well as of the topic of charity with regards to music genres and record sales is needed to answer the question of nature's influence on musicians, their creative work, and their image satisfactory.

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## 6. Appendix

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## **English Abstract**

Nature has always been a popular topic in literature and the fine arts, even before the romantic era. In these areas, the research of the term nature has been thorough. Unfortunately, this has not been done in the area of music. This is the reason why this academic paper is interested in the understanding of nature found in contemporary popular music. In detail, this paper wants to point out that a romantic understanding of nature in popular music is prevailing.

In a first step, the connection between nature or a romantic understanding of it and art becomes highlighted. Examples taken from literature, the fine arts, as well as from classical music help to underline this thesis. In addition, some romantic concepts like nostalgia, the sublime or the wilderness become discussed, as well. In the following, to prove the thesis correct, eleven musicians taken from four different music genres – country-, folk-, rock-, and pop music – are analysed. The focus of this analysis lies on nature's influence on the creative work of these chosen artists.

This discussion will lead to the conclusion that regardless of the music genre a musician is thought to belong to, a romantic understanding of nature can be detected in all the musicians' works. The reasons, however, why this is the case are varying; while, on the one hand, some artists are interested in displaying their strong connection to nature, others, on the other hand, use the current trend of nature awareness to gain publicity. Nevertheless the reason, a romantic idea of nature is present in all the discussed musicians' works.

## **Deutsche Zusammenfassung**

Nicht erst seit der Romantik ist Natur ein beliebtes Thema sowohl in der Literatur als auch in der bildenden Kunst. In diesen Bereichen ist der Naturbegriff gut und genau erforscht. Leider wurde dieser bisher jedoch in der Musik größtenteils außer Acht gelassen. Daher beschäftigt sich diese Arbeit mit dem Naturbegriff in der kontemporären Populärmusik. Genauer gesagt, ist diese Arbeit daran interessiert aufzudecken, dass besonders eine romantische Vorstellung von Natur in der gegenwärtigen Populärmusik vorherrscht.

In einem ersten Schritt wird ein Zusammenhang zwischen Natur beziehungsweise einer romantischen Vorstellung von Natur und Kunst aufgezeigt. Dies geschieht mit Hilfe von Beispielen aus der Literatur, der bildenden Kunst und aus der klassischen Musik. Auch werden einige romantische Konzepte wie Nostalgie, Erhabenheit der Natur sowie Wildnis thematisiert und diskutiert.

In weiterer Folge, um die angesprochene These zu belegen, werden elf Musiker aus vier verschiedenen Musikrichtungen, nämlich Country-, Folk-, Rock- und Popmusik, herangezogen und anhand des Einflusses dieser romantischen Vorstellungen von Natur auf ihr kreatives Schaffen hin analysiert. Dabei wird sich herausstellen, dass unabhängig der Musikrichtung eine romantische Idee von Natur bei allen Künstlern wiederzufinden ist, auch wenn der Grund hierfür sehr unterschiedlich sein kann.

Einige der zu analysierenden Künstler verwenden Natur in ihrer Kunst um ihre Verbundenheit mit dieser zu verdeutlichen, andere jedoch nutzen den gegenwärtigen Trend von Naturverbundenheit, um mehr Aufmerksamkeit auf sich zu lenken. Eines bleibt jedoch gewiss, bei allen Musikern ist der romantische Naturbegriff auffindbar.

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