

Introduction: Green Countercultures

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The Danish counterculture reached a high point on 29 May 1975, when approximately 400 men, women and children assembled on a windswept field near Ulfborg in West Jutland to begin construction on what would become the world's tallest (53 meters) and highest yielding (2 megawatt) wind turbine. While none of the assembled was a professional wind engineer, all were teachers, students or sympathizers of the countercultural Tvind organization. Tvind emerged during the late 1960s from a group of left-wing school teachers, whose unofficial leader Mogens Amdi Petersen had been radicalized by communal living and a bus trip to East Asia in 1967-1968. In 1970, Petersen co-founded the Travelling Folk High School (Den Rejsende Højskole), coalescing influences from Maoism, the Vietnam War protest movement, 19th-century Danish folk high schools, Jack Kerouac's Beat novel *On the Road* (1956) and the Russian reform educator Anton Makarenko. Tvind specialized in non-curricular teaching of troubled Danish youths, who as part of their teaching were enlisted in humanitarian aid projects in Africa and South and Central America. Tvind's idealistic cadre of teachers would pour their salaries into a collective fund, which would be used to purchase property and sponsor further charity, foreign aid and educational activities in Denmark, Europe and the third world.

Tvind's well-publicized windmill project signified on different levels. The group's lack of formalized leadership and reliance on volunteer amateur laborers registered an ideologically loaded protest against capitalist specialization, reflecting the organization's communitarian principles and dogged belief in learning-by-doing. Danish society had been stunned by the 1973 OPEC oil embargo, and the government's plan to put several nuclear reactors online by 1980 had galvanized widespread opposition from Danish greens. Once complete, Tvind assumed, the turbine would shelter the group against further shocks to the central energy supply system and allow inhabitants of the recently acquired Ulfborg headquarters to live off the grid. In addition, it was hoped that the project would act as a catalyst of more general social change, alerting the Danish public to the existence of more eco-responsible and democracy-friendly ways of life than those based on coal, oil, gasoline and plutonium.

Fiercely contested then and now, Tvind's turbine embodies the complexities, paradoxes, unresolved tensions, ideological delusions and unfulfilled utopian aspirations of the counterculture. After the windmill's completion in early 1978, the daily newspaper *Politiken* printed an ode penned by Thorkild Bjørnvig, the poet laureate of Danish deep ecology, who was well-known for writing gloomy technophobic diatribes against the evils of modern progress. In "Tvindmøllen" ("The Tvindmill"), however, Bjørnvig strikes a more upbeat note, presenting a techno-pastoral vision reminiscent of

Richard Brautigan's "All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace" (1967). Although it has a "cherubian wingspan" (58), Bjørnvig insists, the Tvindmill differs profoundly from other manifestations of modern technological gigantism. Far from reflecting some corrupt regime or corporation's grasping for power, Bjørnvig holds, the Tvindmill has emerged from the grassroots, and is an expression of popular desire for another way of life. Bjørnvig echoes Martin Heidegger's reasoning in "Die Frage nach der Technik" ("The Question Concerning Technology," 1954), suggesting that windmills can somehow tap into nature's resources without riding roughshod over it. Thus, by converting wind's elemental opposition into positive energy, the Tvindmill signals the hope that man can learn to coexist with nature in an unobtrusive and non-destructive way:

The wind, which first dried what was fruitful, but now loosens
the worn-out and poisoned soil,
whirls it up and away in dust storms
and leaves the sterile structures –
brings about the deadly erosion, which sweepingly uncovers
the hip socket and ribcage of the Earth.
The wind, which before drove all kinds of ships across the ocean,
and still fills the sails, but now just for pleasure
or for the distant and destitute inshore fishermen,
and turned all kinds of mills –
now finally brought to use again. (27-37, my translation)

In response to such pathos, skeptical commentators on the left and the right would object that modern wind turbines require a lot of energy to produce and maintain; that Tvind's top-down organization structure left little room for spontaneous experimentation; that the inner circle of Tvind leaders live in luxury while the rank and file practice extreme modesty; that Tvind has enjoyed generous support from the capitalist welfare state that it purports to scorn; and that the 1970s windmill builders never operated outside the structures of mainstream society, but relied heavily on free expertise supplied by Denmark's Technical University (Møller 94-106). In the 1980s and 1990s, Tvind morphed into an opaque political sect and transnational business conglomerate, as the enigmatic "Amdi" and his fellow inner circle members were accused (but never convicted) of brainwashing students, profiteering from third-world poverty, exploiting legal loopholes and defrauding the Danish authorities of vast sums of money. In 1996 the Danish parliament passed legislation excluding Tvind from applying for state support to run their schools. Tvind still divides and alienates, but the turbine at Ulfborg – that ambiguous symbol of the other way – continues to turn and produce electricity. Unlike most neighbor states, Denmark never went nuclear; instead, countercultural experiments à la Tvind helped boost the development of new technologies that made Danish wind corporations like Vestas world leaders, brought wind's proportion of Denmark's energy mix to 20% and allowed communities like the island of Samsø to declare itself energy- and CO₂-neutral in 2008 (Maegaard; Sønnichsen; Kolbert).

As Ramachandra Guha reminds us, "[t]he environmental movement is a child of the sixties" (4). The term "counterculture" was first put into public circulation by Theodore Roszak in his book *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969), which framed the

hippie movement of the 1960s in relation to previous manifestations of nonconformist dissent including the British Romantic movement at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Often traced more immediately to late-1940s and early-1950s Beat writers and artists like Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, the counterculture was not a unified phenomenon, let alone a movement with a coherent structure, worldview or set of priorities. In the introduction to their collection *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s*, Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle characterize it instead as “an inherently unstable collection of attitudes, tendencies, postures, gestures, ‘lifestyles,’ visions, hedonistic pleasures, moralisms, negations, and affirmations” (10). The sixties era’s dynamics of anti-bourgeois protest, bohemian lifestyle experimentation and socio-political activism played out differently across the counterculture’s iconic sites and events, from novelist Ken Kesey’s “acid test” parties at La Honda, California in the summer of 1965, to the protests at the wedding of the Dutch Queen Beatrix in Amsterdam on 10 March 1966, the Paris student riots of May 1968, the killing of student protesters and bystanders by Mexican army forces on October 2 1968 in the Tlatelolco section of Mexico City, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair in New York’s Catskill mountains on August 15-18 1969, the founding of Copenhagen’s Christiania commune on September 26 1971, and the terrorist campaign launched by the West German urban guerilla group Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction) during the “German autumn” of 1977.

Even so, a heightened awareness of nature and an investment in ecology underpinned many actions and expressions by otherwise disparate groups of American hippies, Scandinavian squatters, Mexican “jipitecas,” German “Spontis” and “Stadtindianer” (“urban Indians”), French “soixante-huitards” (“sixty-eighters”) and Dutch “Kabouters” (“pixies”). A key moment in Kesey’s influential novel *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962) occurs when the Native American first-person narrator “Chief” Bromden, who has been institutionalized since World War II, surveys how profoundly the land has changed in his absence:

All up the coast I could see the signs of what the Combine had accomplished since I was last through this country, things like, for example – a train stopping at a station and laying a string of full-grown men in mirrored suits and machined hats, laying them like a hatch of identical insects, half-life things coming pht-pht-pht out of the last car, then hooting its electric whistle and moving on down the spoiled land to deposit another hatch. . . . Or things like five thousand houses punched out identical by a machine and strung across the hills outside of town, so fresh from the factory they’re still linked together like sausages, a sign saying “NEST IN THE WEST HOMES – NO DWN. PAYMENT FOR VETS,” a playground down the hill from the houses, behind a checker-wire fence and another sign that read “ST. LUKE’S SCHOOL FOR BOYS” – there were five thousand kids in green corduroy pants and white shirts under green pullover sweaters playing crack-the-whip across an acre of crushed gravel. (205-206)

Positing images of totalizing and totalitarian otherness – Kesey’s “Combine,” Ginsberg’s “Moloch” (21-23), Roszak’s “technocracy” (1-42) and Lewis Mumford’s “megamachine” – counterculturalists protested and resisted the process of de-naturalization that they saw reflected in various trends including the misguided use of chemicals and pesticides such as DDT, the substitution of healthy local diets by highly processed industrial foods, the

development of wild natural areas for mass tourism, the suburbanization of cities across the western world and especially the US war in Vietnam, which was widely perceived as a “war against nature” (Rome 542). Counterculturalists bought into, and strengthened, the discursive equation of “nature” with immediate and authentic experience, in opposition to the racism, sexism, moralism and commercialism of their parents’ generation and the “one-dimensional thought and behavior” (Marcuse 14) characteristic of Cold War western societies generally. Socially, ethnically or culturally marginalized groups – including American Indians, Mexican migrant workers, Vietnamese peasants, Greenland Inuits, hobos, gypsies, clowns, fools and circus artists – served the counterculture as redemptive exemplars of “rooted” existence and nonalienated, self-determined labor. Generally favoring intuitive, utopian and sometimes mystical modes of engagement over scientifically and sociologically rigorous analysis of environmental issues, counterculturalists unashamedly partook of what some Marxists have called “romantic anti-capitalism” (Lukacs 19).

At the same time, young sixties people were quick to understand, embrace and deploy the new discourse of interconnectedness, fragility and whole system thinking that was captured by J. Buckminster Fuller’s metaphor of “Spaceship Earth,” James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis and the iconic photo of Earth seen from space (“Earthrise”) featured on the cover of Steward Brand’s first issue of the *Whole Earth Catalogue* (fall 1968). Counterculturalists revived old forms of “anthropotechnics” (Sloterdijk) and devised new “technologies of the self” (Foucault) including homesteading, Buddhist economics, organic, biodynamic and macrobiotic gardening, vegetarianism, voluntary simplicity and yoga. Preferring hands-on activities to disinterested theoretical critique, they charted innovative routes towards the self-sufficient earth-centered life touted in a new genre of do-it-yourself building manuals and self-help guidebooks including Lloyd Kahn’s *Domebook* (1970) and *Domebook 2* (1971), Alicia Bay Laurel’s *Living on the Earth* (1971), Jacques Massacrier’s *Savoir revivre (Another Way of Living)*, 1973), Nancy Jack Todd’s *The Book of the New Alchemist* (1977) and John Seymour’s *The Self-Sufficient Gardener* (1978). Remarkably, it is estimated that by the early 1970s approximately 750,000 people in the United States lived in more than 10,000 rural communes, with similar “alternative” living experiments mushrooming in countries including France, Holland, Germany and Denmark (Miller xx).

One of the more poetic slogans of the May 1968 Paris riots was “sous les pavés, la plage” (“beneath the cobblestones, the beach”). Precisely how and to what extent the counterculture overlapped with the nascent environmental movement needs to be studied in much further detail, but some idea can be gained from the way in which student activists, including the German Joschka Fischer, the Dutch Roel van Duyn, the French-German Daniel Cohn-Bendit and the Czechs Vaclav Havel and Milan Horáček, rose to become leading Green politicians. Then, too, ecological tropes, concerns and anxieties permeate the counterculture’s experimental aesthetic production in both elite and popular genres. The conceptual artist Joseph Beuys, who co-founded the German Green Party in 1979, used felt, fat, honey and other symbolically charged natural materials to catalyze psycho-social-environmental transformation processes, while the

Austrian Friedensreich Hundertwasser drew, designed, built and theorized humus toilets, celebrating the composting of human feces as a form of ecological alchemy. With the 1965 “Witte Fietsenplan” (“White Bicycle Plan”), members of the Dutch avant-garde group Provo fused life and art, asserting that “[t]he white bicycle symbolizes simplicity and healthy living, as opposed to the vanity and foulness of the authoritarian car” (qtd. Stansill and Mairowitz 27). Films like Dennis Hopper’s *Easy Rider* (1969), Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Zabriskie Point* (1970) and Alain Tanner’s *Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l’an 2000* (*Jonas Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*, 1976) connected intergenerational conflict, libidinal emancipation and back-to-nature activism with varying degrees of commercial and critical acumen and success. Wannabe Indians like the Danish poet Vagn Lundbye in *Smukke tabere* (*Beautiful Losers*, 1970) and white shaman figures like the American Gary Snyder in *Turtle Island* (1974) hybridized western literary genres with non-western ceremonial and ritualistic forms believed capable of healing the rift between culture and nature. Ecological protest bands and singers including Joni Mitchell, Marvin Gaye, Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead tested the ambiguous strategy of using electrically amplified rock music to launch pastoral critiques of runaway technology (Perowne 143-149; Phull 103-109). And novelists like Aldous Huxley and Ernest Callenbach penned “ecotopian” novels in which the achievement of a “natural” way of life comes to hinge, somewhat paradoxically, upon the practice and mastery of complex forms of *askesis* including meditation, yoga, Tantric sex, ritual war games and the ingestion of psychedelic drugs.

According to a familiar saying, if you remember the sixties, you probably weren’t there. Until recently, academic work on the counterculture was undertaken primarily by participants in the movement, writing from necessarily somewhat biased perspectives and often focusing disproportionately on the American (and more specifically Californian) scene. As a recent slew of books and articles suggests, however, scholarship on 1960s era radicalism shows little sign of abating, even as baby boomers retreat from the scene. Indeed, the recent upsurge in scholarly interest in the counterculture is part of a reassessment driven in many cases, though not exclusively, by a younger generation of scholars writing from more distanced and sometimes explicitly revisionist viewpoints. Braunstein and Doyle’s *Imagine Nation* (2002) broke new ground by challenging both neoconservative declensionist narratives of the sixties and the self-heroization implicit in much scholarship by countercultural insiders. The editors of *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture*, all born between 1964 and 1970, call for analyses that enlist a broader spectrum of actors than the usual hippies, yippies, diggers and Students for a Democratic Society members, breaching the narrow US-UK axis to explore new perspectives including “the transnational diffusion of ideas and images” and “the forging of political and cultural alliances across national boundaries” (Varon et al. 5). Recent books and articles foreground the countercultural agency of women and sexual and ethnic minorities, mapping currents of influence and exchange that destabilized entrenched power structures not only in North America, Great Britain and western Europe but in Mexico, Brazil and Israel as well (Dunn; Frankel; Lemke-

Santangelo; Smith; Zolov). In short, the moment for historicizing what Arthur Marwick calls “the long sixties” period from ca. 1958 to ca. 1975 seems to have arrived.

Countercultural tropes and ideas inflected the work of first-generation ecocritics, some of whom were (and are) themselves veterans of “the movement.” Ursula K. Heise and Allison Carruth position contemporary ecocritics and other environmental humanists in a “double struggle – against the concepts and stories that have enabled environmental degradation in the past and against impartial (and imperfect) ideas about nature in environmentalist thought and writing itself.” Trends within countercultural studies dovetail with the development of more (self-)critical forms of second- and third-generation ecocriticism, inspiring us to recollect the sixties, rethink what they mean to us and reassess how we use them in our work.

Ecocritically reconsidering the counterculture means confronting “green” beliefs, concepts and practices that have lost persuasiveness and usefulness in the transition from the age of “nature” to the age of “sustainability.” To pick an egregious example, the geodesic dome popularized by Buckminster Fuller in the sixties focalized mounting concerns with energy efficiency, wise resource use and “ephemeralization” (doing more with less) (*Nine Chains* 252-259). Covering a maximum of space with a minimum of materials, Fuller claimed, the geodesic dome had unique value for civilization because its tetrahedron units reproduced “nature’s essential building blocks” (qtd. Kahn, *Shelter* 108). Fuller’s twentysomething acolytes routinely contrasted rectangular with curved structures, the latter promising a much-needed realignment of human lives with the natural world. For Peter Douthit (aka “Bill Voyd”) of the Drop City commune in Colorado, for example, dome inhabitation equaled “not sheltering ourselves from our natural environment but learning to live with it”:

To live in a dome is – psychologically – to be in closer harmony with natural structure. Macrocosm and microcosm are recreated, both the celestial sphere and molecular and crystalline forms. Cubical buildings are structurally weak and uneconomic. Corners constrict the mind. Domes break into new dimensions. They help to open man's perception and expand his approaches to creativity. The dichotomy between utilitarian and aesthetic, between artist and layman is broken down. (157-158)

Unfortunately, geodesic domes also proved virtually impossible to waterproof, furnish, subdivide or just inhabit in any meaningful way, and most stood ruined and abandoned by the mid-1970s. Politically perceptive ecocritics will be cognizant of countercultural ecologism’s more sinister aspects, revealed in the homicidal song writer and cult leader Charles Manson’s slogan ATWA (an acronym for both “Air, Trees, Water, Animals” and “All The Way Alive”). Likewise, they will want to query key aspects of sixties-era romantic xenophilia, including counterculturalists’ fondness for “playing Indian” and their frequent positing of a monolithic “West” defined by materialism, rationalism, dualism and anthropocentrism over against an “East” characterized through spirituality, holism, pacifism and biocentrism (Deloria 154-180; Mortensen). Lapsed Harvard professor and LSD prophet Timothy Leary famously enjoined participants in the “Human Be-In” at San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park on January 14, 1967 to “turn on, tune in, drop out.” We, however, should beware of basing critiques of consumerism on aesthetic transgression, expressive subversion and other varieties of “hip” lifestyle

individualism, heeding persuasive claims that the counterculture and commercial society emerged in tandem and always-already fed upon each other (Frank; Heath and Potter).

At the same time, however, we have already witnessed how historicized readings of the sixties can also render little-regarded aspects of this culturally creative and politically tumultuous period newly meaningful. Deeper understanding of the counterculture, I suggest, assists us in “imagining the outlines of different and more positive and future-oriented ways of thinking and writing for environmentalism” (Buell et al. 435). In his *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry*, for example, Warren Belasco directs attention from sex, drugs and rock’n roll to the counterculture’s network of free kitchens, food cooperatives, community farms, organic farmers’ markets and vegetarian and ethnic restaurants. One key tenet of the 1960s “countercuisine,” highlighted by Belasco and worth recollecting today, was that environmental reform did not have to be austere and abstemious, but quite properly should be personally satisfying, sensuous and even fun: “Natural foods were safer and tastier; wild greens were hardscrabble staples and gourmet treats. . . . Exercise and dieting made you a better street fighter and lover. Fasting confronted the system and made you high” (43). Writing in a similarly vein, scholars like Andrew Kirk and Fred Turner have recently been turning with renewed attentiveness to the “whole earth” or “appropriate technology” movement that evolved during the 1960s and 1970s in California and elsewhere from the efforts of countercultural engineers, designers and grassroots activists. These long-forgotten “tool freaks” deserve our interest, it is argued, because they disputed the discourse of technological alienation prevalent among romantic environmentalists, and because they recognized that human innovation is central to any vision for an environmentally sustainable future. Far from simply maligning “the machine,” countercultural appropriate technologists labored not only to reduce humanity’s harmful environmental impact, but to reconfigure technology as an agent of positive environmental, social and political change. They adumbrated a humanity- and modernity-centered post-wilderness model of environmentalism that resonates with the dilemmas that we face in our increasingly resource-impoverished, rapidly warming and densely populated world. According to Canadian architecture critic Mirko Zardini, the situation we confront today – energy crises, environmental problems and the need to make better use of resources – mandates that we “start by retrieving those experiments that a large group of people who ‘thought differently’ produced over three decades ago, and that were once so hastily and thoughtlessly cast aside” (49).

The essays in this special section of *Ecozon@* adopt green perspectives on key cultural documents from the sixties, opening up new conversations about the counterculture’s powerful but ambiguous ecological investments. The first essay, Susanna Lidström’s “Different Shades of Green: A Dark Green Counterculture in Ted Hughes’s *Crow*,” considers a countercultural eco-mythologization constructed out of historical, literary and philosophical fragments. While Hughes is often viewed as belated follower of the English Romantics and D. H. Lawrence, Lidström positions him squarely as a writer of the sixties, who uses every trick in the modern shaman’s book to counter

western modernity's desacralization of the natural world. Thus, Hughes' poetry collection *Crow* (1970) is shown to be dominated by prominent Earth Day era concerns including the risk of ecological catastrophe, the shortcomings of mainstream religion and the desirability of a "dark green" spiritual reorientation in the West – preoccupations that Hughes focalizes both by parodying Christian narratives and by creatively, but also problematically, appropriating non-Western cultural materials.

Another sixties figure who may be due for a reappraisal is the Californian Richard Brautigan, a poet and fiction writer whose errant lifestyle, flippant humor, faux naïf writing style and politically inchoate anti-establishmentarianism can seem, depending on one's perspective, to epitomize both some of the most and some of the least attractive features of the counterculture. Reading the postmodern anti-novel *Trout Fishing in America* (1967), Jill Anderson in "Blown away like apples by the fickle wind of the Twentieth Century': Counterculture Resistance and the Wilderness Condition in Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*" connects and compares Brautigan to other sixties radicals and to previous writers invoking "nature" and "wilderness" as redeeming antitheses to a hopelessly commercialized and mechanized present. Such valorizations have of course been *de rigueur* within certain kinds of post-romantic cultural critique, but Anderson finds that Brautigan articulates a more complex, ironic and questioning pastoral consciousness, as he self-consciously struggles to locate a safe and stable discursive site from which it would be possible to write back to the machine.

More than literature, it was above all popular music that crystallized the ethos of the counterculture. Not coincidentally, ecocritics have recently begun to think more carefully about popular music, for example by asking whether music has a special affinity with ecological ideas, and by considering what roles music can play in environmental protest and advocacy. In "Surf Aces Resurfaced: The Beach Boys and the Greening of the American Counter-Culture, 1963-1973," Dale Carter links the breakthrough of environmentalism to developments in sixties era popular music, bypassing widely celebrated environmental protest songs (like Marvin Gaye's "Mercy Mercy Me") and obviously ecologically-minded singers (Joni Mitchell, Pete Seeger or Country Joe MacDonald) to consider a band traditionally seen as more "square" than "hip." Carter shows how the late-sixties and early-seventies Brian Wilson-led Beach Boys, surviving multiple personal, commercial and artistic crises, maneuvered their way towards a fraught and compromised pro-environment stance. In taking mass-cultural artifacts seriously, this essay resonates with ecocriticism's general ambition to embrace a wider variety of genres and broaden the scope of scholarship beyond a narrowly defined literary canon. By exploring how a band synonymous with cars, surfing and consumerism can also be read environmentally, Carter like Lidström and Anderson raises key questions about the paradoxes intrinsic to "green" self-positionings in sixties culture specifically and in literature, music and culture more generally.

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