
Modern ecocritical movements in pop-culture: Songs as a medium of environmental concerns about urbanization in 1970s American radio hits

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Abstract

As an interdisciplinary study, ecocriticism has significantly influenced the recognition of ecological concerns within the cultural phenomena of literature, including popular narratives such as songs. The use of poetic narratives in songs to address ecological issues and agendas has garnered expansive interest in the social marketplace, driven by the interplay of natural, cultural, and political dialogues. This study employed Roland Barthes's semiotic perspective and Greg Garrard's ecocritical theory to analyze environmental themes in the lyrics of three songs: "Big Yellow Taxi" by Joni Mitchell, "Ain't It a Sad Thing" by Richard Dean Taylor, and "Apeman" by The Kinks. These songs, through their literary narratives, explored key ecocritical concepts such as pollution, animals, dwelling, and the earth, highlighting the impacts of urban life on ecological systems. Using a qualitative approach to interpret the data, the analysis reveals that, as early as the 1970s, environmental awareness of ecological damage was a recognized global concern. The lyrics serve as a medium of social critique, emphasizing the importance of harmony between humans and nature. Through their representation of the human-nature relationship, the songs contribute to an understanding of the interconnection between civilization and sustainability, promoting environmental ethics in managing the natural world. By projecting ecological issues within their narratives, the songs stimulate ecological awareness and underscore the urgency of addressing environmental challenges.

Keywords: *Ecocriticism; urbanization; pop-culture; semiotics*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid urbanization of cities has significantly contributed to complex environmental challenges on a global scale. The interplay between modern lifestyles and the natural environment has profoundly impacted both human and non-human life, altering their physical surroundings. In the United States, the 1970s marked a pivotal moment for ecological awareness, driven by growing concerns about environmental degradation. This era witnessed the emergence of the modern ecological movement, highlighted by the establishment of Earth

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Day, which transformed environmental issues into a national agenda and eventually a global movement (*EPA History: Earth Day*, 2024). The increasing damage to ecosystems during this period sparked critical discussions about the impact of urbanization and industrialization on human quality of life. Since then, environmental degradation—including air and water pollution, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and climate change—has continued to escalate, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable solutions.

Recent research has consistently demonstrated that human activities are the primary driver of long-term climate change (Fourth National Climate Assessment Chapter 2: Our Changing Climate, 2017). Studies conducted in 2020 further highlighted the substantial role of human actions in environmental destruction by applying basic physics, analyzing observations, and identifying distinct patterns of human influence on natural systems. (National Research Council, 2020). The 2024 Emissions Gap Report warns that global temperatures are projected to rise by 2.6–3.1°C within this century, a consequence of failing to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions (UNEP, 2024). This alarming trajectory places humanity, the planet, and all living organisms at severe risk. It is clear that human activities in natural surroundings are critical determinants of the current and future state of the physical environment.

Nowadays, deforestation is not being controlled or minimized but instead accelerated by the growing urbanization of the developing world. The world's development continues the consumption of products that impact forests. With more individuals clearing land for agriculture and commercialization, Central America experienced the highest rate of deforestation throughout the 1960s and 1970s (Ortiz et al., 2022). The demand for food and energy has increased in Central America over the past 30 years, prompting national authorities to utilize natural resources for energy generation and agricultural development (Ortiz et al., 2022). On a global scale, South America is the highest region for regional deforestation, where in Peru, the rate of net forest loss from 2000 to 2020 was up to 3.4 million hectares (Móstiga et al., 2024). The rapid growth of net forest loss in this region has been further accelerated by several factors contributing to deforestation and forest degradation, including large-scale agriculture, logging, and land settlements. The indigenous populations and biodiversity ecosystems within the forests gradually disappear due to increased urbanization, farming, and the intensification of climate change.

The issue of environmental degradation has occurred for decades, yet the solution produced no significant results. The lack of situational awareness of the ecological surroundings within the dominant society enforces environmental degradation, where they play roles at the critical layers. Urbanization is one of the main reasons why or how the effects of dominant society are crucial in the long term of the human-nature ecosystem. The central alarm of this phenomenon is the need for more awareness and understanding of the community on how valuable their physical environment is. The major challenge in this situation is to change society through patterns that require effective movements. One of the ways is through narratives. Literature plays an essential role in narrating social issues. Thus, the importance of narratives in spreading knowledge and awareness in this discussion led to the uprising of the modern ecocritical movement in literature. Literature conveys the significance of its

existence by giving knowledge and real pictures of the social and environmental issues in human's physical surroundings. In line with the definition of literature, it is a form of human expression (Armstrong, 2018). Therefore, the importance of literature in expressing the critical agenda on the ecological situation is crucial.

As an interdisciplinary study, literature has moved forward in connecting the dialogue between nature and humans. The ecocriticism study appeared in the conversation to answer the challenges in understanding the environmental concepts concerning humans by eliminating the gap between the situation occurring in the physical environment and literature (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). The recognition of ecocritical concern in the 1970s has reached the expansive interest in the domain of the vast literature narrative products such as songs. As one of the literary products, songs in the 1970s successfully showed their position and capability in the domain of literature as a pop-culture product in presenting social, cultural, and political issues. Songs have become one of the most pervasive narrative forms people frequently encounter daily (Negus, 2012). The participation of songs in the broader cultural dialogue was captured in the 1970s American radio hits (Kim Simpson, 2011). With this modern ecological movement, the value of environmental narratives in human understanding of cultural and social phenomena in their surroundings is widely recognized through songs.

Due to the popularity of ecological dialogue within the poetic narratives in the songs, the massive scale of the theme of environmental concern managed to take over the music charts on American radio hits in the 1970s (Kim Simpson, 2011). Kim Simpson (2011), in his book with the title *"Early '70s Radio: The American Format Revolution."* mentions that there are several social, political, and cultural phenomena that stimulate the creative writing processes of songs that emerged in the 1970s, including environmental themes. The earth-centered themes that emerged in songs in the 1970s era seem to have a special place in captivating the creative process of songwriting. Songs such as *"Big Yellow Taxi"* by Joni Mitchell, *"Ain't It a Sad Thing"* by Richard Dean Taylor, and *"Apeman"* by The Kinks are some songs that mention several ecological concerns. These songs mainly talk about the effects of urbanization, such as pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss.

The great enthusiasm regarding environmental awareness comes not only from the songwriters but also from the listeners. The song *"Big Yellow Taxi"* is a Grammy-winning music by Joni Mitchell released in 1970 (Rufo, 2024). This song entered the U.S. Billboard chart at #24 after the live version was released in 1975 (*LyricFind U.S.*, 2019). On the other hand, the song *"Apeman"* by The Kinks peaked at #45 on the Billboard Hot 100 (McGinnis, 2019). The song *"Ain't It a Sad Thing"* became one of the hits by Richard Dean Taylor that peaked at #66 on the Billboard chart (*Chart History R. Dean Taylor*, n.d.). With the massive enthusiasm for ecological themes in American radio hits in the 1970s, these three chosen songs particularly mention the environmental destruction of urban development. Interestingly, the messages in these songs still relate to the current situation. Therefore, the discussion about ecocritical concerns from the literary point of view will examine how ecology was projected through songs in the 1970s. The spread of cultural phenomena such as environmental concern

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in the domain of the vast literature narrative through mass media provides access to knowledge with a broader range of audiences.

In the 1970s, the popular strategy of utilizing songs to raise awareness of environmental issues became a noteworthy technique in attracting significant outcomes. However, the awareness of preserving environmental issues through songs shows no significant results in today's environmental situation. The sustainability of the ecosystem is still declining. It is rare to discover musicians who write about environmental issues these days. The intensity of the song's appeal on contemporary online platforms and traditional ones like physical album sales does not indicate listeners' interest in environmental issues as expressed in the lyrics. For example, the songs "*Earth*" by Lil Dickey and "*All the Good Girls Go to Hell*" by Billie Eilish are songs about environmental concerns that managed to get on the Billboard charts in 2019 (*Billboard*, 2019). However, the popularity of these songs is only based on the artist who sings the song, not on the song's ideologies. Even after the songs' popularity, the world is still heading towards environmental destruction.

Literature Review

Previous studies have explored ecological concerns in music, including the songs analyzed in this research. Joni Mitchell's "*Big Yellow Taxi*" and The Kinks' "*Apeman*" are frequently recognized as seminal examples of American popular music that reflect the rise of environmental awareness and countercultural movements protesting the flawed practices of mainstream society (Connolly et al., 2016; Kahn, 2014; Rivers, 2019). However, these studies often differ in focus. For instance, Connolly et al. (2016) examined the relationship between concert ticket prices and the cost of carbon credits. while Kahn (2014) explored how various music genres, including classical, folk, rock, metal, hip-hop, and children's songs, serve as tools for environmental activism. Talhelm (2021) analyzed song lyrics as poetic forms, highlighting "*Big Yellow Taxi*" as an example of a one-part song (AAA form) with a rhyming pattern. Similarly, Čapek (2012) investigated green architectural designs inspired by socio-ecological perspectives, drawing on Joni Mitchell's lyrics, particularly the iconic phrase "*paved paradise.*" These studies collectively underscore the cultural and ecological significance of music in fostering environmental awareness, yet they vary in methodology and thematic emphasis.

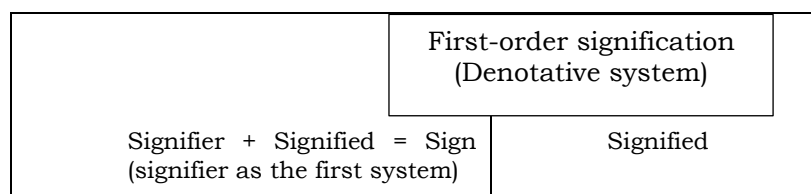
The representation of environmental concerns in songs emphasizes the social-environmental context by referring to the cultural perspective of how one form of music is more 'natural' or 'ecological' than any other by looking at the music's affinity to eco-philosophy between the context-dependent or socially relative portrayed through the significant role of cultural construction (Barradas & Sakka, 2022; Manjin, 2024; Park & Lee, 2024; Schippers & Bendrups, 2015). The focus on eco-linguistics analysis has been conducted to deeply interpret the underlying messages behind the song lyrics of how the more-than-human universe is portrayed in the songs through the use of personification, naming, and activation, as well as the usage of metaphors, appraisal patterns, and salience patterns (Ghorbanpour, 2016; Jismulatif et al., 2020).

At the time this research was conducted, the analysis in understanding the modern ecological concern in 70s American radio hit songs such as Joni Mitchell’s “Big Yellow Taxi” and The Kink’s “Apeman” was conducted, where Richard Dean Taylor’s song “*Ain’t It a Sad Thing*” has not been conducted. However, the textual approach, such as Barthes’s semiotic perspective and an ecocritical theory by Garrard to analyze in-depth the connection of social representation that appears in the environmental narratives in these songs remains unexplored. Therefore, the discussion in this research analysis aims to examine how the three chosen songs of the object analysis emphasize the social-environmental context and stimulate ecological awareness in terms of the human-nature relationship.

METHOD

The qualitative descriptive method, as outlined by Creswell (2017), was employed to analyze the data for this research. This approach facilitated an in-depth examination of the data, enabling the identification of meanings and interpretations from verbal or visual elements to support the findings. Accordingly, the discussion involved a detailed analysis of the lyrics from the three selected songs, focusing on their representation of environmental awareness. By emphasizing the relationship between humans and their ecological environment, the analysis adopted a subjective lens to explore how the lyrics reflect and promoted ecological concerns.

Roland Barthes’s semiotic theory provides a framework for understanding how the signification process emerges within the narrative of song lyrics. Derived from the Greek word **semeiotikos**, meaning “the study of signs” (Jadou & Ghabra, 2021), semiotics examines the relationship between signs and their meanings. In Barthes’s work, this process was structured into two orders of semiotic systems: denotation and connotation. Drawing from Ferdinand de Saussure’s concepts of the **signifier** (the form of a sign) and the **signified** (its meaning) (Bouzida, 2015), Barthes expanded the theory to include a second-order system. Denotation refers to the explicit, direct meaning of a sign, while connotation involves a deeper layer influenced by ideology, social, or cultural contexts. Through the process of connotation, myths were constructed, embedding cultural or ideological meanings into signs (Griffin, 2012). In this system, denotation acts as the foundational level, serving as the signifier for the second-order system of myth or connotation.



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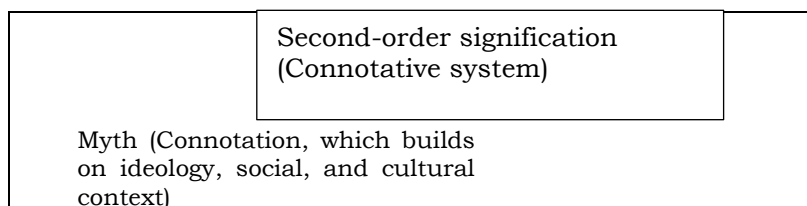


Figure 1. Connotation as a Second-Order Semiotic System (Griffin, 2012).

In examining the literary point of view of the social-environmental context, which was the environmental destruction of urban development in the chosen songs, the theory of Ecocriticism by Greg Garrard will be used in interpreting the eco-lyrics of this research analysis. Garrard's Ecocriticism theory elaborates on the environmental issues such as pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss caused by the urban development in the city portrayed in the three chosen songs; *"Big Yellow Taxi"* by Joni Mitchell, *"Ain't It a Sad Thing"* by Richard Dean Taylor, and *"Apeman"* by The Kinks. Garrard's Ecocriticism theory explained six key concepts, such as pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animals, and the earth, in understanding the ecocritical concepts that portray the relationship between humans and the environment in all areas of cultural production (Garrard, 2004). Garrard's concepts of environmental awareness helped the researcher elaborate on the song's central idea of ecological degradation caused by human activities, particularly the effect of urbanization on pollution, biodiversity loss, and deforestation. Therefore, the signification process of the songs' lyrics using Barthes's connotative system enables the discussion of the data interpretation to be strengthened with Garrard's ecocriticism to view how the song's ideology performs through the social-environmental context.

DISCUSSION

In this part, the discussion of the three chosen songs, *"Big Yellow Taxi"* by Joni Mitchell, *"Ain't It a Sad Thing"* by Richard Dean Taylor, and *"Apeman"* by The Kinks, is divided into three sub-discussions for each song. Garrard's Ecocriticism and Barthes's semiotic studies are used in discussing the research question: how does environmental awareness in the social-environmental context of the eco-lyrics from the songs portray the effect of the ecological destruction of urban development? The impact of urbanization on pollution, biodiversity loss, and deforestation in the songs will be the main focus of the analysis using four of the six Ecocriticism concepts from Garrard's theory. The four concepts of Garrard's Ecocriticism theory used in this research are Pollution, Dwelling, Animals, and Earth. All of Garrard's six concepts in Ecocriticism are not applied to the analysis discussion because the interpretation process will look in depth at the most significant concepts of Garrard's Ecocriticism presented throughout the lyrics of the three chosen songs. Thus, the textual analysis enables the social-environmental issue to appear in the research data.

Datum 1: Ecocriticism in *"Big Yellow Taxi"* by Joni Mitchell (1970)

The song *"Big Yellow Taxi"* by Joni Mitchell shows the characteristics of Garrard's Ecocriticism concepts on Pollution, Dwelling, Animals, and Earth.

This song was released in 1970, which was the year when significant ecological concerns took place (Earth Day Movement), and influenced the majority of discussions of global environmental issues, especially in America. The issues of pollution, biodiversity loss (animals), globalization on postmodern social thinking from the economic point of view (Earth), and urbanization (dwelling) are portrayed in the social-environmental awareness in the eco-lyrics of the song. Here are the following lyrics of the song:

*They paved paradise and put up a parking lot
With a pink hotel, a boutique,
and a swingin' hot spot
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'til it's gone?
They paved paradise, put up a parking lot
They took all the trees, put 'em in a tree museum
And they charged the people a dollar and a half
just to see 'em*

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

*Hey farmer, farmer, put away the DDT now
Give me spots on my apples
But leave me the birds and the bees, please
(Wihangga & Imanda, 2021)*

In Garrard's concept of Pollution from the Ecocriticism theory point of view, environmental destruction and redemption illustrate the conflicting roles that science plays as both a creator of environmental risks and a critical observer (Garrard, 2004). From the first-order signification (denotative system), the lyrics with the line "*Hey farmer, farmer, put away the DDT now*" perform as a reference for the chemical usage during the present time of the song, which is DDT or Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane. In this context, DDT appears in the line to represent concern and awareness, where this interpretation is performed as the connotative signification. DDT is a persistent organic pollutant prohibited in 1972 due to the regulation of the health and environmental effects (*DDT - A Brief History and Status*, 2024). Since 1996, countries drafted a convention to impose worldwide bans or limitations on persistent organic pollutants (POPs). This category includes DDT, under the guidance of the United Nations Environment Programme. With the understanding of Garrard's concept of pollution, DDT, from an ecocritical perspective, this particular line reflects the ambivalent role of science as the producer of environmental danger and as the critical analyst of environmental awareness. The social-environmental context depicted in this line shows how this song pictures ecological awareness through the lyrics. Modernization in managing agricultural land using DDT shows how urban society constructs the balance of the environmental ecosystem to the effect toward plants and animals. The representation of social-environmental issues from the pollution concept in this context is performed as a protest for the incorrect practice of human living. In line with the previous researchers, "Big Yellow Taxi" is one of the songs that stands as a countercultural movement (Connolly et al., 2016; Kahn, 2014; Rivers, 2019). In this research, the understanding of the countercultural movement from the song appears in multiple forms, such as the protest against organic pollution and the promotion

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of ecological sustainability. The concern within the external surroundings is shown by using an environmental sustainability perspective. To some extent, using Barthes's connotative system, the representation of DDT in the song, which appears as a criticism of man's way of living, is also performed as a gesture of ecological awareness that manifests through the ideological stands of the song.

The concept of Animals in Garrard's Ecocriticism through environmental awareness is portrayed in the song "*Big Yellow Taxi*" by Joni Mitchell. Garrard (2004) states the moral responsibility of animal rights delivered throughout the ecological consciousness. From the first-order signification, the line "*But leave me the birds and the bees, please*" denotes the link between the line that mentions DDT and corresponds to the moral responsibility of the birth and the bees (animals) as the social-environmental context of the song. The ecocritical issues on the persistent organic pollutants (DDT) led to severe damage to the ecosystem. Therefore, the second-order signification of this line is presented as the calls for ecological awareness by asking for deep cooperation on DDT or Dichloro-Diphenly-Trichaloroethane. The animals represented in this song are not used as the symbolization of what so-called figurative language as the rhetorical style of narratives; instead, it is used to quote the real issues that involve the effects of DDT on animals, one of which is birds. The lines "*Don't it always seem to go. That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?*" perform as the effect of urbanization, which in the discussion shows how the biodiversity loss in humans' natural surroundings occurs because of the human's activity itself. Therefore, the line "*paved paradise*" constitutes human activity (deforestation), which causes environmental damage in urban areas.

The song lyrics also show the Dwelling concept from Garrard's Ecocriticism. According to Garrard (2004), the dwelling figure is essential because it inflects nature as the troubled ground of life, knowledge, economy, and responsibility. Therefore, the interpretation of environmental awareness in ecocriticism led to the critique of the relationship between humans and nature. In Garrard's concept of dwelling, a significant task for ecocritics invested in a cultural evaluation projection, which is primarily political rather than moral or spiritual (Garrard, 2004). The interpretation of the various types of dwellings was oriented towards the surrounding political sphere and not only centered on the general concept of nature writing. The denotative signification from the ecology of the song shows how the line "*paved paradise*" references the metaphor of the construction of urban development in the natural environment. The connotative signification of this line is referencing the social-environmental context that occurs in the song. This line shows how nature is described as paradise in the interpretation of the long-term imbrication of humans in a landscape of memory, which refers to a beautiful, peaceful, and harmonious place. Figures of speech are used here to emphasize the concept of Dwelling, which is present in the eco-social point of view of the song lyrics. The eco-social perspective from this line shows when the environmental surroundings are idealized as 'paradise' to highlight the deep connection of awareness and appreciation of nature. Thus, stating 'paved paradise' refers to a critique that evokes a sense of commitment demand from humans toward their influence of ecological destruction, which has become unbeautiful, unpeaceful, and

unharmonious. The line 'paved paradise' is a critique directed at the dominant society with the ability or the power to change (pave) the natural surroundings.

The other standpoint shown in the song is the recognition of the postmodern social thoughts of globalization from the economic point of view. Garrard defines the concept of Earth as the entirety of its parts and its concerns, including the ozone layer, climate change, global warming, and other environmental issues (Garrard, 2004). Garrard (2004) separated the Earth's concept into two significant arcs. The first inflection is the "globe," which originates from the main concerns of postmodern social thought, globalization, and the Earth from an economic and technological standpoint. The second is Gaia, a name from the ancient Greek Earth-Goddess, which describes the Earth as an automated system similar to living organisms. From the first-order signification, the line "*They took all the trees, put 'em in a tree museum, And they charged the people a dollar and a half just to see 'em*" signifies the postmodern social thought of globalization from the economic point of view. The social-environmental context of the line refers to the urban development that led to the ecological issues of capitalism in environmental management in the modern era. At the second-order signification, this line signified the critique toward nature that has been objectified and materialized as a commodity consumption for humans. Thus, this line appears countercultural, which is also performed to stimulate environmental awareness among the audience—to rethink how decisions are made. Is it based on ecological sustainability—or the dominant society's materialist view of nature? Therefore, the signification of the song demonstrates a deeper level of environmental consciousness which is the long-term sustainability of the human-nature ecosystem.

Datum 2: Ecocriticism in "Ain't It a Sad Thing" by Richard Dean Taylor (1971)

Richard Dean Taylor's song "Ain't It a Sad Thing" demonstrates the concepts of Gerrard's ecocriticism theories around Pollution, Dwelling, Animals, and the Earth. The song was released in 1971, at the peak of global concern over environmental issues. The use of eco-lyrics to elaborate on the social-environmental situation is shown between the lines of the song. Here are the following lyrics of the song:

*Big brown tin can Lying in the black sand We used to lie there and
watch the day*

*Now the leaves have all turned to grey
Down by the river where the river don't flow
We can't go there no more*

*Down by the river where the river don't flow
The birds don't sing, ain't it a sad thing*

*Little child upon my knee Holds a picture of a tree
Tears in his eyes say where'd they all go
The tears in mine say I really don't know*

*Listen to the wind blowing over the land
Listen to the reasons that you don't understand
Reach out and take my hand and we'll run, run, run, run*

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*Cities eating up the land
Progress eating up the planet
The writing's in the slime on the sewer wall
You better look see or we're all gonna fall
(Ain't It a Sad Thing, 1970)*

The representation of environmental awareness appears in the form of eco-lyrics, which dominate the line in the song. From the first-order signification, the use of figurative language such as personification and metaphor denotes to emphasize the intention and purpose of the song. The eco-lyrics here are used as the medium to construct the social-environmental context underlying the narrative between the context-dependent or socially relative ecocriticism point of view. According to Garrard (2004), the focus of the ecocriticism concepts on Pollution, environmental destruction, and redemption illustrate science's conflicting roles as both a creator of ecological risks and a critical observer. Therefore, the song's first verse with the line “*Big brown tin can. Lying in the black sand. We used to lie there and watch the day. Now the leaves have all turned to grey*” can be indicated as a critique of the effect of pollution. According to the Ministry for the Environment, some forms of pollution can be found in urban areas, such as air, water, and land (*Environment Aotearoa 2019, 2019*). Thus, the line shows how human productions that appear in the black sand (in the land) damage the natural surroundings. The urbanization effect portrayed in this song appears in the discussion about the environmental damages from human production toward the ecosystem. The emphasis on land pollution constitutes a reference to the incorrect practice of human ecological management of nature. The second-order signification appears in this context and shows how the representation of urbanization often leads to expanding industrial operations, which results in ecosystem degradation. In this sense, the ecological situation appears in the narrative of the song performed as the critics' statement about the imbalance of human activity between development and sustainability.

In Garrard's concept of Animals, figurative language, such as personification and metaphor, from the literary ecocriticism point of view, is a sign used to understand the philosophical examination of animal rights and the portrayal of animals from historical and cultural perspectives. Garrard's concept of Animals describes the two distinct areas of study in the humanities related to the interaction between humans and animals. The line “*The birds don't sing, ain't it a sad thing.*” uses personification to describe the social-environmental situation in the song. The romanticism of natural surroundings uses the birds as the medium of the rhetorical narrative, contributing to examining the conditions and damages in the ecosystem. In his book, Garrard (2004) discusses animals, which alludes to using animals as political symbols in referring to social-environmental issues. Thus, the eco-lyrics indicate that the personification of “*the birds don't sing*” in this song successfully pictures the use of animals as the figurative language in the environmental awareness of Garrard's Ecocriticism perspectives. The line signified the effect of urbanization on the ecosystem, causing biodiversity to become only a memory of the past.

The alienation between the human-nature relationship is the result of urbanization. This representation is projected through the development of industrialization that causes disconnection to the natural ecosystem. The materialized perspective in viewing nature fosters the overconsumption of natural resources. The Dwelling concept from Garrard's Ecocriticism argues that people are continuously embedded in a landscape of memories that inflects nature as the troubled ground of life, knowledge, economy, and responsibility (Garrard, 2004). Therefore, the line "*We used to lie there and watch the day. Now the leaves have all turned to grey*" and "*Little child upon my knee. Holds a picture of a tree. Tears in his eyes say where'd they all go. The tears in mine say I really don't know*" shows how the unsustainable ecological systems create gap between human and nature. The nostalgic representation of the previous harmonious nature in line 'holds a picture of a tree' is interrelated with environmental and social issues surrounding the song lyrics. Not only is it signified as the alienation of societies from their natural ecosystem, but the social-environmental sphere presented in the eco-lyrics of the song produces the interpretation of political, social, and economic views on humans' complex ethical and moral values toward the natural surroundings. The nostalgic portrayal of the ecosystem in the song shows that the dwelling appears in the intrinsic aspect of the romantic eco-lyrics in the narratives. This song reflected the effect of urbanization on deforestation and industrialization. In this context, the song highlights ecological injustice and affects both nature and humans. The ecological injustice accumulated by the dominant society appears as a sign of the loss of ethical and moral values toward nature.

According to Garrard (2004), "Earth" in the perspective of Ecocriticism refers to the environmental awareness of the planet's entirety and its challenges, including ozone depletion, global warming, climate change, and other environmental issues. In the division of the Earth's view concepts, the inflection presents the "globe," which originates from the primary problems of postmodern social thought, globalization, and the environment from an economic and technological point of view. Postmodern social thought of globalization from the economic point of view on the concept of Earth in Garrard's Ecocriticism is represented throughout the song in lines "*Down by the river where the river don't flow*" and "*Cities eating up the land. Progress eating up the planet.*" The contribution of urbanization and industrialization toward climate change is portrayed in the song. The lines signify the effect of human activities on the environmental damage of natural surroundings. The metaphor used in quoting urbanization and industrialization, such as "progress," signified the paradox of globalization leading to the ecological damage eating up the planet. The representation of global warming shows how the effect of urbanization results in changes in river flows. Thus, the dry river is the outcome of global warming, which is compounded by human activities. The materialized perspective toward nature has broadly affected climate change, where the degradation of river ecosystems emerges and manifests from the human activities that are eating up nature for granted. The critics of global warming in this line appear as the reference for the dominant society by notifying how the impacts of poor decision-making could lead to the high risk of environmental issues for both humans and nature.

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Datum 3: Ecocriticism in "Apeman" by The Kinks (1970)

The Kinks' song "Apeman" presents the environmental concern that covers Garrard's Ecocriticism theory of concepts on Pollution, Dwelling, Animals, and the Earth. The satirical style of narratives is shown in the song lyrics. Eco-lyrics are seen in the use of personification figures of speech and metaphors in communicating the message of environmental awareness of the song. In the social-environmental context, the lyrics mention many layers of ecological destruction caused by urbanization. Here are the following lyrics of the song:

*I think I'm sophisticated
'Cause I'm living my life like a good homosapien
But all around me everybody's multiplying
'Til they're walking round like flies man
So I'm no better than the animals sitting in their cages
In the zoo man
'Cause compared to the flowers and the birds and the trees
I am an ape man*

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

*"In man's evolution he has created the city and
The motor traffic rumble, but give me half a chance
And I'd be taking off my clothes and living in the jungle"*

*'Cause the only time that I feel at ease
Is swinging up and down in a coconut tree
Oh what a life of luxury
To be like an ape man*

*I look out the window, but I can't see the sky
'Cause the air pollution is a-fogging up my eyes
I want to get out of this city alive
And make like an ape man
Come on and love me
Be my ape man girl
And we'll be so happy
In my ape man world I'm an ape man*

*I don't feel safe in this world no more
I don't want to die in a nuclear war
I want to sail away to a distant shore
And make like an ape man
(Wihangga & Cyntara, 2021)*

The representation of ecological critics of human activities appears in the discussion about air pollution. The concept of Pollution by Greg Garrard's Ecocriticism theory on environmental awareness is portrayed in the song lyrics with the line "I look out the window, but I can't see the sky, 'Cause the air pollution is a-fogging up my eyes." This line signifies how air pollution has become one of the environmental issues in urban areas. The representation of air pollution as an ecological issue signified how the song tried to address the interconnected

relationship between development and sustainability. The statement of air pollution appears in the narrative of the song performed as the critics of human activities that cause damage and unhealthy ecosystems for humans and nature. According to Garrard, the notions of ecocriticism about pollution center on the destruction and redemption of the environment—highlighting science's contradictory roles in creating environmental risks and acting as a critical observer (Garrard, 2004). From the song, ecological awareness is shown in the concern of air pollution—at the same time, it appears as the signification of how the dominant society has failed to create harmony in the ecosystem. The effect of modern urbanization signifies the production of environmental pollution. The ecological awareness of this line is directed at the dominant society by addressing social and environmental justice—for humans to be free from air pollution and for nature to be free from the damage of human activities.

The representation of ecological concern in terms of biodiversity appears as the manifestation of urbanization, which eliminates the habitats and ecosystem of animals. Garrard's concept of Animals states that figurative language, such as personification and metaphor, from the literary ecocriticism point of view, is used to understand the social-environmental context of animal rights and the portrayal of animals from historical and cultural perspectives. The lines "*'Til they're walking round like flies man. So I'm no better than the animals sitting in their cages. In the zoo man 'Cause compared to the flowers and the birds and the trees I am an ape man*" signified how the song describes the idea that the modern world people live in is essentially no different from a zoo, which could theoretically be seen as a prison. Using animals mentioned in the song as the figurative language of speech produces the interpretation of determining man through the lens of their environmental surroundings. The repression toward animals in line, 'animals sitting in their cage' refers to the real issue where animals are forced to be placed in unnatural habitats. This line is performed as the understanding of how animals are also experiencing displacement from their natural habitats. The lyrics highlight the position of humans and nature in the ecosystem using a reverse psychological situation. Reverse psychology is a common strategy used in popular culture that can significantly influence people's decision-making processes by maintaining their sense of freedom (Pailhes & Kuhn, 2023). Thus, using reverse psychology, such as framing the people's way of living in their external surroundings, shows how "Apeman" by The Kink wanted to develop ecological awareness by exposing environmental situations—referencing how humans treated nature. The recognition of the relationship of humans to nature and nature to humans led to the understanding that humans and nature constructed the meaning of life for each. From the second-order signification, the ideological determination of the lyrics shows how the human-nature relationship has no boundaries, which explains how preserving natural sustainability is interconnected with preserving human life. The representation of how man is referenced as 'apeman' signifies the political standpoint of the lyrics, which stand for nature through humans. Thus, the narrative shows how humans are part of nature.

The complex social and environmental issues represent the human-nature relationship. The ecological concern of the song occurs in the signification of the interconnection of human urbanization in terms of displacement. Environmental awareness in the concept of Dwelling of Garrard's

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Ecocriticism is projected from the lines *“Til they're walking round like flies man. So I'm no better than the animals sitting in their cages. In the zoo man.”* The representation of ‘zoo man’ in the lyrics produces the interpretation of the symbolization of humans and nature's relationship in the ecosystem, which is the conflict between civilization and nature. Apart from showing the relationship between humans and nature, the lyrics also interpret the view of a place to live, namely the human world, which is not much different from a zoo. Therefore, ‘zoo man’ can be signified by the feeling of connection to the natural world. However, the representation of displacement also occurs in the discussion of animals ‘sitting in their cage’ and humans referred to as ‘zoo man.’ The disconnection of animals in their natural worlds is used to represent humans’ way of living, which, from this song, humans are part of nature that no longer have freedom in their habitats. The lines *“But with the over-population and inflation and starvation. And the crazy politicians. I don't feel safe in this world no more”* show how the interrelated environmental and social issues appear in the discussion of dwelling from a complex eco-political and eco-social perspective. From this song, urbanization, and industrialization are seen as the social-environmental context in the lyrics. The critics of the human way of living appear in the representation of ecological destruction in the form of irony between human civilization and nature.

In the Earth concept from Garrard’s Ecocriticism point of view, the song arises from the main issues of postmodern social thought about urbanization and globalization. The representation of the postmodern issue appears in the lyrics of the song’s attempt to rethink the effect on the environmental surroundings from an economic and technological point of view presented by the inflection in the division of Garrard Earth's conceptions in Ecocriticism. The lines *“In man's evolution he has created the city and, The motor traffic rumble, but give me half a chance, And I'd be taking off my clothes and living in the jungle”* portrayed the influence of urbanization that affects the environmental ecosystem that replaces land to become a city, which means this action led to the destruction of the surrounding environment, such as animals and plants. Therefore, this condition can be signified by the acknowledgment that high mobilization occurred due to the effect of urbanization, which led to the interpretation of ozone depletion and global warming. In this context, the critics of the human way of living in the postmodernism era arise in discussing the human decision-making process in managing civilization and sustainability. The representation of humans, moreover, the dominant society in terms of decision-making processes, is a significant factor that produces and performs environmental issues.

CONCLUSION

Within the ecocritical framework, songs have represented humans and nature as the medium for communicating environmental challenges. As the medium to vocalize environmental awareness in the natural surroundings, songs successfully picture the primary concern due to human activities as the effect of urbanization. The Ecocriticism theory by Greg Garrard helps examine the environmental awareness in the lyrics of the three songs analyzed. Urbanization, as the social-environmental context in the song lyrics, leads to

various recognitions of ecological damage in natural surroundings. Each song discusses the same central area from the effect of urbanization, such as deforestation, climate change, and global warming, and the eco-social and eco-political issues related to environmental concern.

From the previous studies, the acknowledgment of the songs “*Big Yellow Taxi*” by Joni Mitchell and “*Ain't It a Sad Thing*” by Richard Dean Taylor appears as a form of a countercultural movement. However, along with the song “*Apeman*” by The Kink, the three songs also promote environmental awareness by delivering hope for protecting the environment by quoting the real issues and agenda that appeared at that time. The lyrics delivered messages about environmental awareness about urbanization's effects on deforestation. The figurative language in the eco-lyrics of the song occurs due to addressing the ecological damages, which affect not only the natural world but also humans as part of nature. The displacement of humans and nature in the ecosystem creates disconnection, which forms the feeling of alienation between humans and nature. Therefore, the songs appear as a countercultural movement that also produces ecological awareness among people. The songs stimulate people to rethink their decision-making process by including themselves in the narrative as part of nature.

AUTHORS' STATEMENTS

Dewi Sekar Arum: conceptualized the research, designed the methodology, wrote the manuscript, and conducted the data collection and research analysis.
Bastian Zulyeno: supervised and reviewed the manuscript

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Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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