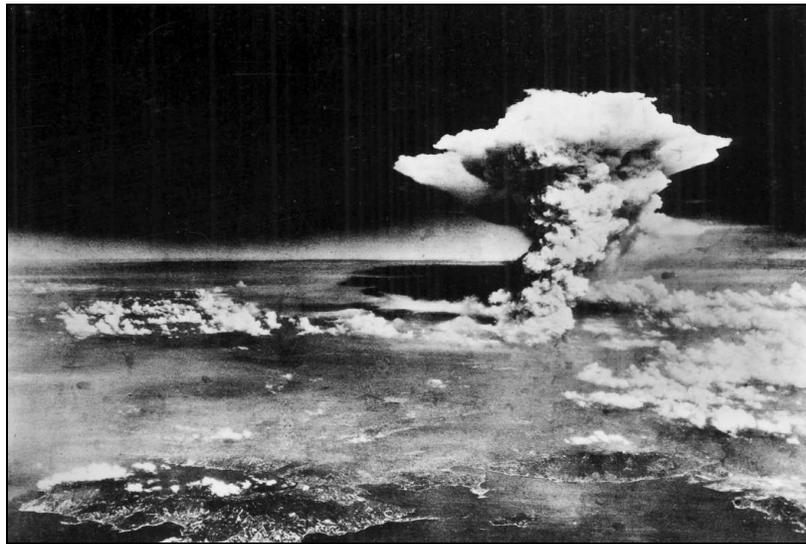


We now consider the way that poetry gave voice to the post-war years. This period of time had received its name from Auden's 1947 poem *The Age of Anxiety*. People found the world as difficult to understand as the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists. Emotions ran high and reason was not always in control. People worried that the world might end. Anxiety differs from fear in that its source is not clearly understood. The overwhelming anxiety of the post war years derived from our not being able to see whence our final annihilation might come.



The photograph shows the mushroom-cloud of the atomic-bomb explosion over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The bomb was dropped from the *Enola Gay*; the photograph was taken from a special observation plane called *Necessary Evil*. About 70,000 people died immediately and an equal number died in the next few months.

### The Cold War

Winston Churchill,  
1946, Fulton, Missouri

 [Audio](#)

*Reichstag, 1945*  
Yevgeny Khaldei



The Cold War lasted from the end of World War II to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Wars occurred (Korea, 1950-3; Vietnam, 1955-75). Crises abounded (Berlin Blockade, 1948; Cuban Missiles, 1962). Revolutions were put down (Hungary, 1956; Prague, 1968; Poland 1981). Nuclear stockpiles grew. Somehow the world did not succumb to annihilation.

At the end of World War II, Europe became divided between the Western capitalist societies and the Eastern communist societies. Both called themselves “democracies.” In the West the governments were elected by the people. In the East the government acted for the people. Winston Churchill described an “iron curtain” that had descended across Europe from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic. This is available on video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2PUIQpAEAQ>

The two opposing sides were at war for the control of the world. For the most part it was not a war of armies and tanks, although such hot wars occasionally flared up. Most of the time it was a cold war – involving propaganda, revolutions, crises, walls, and spies. It ceased when the Soviet Union began to fall apart in 1989. However, remnants of the war persist to the present day.

Somehow from 1945 to 1989 the world avoided nuclear war, even though the nuclear weapons sufficient to annihilate all the people of the world several times over were stockpiled and maintained in a state of readiness.

Beginning in 1947 the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* maintained a “Doomsday Clock” that estimated how close the world was to catastrophe – how close to midnight. It started at 7 minutes, went to 2 minutes in 1953 with the invention of the Hydrogen Bomb, relaxed to 12 minutes with the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963, went back up to 3 minutes as the US considered an arms race in space in 1984, and relaxed to 17 minutes with the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in 1991.

In 2017 the clock returned to 2.5 minutes. To the fear of nuclear war has now been added the increasing danger of climate change and the instability of American politics:

## The Beat Generation

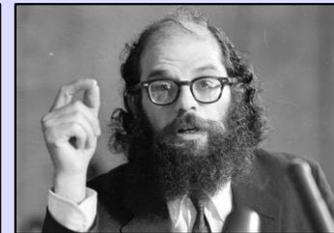


Hal Chase, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs, Columbia University, 1945

A group of young writers in New York rebelled against the state of the world and called themselves “beat” (down-trodden, exhausted). They hung out in jazz clubs in Greenwich Village and wandered across the continent, ultimately reaching San Francisco, where they intermingled with a similar group of poets. They looked to Eastern civilizations as a possible escape from the wars and materialism of the West and they experimented with psychoactive drugs. Beat assumed connotations of “beatific” and “upbeat”

Many young people in the US opted out of politics in the early years of the cold war. They sought respite in the peaceful religions of the East and in the psychedelic visions of pharmacology. They travelled across the country, and established a counter-culture.

## Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)



1952

1975

1990

Ginsberg’s father was a poet and teacher. His mother was schizophrenic and was hospitalized through much of Ginsberg’s childhood and adolescence. At Columbia university he became friends with Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady. In San Francisco in 1954, he met Peter Orlovsky who would become his lifelong partner, and became fascinated by Buddhism. He performed the poem *Howl* at the Six Gallery in San Francisco in October, 1955.

Many people contributed to the counter-culture. Jack Kerouac wrote *On the Road* (1957), which documented his travels with his friends across the United States. It is a roman à clef – Kerouac is Sal Paradise, Ginsberg is Carlo Marx, and Neal Cassady is Dean Moriarty. Allen Ginsberg’s 1956 poem *Howl* – a long rant against the materialism and immorality of the capitalist world – became the signature statement of the Beat Generation.

**Howl**



Eric Drooker  
2010



I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving  
hysterical naked,  
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an  
angry fix,  
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the  
starry dynamo in the machinery of night,  
who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the  
supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of  
cities contemplating jazz,

The poem is a long diatribe against the evils of American society and a lament for the young people who could no longer find their way. The poem is in three parts. We shall consider only the first part.

The poem is dedicated to Carl Solomon. He was a patient whom Ginsberg met in 1949 at the Columbia Presbyterian Psychiatric Institute. Solomon was being treated for depression with insulin shock therapy. Ginsberg had just been admitted after he had been charged with possession of stolen goods (which had been stolen by his room-mate). His professors had arranged for him to be treated for a psychiatric disorder rather than jailed. The two young men became friends and howled together at the moon.

Ginsberg is not fully accurate in his description of what happened. He mentions other psychiatric hospitals near New York City – Rockland, Greystone, Pilgrim State – perhaps because they have striking names. He mentions many different types of barbaric therapy – metrazol, insulin, electricity, etc. Solomon only received insulin therapy. Although it is not known for certain, Ginsberg himself was apparently only treated with psychotherapy and drugs. He was, however, familiar with the other therapies because of his mother's long psychiatric hospitalization.

The first part of the poem is recited by Ginsberg.

The illustration is a still from the 2010 movie *Howl* about Ginsberg starring James Franco. The movie includes a set of animations that attempt to illustrate the images of the poem. These were based on the visual ideas of Eric Drooker.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YyFJVyWao8>

Some notes on the text:

Paterson – New Jersey city where Ginsberg was born. William Carlos Williams wrote a book of poems about the city

Bickford's – all-night cafeteria on 42<sup>nd</sup> St.

Fugazzi's – bar in Greenwich Village

Bellevue – NYC hospital with psychiatric ward

Tangerian bone grindings – heroin (used by Burroughs, who had visited Tangiers)

N.C. – Neal Cassady

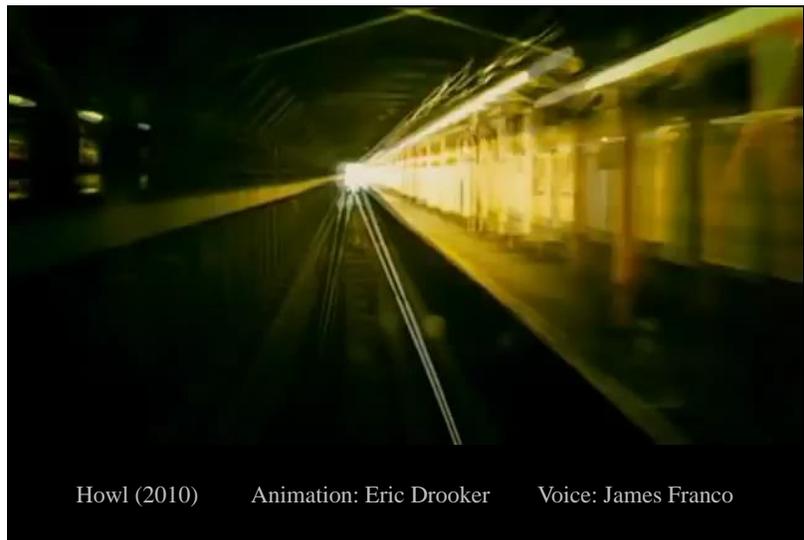
Passaic – river in Paterson.

Woodlawn – a cemetery in the Bronx

CCNY – City College of New York

*Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus* – All powerful father, eternal God (should be aeternus)

*eli eli lamma lamma sabacthani* – “My god my god, why hast thou forsaken me” (Matthew 27:46) words of Christ on the cross



This is Eric Drooker’s animation for the first section of *Howl* – it begins at the bottom of the first page of the printed text.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YyFJVyWao8>

The voice is that of actor James Franco. The film tells the story of *Howl*’s publication by Lawrence Ferlinghetti of the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco, and the first performance of the poem at the Six Gallery. The police considered the poem obscene for such sections as

who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy  
and

and ended fainting on the wall with a vision of ultimate cunt and come eluding the last  
gyzym of consciousness

Ferlinghetti was charged with disseminating obscene literature. On October 3, 1957, Judge Clayton Horn ruled that the poem was not obscene.

### Gary Snyder (1930- )

Snyder grew up in the Pacific Northwest and studied anthropology at Reed College. He worked in the summers as a fire lookout, a logger and a trailmaker.



In 1953 he came to the Bay Area and studied Chinese language and culture at the University of California, Berkeley. In the late 50s and 60s, he visited Japan multiple times, studying in different Buddhist temples. Since 1970 he has lived with his family in various homesteads in the mountains of the US West Coast. His poetry combines Buddhism with an ecological sensitivity.

The lyric poetry of Gary Snyder is a complete change from Ginsberg's rant. Though their poetic styles were quite different, Snyder and Ginsberg became great friends. They shared a deep interest in Buddhism. And some of Snyder's later poetry is similar to Ginsberg's in its long repeating declamations.



### Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout

Down valley a smoke haze  
Three days heat, after five days rain  
Pitch glows on the fir-cones  
Across rocks and meadows  
Swarms of new flies.

I cannot remember things I once read  
A few friends, but they are in cities.  
Drinking cold snow-water from a tin cup  
Looking down for miles  
Through high still air.



This short poem describes the experience of being at Sourdough Mountain Lookout. Sourdough Mountain is in the North Cascades Mountains in Washington State about 20 km from the Canadian Border. It looks out over Diablo Lake.



This is the view from Sourdough Mountain Lookout.



**Riprap**

Lay down these words  
 Before your mind like rocks.  
     placed solid, by hands  
 In choice of place, set  
 Before the body of the mind  
     in space and time:  
 Solidity of bark, leaf, or wall  
     riprap of things:

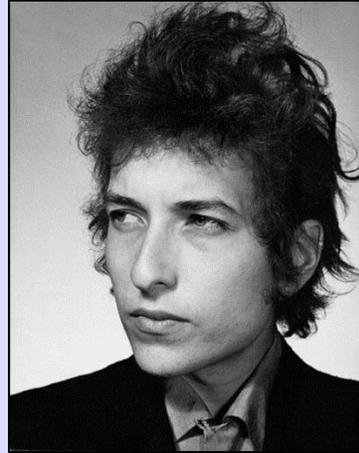
Snyder worked several summers creating and maintaining trails in the mountains. Riprap is the way that stones are laid down to make the trail. Snyder likens the technique to that of writing poetry where the words must be laid down together to give the meaning.

Trails in the mountains are different from those on the flat. They have three rather than two dimensions and you have to fit the stones vertically as well as horizontally.

The game of Go is a Japanese game wherein one places stones on a board at the intersections of a 19 X 19 grid. The intent is to surround and capture the stones of one's opponent. The game is very complex. A three-dimensional version of the game would be close to impossible.

**Bob Dylan (1941- )**

Born as Robert Zimmerman in Duluth, Minnesota, Dylan became one of the most prolific and popular song-writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He began as a folk-singer, his songs *Blowin' in the wind* and *The times they are a-changin'* becoming anthems of the civil rights and anti-war movements of the sixties. He moved on to folk-rock, blues, jazz and gospel. His lyrics are always highly imaginative and intensely rhythmic even without the music. In 2016 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.



1967 Photograph by Robert Kramer

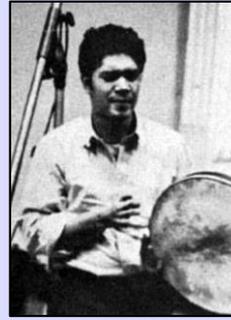
In the 1960s the Beat Generation slowly evolved into the Hippies. Six major forces were at work:

- The escalation of the Vietnam War. This conflict, which had begun in 1955, was radically changed by the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident, which led to the deployment of American troops in Vietnam. Many young people felt that the war was not justified and refused to fight.
- The increasing availability and widespread use of psychoactive drugs, such as marijuana and Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD). Drugs had been used by the Beats, but these became far more easily obtained in the 1960s.
- The broadening of religious experience. The world became more aware of Eastern religions, which seemed at first blush to be far more peaceful and far more tolerant than the Abrahamic religions. Religion became self-selected rather than imposed. New Age beliefs became widespread – a confusing mixture of Eastern religion, superstition and socialism.
- The Civil Rights movement. Young people decided that this it was better to fight for civil rights in America than to fight against an unknown enemy in Vietnam.
- The sexual revolution. The breakdown of the old morality and the invention of the contraceptive pill allowed sex without fear of consequences. Enovid was approved for contraceptive purposes in the US in 1961.
- The birth of a new music. The protest songs of the folk tradition amalgamated with both rock 'n roll, particularly as interpreted by the English pop groups *The Beatles* (debut 1962) and *The Rolling Stones* (debut 1963) and soul music such as sung by Otis Redding (debut 1962) to give a powerful new music. Huge concerts were set up for young people to hear the music in combination with drugs and sex. The Monterey Pop Festival occurred in 1967, Woodstock in the summer 1969. The movement flagged after the violence and deaths at the Altamont Festival in December 1969.

Bob Dylan was a major force in the new music. He started as a folk-singer but in 1965 began to use the electric guitars and styles of rock 'n roll. This was the beginning of a new folk-rock-soul type of music. It was not an easy birth – many in the audience booed at the 1965 Newport Festival. *Mr. Tambourine Man* was one of the songs written as he was leaving his roots in folk music.

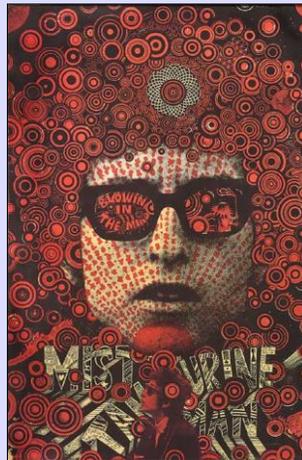
### Mr. Tambourine Man

Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,  
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to.  
Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,  
In the jingle jangle morning I'll come followin' you.



“Mr Tambourine Man, I think, was inspired by Bruce Langhorne. Bruce was playing guitar with me on a bunch of the early records .... He had this gigantic tambourine .... And the vision of him playing this tambourine just stuck in my mind .... Drugs never played a part in that song ....” (Bob Dylan, *Biograph*, 1985)

Many have suggested that *Mr Tambourine Man* was a metaphor for the drug experience. Dylan has insisted that the song is not drug-related, and that the image of the tambourine man was related to an actual person who played in the studio recordings.



1967 Poster by Martin Sharp

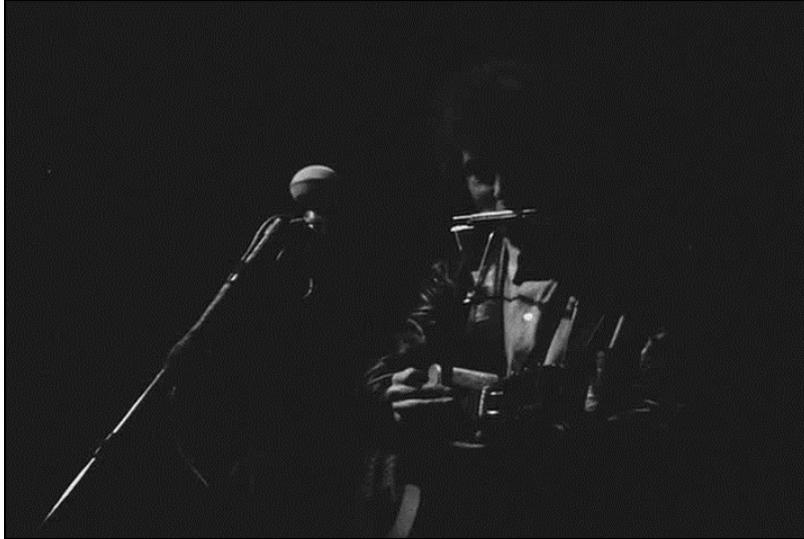
Then take me disappearin'  
through the smoke rings of my mind,  
Down the foggy ruins of time,  
far past the frozen leaves,  
The haunted, frightened trees,  
out to the windy beach,  
Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow.

Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky  
with one hand waving free,  
Silhouetted by the sea,  
circled by the circus sands,  
With all memory and fate  
driven deep beneath the waves,  
Let me forget about today until tomorrow.

So, what do the words mean? The most common interpretation is that the tambourine man personifies the imagination. This poetic muse can take you to lands even stranger than those seen in psychedelic hallucinations.

The listener should just let the images wash over. There is no specific meaning to each detail. The loneliness and emptiness at the beginning is transformed as the singer dances away after the tambourine man. The shadow of the ragged clown fades behind and the singer finally becomes free under the diamond sky.

Someone with a spiritual bent might interpret the song as the release of the individual soul from the trappings of the world so that it can become one with the universal consciousness.



This is a performance of *Mr Tambourine Man* at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. Various other performances can be found on the web, e.g. a year earlier <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeP4FFr88SQ>

	<p><b>John Berryman (1914-1972)</b></p> <p>When Berryman was 11 years old, his father committed suicide. Haunted throughout his life by this tragedy, he often turned to alcohol. He taught at the University of Minnesota, where Donald Justice and Philip Levine were among his many successful students. He tried to understand himself in his <i>Dream Songs</i>. In these confessional poems the characters of Henry and Mr Bones play out his thoughts and desires. Berryman ended his own life by suicide.</p>
<p>1963 Photograph by Rollie McKenna</p>	

The song *Mr Tambourine Man* may concern the dreams of the young, but the 1960s were also the years of John Berryman's *Dream Songs*. These brief poems recounted the poet's thoughts as viewed through the personae of Henry, a reticent but sensitive middle-aged man and Mr. Bones, an imagined minstrel-like character who acts as Henry's conscience or demon. The poems use

rhyme but there is no regular sequence. They are written using three 6-line stanzas – one cannot help but think of the 666 that is the sign of Beast in *Revelations* 13:18.



Washington Avenue Bridge

**Dream Song 29**



But never did Henry, as he thought he did,  
 end anyone and hacks her body up  
 and hide the pieces, where they may be found.  
 He knows: he went over everyone, & nobody's missing.  
 Often he reckons, in the dawn, them up.  
 Nobody is ever missing.

The illustration shows the bridge that connects the University of Minnesota to downtown Minneapolis. Berryman jumped to his death off this bridge.

In *Dream Song 29*, Henry worries that he might have committed some terrible crime which he cannot remember. He suffers from the pervasive guilt of humanity – that we cannot be as good as we wish to be (cf. Auden in *The Age of Anxiety*). He continually goes over everyone he knows and “nobody is ever missing.” Mr. Bones does not need to comment.



This is a clip from the 1968 animated film *Yellow Submarine*. The animation by George Dunning captures the psychedelic imagery of the Beatles' song *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*. John Lennon insisted that this came from a nursery-school drawing by his son Julian. Many people consider the song to represent the experience of LSD (the initials of the main words in the title).

### Kenneth Rexroth (1905-1982)

Born in Indiana, Rexroth travelled extensively, finally settling in San Francisco. He wrote many volumes of poetry, and became famous for his translations of Japanese and Chinese poems. In 1955, he presided at the first presentation of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*.



1955 reading his translation of the poem *I walk out into the country at night* by Lu You (1125–1209)



From 1957 record cover  
*Poetry in the Cellar*

One of the main cultural currents of the 1950s and 60s was the appreciation of the religion and poetry of China and Japan. One of the great translators was Kenneth Rexroth.

#### **I Walk Out Into the Country at Night**

The moon is so high it is  
Almost in the Great Bear.  
I walk out of the city  
Along the road to the West.  
The damp wind ruffles my coat.  
Dewy grass soaks my sandals.  
Fishermen are singing  
On the distant river.  
Fox fires dance on the ruined tombs.  
A chill wind rises and fills  
Me with melancholy. I  
Try to think of words that will  
Capture the uncanny solitude.  
I come home late. The night  
Is half spent. I stand for a  
Long while in the doorway.  
My young son is still up, reading.  
Suddenly he bursts out laughing,  
And all of the sadness of the  
Twilight of my life is gone.

### The Spark in the Tinder of Knowing

Not by flesh, but by love, man  
Comes into the world, lost in  
The illimitable ocean  
Of which there is no shore,  
The sea of circumstance where  
The heart drowns, the sea of love.  
The heart drinks it and it drinks  
The heart—transubstantiation  
In which the One drinks the Other  
And the Other drinks the One.  
The sea of fire that lights all being  
Becomes the human heart.



1987 illustration by Brice  
Marden for Rexroth's  
translations of Tu Fu

Rexroth's poem *The Spark in the Tinder of Knowing* provides a beautiful and insightful description of the mystical experience that is the basis of the Eastern religions – the dissolving of the individual into the sea of universal love.

### Japanese Haiku

**Haiku** are composed using **17 syllables**. There are **3 units** of 5, 7 and 5 syllables, usually translated as separate lines.

By convention, the haiku makes reference to the **season** (the usual four plus the New Year period) – by referring to plants, animals, activities, etc. typical of that season.

The haiku is usually broken in two parts, tied together by a **cutting word** that both breaks the thought and links two disparate ideas.



Matsuo Basho  
(1644 – 1694)

One of the most popular poetic forms that the East has bequeathed the West is the Japanese *haiku*.

The form derives from *renku*, a type of court poetry where two poets would alternate sections – the first with 5-7-5 syllables, the second 7-7, etc. Another popular form is *tanka* which uses 5-7-5-7-7 syllables.

The haiku has the following characteristics:

- Seventeen syllables typically arranged in three lines of 5, 7 and 5 syllables.
- The subject is a direct sensory experience. This is usually of the natural world, or of people or objects in a natural setting.
- The experience has a deep meaning but one that is unexpressed: a Zen understanding.
- There is usually a seasonal reference. Thus collections of haiku are often arranged by the seasons
- The poem contains a sudden change or cutting (*kiru*). Two different perceptions are juxtaposed in much the same way as a Zen master may pose a paradox (*koan*) to be resolved

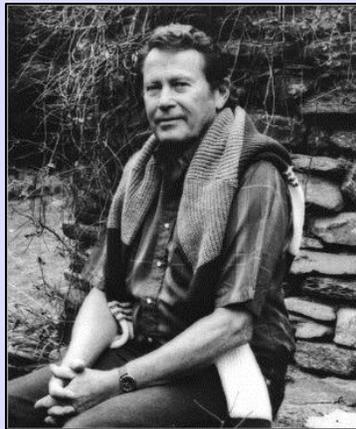
Matsuo Basho is the most famous of the Japanese haiku poets, and his poem about the frog jumping into a pond the most famous of his poems.

Haiku are difficult to translate. If one maintains the form, the precision of the imagery is lost:

The old pond is still  
a frog leaps right into it  
splashing the water (*Earl Miner & Hiroko Odagiri*)

To keep the brevity of description, the number of syllables in English is much less

The old pond —  
a frog jumps in,  
sound of water (*Robert Hass*)



Photograph by Stathis Orphanos, 1990s?

### Richard Wilbur (1921- )

Wilbur graduated from Amherst College in 1942 and served in the U.S. Army in Italy as an infantry-man and a cryptographer. After the war he did graduate studies at Harvard. He taught at several universities, including Harvard and Wesleyan. He has published many volumes of poetry, and several books for children. He wrote lyrics for Bernstein's *Candide* and translated several of Molière's plays. His poetry is formal and characterized by a marvelous control of words, interesting rhythms and innovative rhymes.

Richard Wilbur was one of the great formalist poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He is one of the only poets to have translated Molière's plays using the same rhyming-couplet format as in French.

**Thyme  
Flowering  
among Rocks**



This, if Japanese,  
Would represent grey boulders  
Walloped by rough seas

So that, here or there,  
The balked water tossed its froth  
Straight into the air.

*Thyme Flowering among Rocks* is a poetic *tour de force*. It uses the haiku form for each of its verses. In addition the first and third lines of each verse are rhymed.

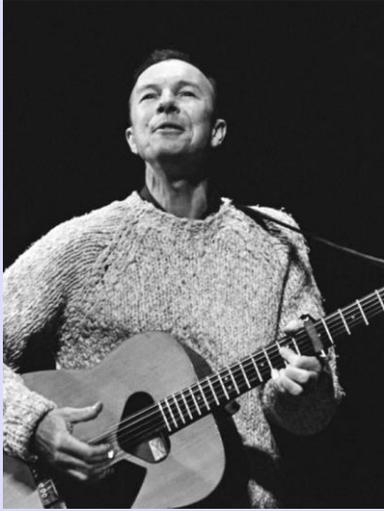
The poem begins with an allusion to some of the Zen Gardens in Japan that use rocks and plants to represent the world. Wilbur suggest that the thyme flowers are like the spray that comes when waves wash upon the rocks.

The end of the poem refers to Basho. Basho was much influenced by Chuang Tzu a Chinese philosopher from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Chuang Tzu famously dreamed that he was a butterfly and when he awoke wondered whether he was indeed Chuang Tzu or just the butterfly dreaming that he was Chuang Tzu. Basho wrote a haiku to a friend:

You are the butterfly  
And I the dreaming heart  
Of Chuang Tzu.

Wilbur has been describing the facts of the thyme plant. Lost in these facts he realizes that reality may not be as clear as what he perceives.

Beneath the poem runs the association of “thyme” with “time.”



Well, I'm not going to point  
any moral;  
I'll leave that for yourself  
Maybe you're still walking,  
you're still talking  
You'd like to keep your  
health.  
But every time I read the  
papers  
That old feeling comes on;  
We're — waist deep in the  
Big Muddy  
And the big fool says to push  
on.



One of the great singers of protest songs was Pete Seeger (1919-2014). He was the nephew of the poet Alan Seeger who died during World War I. He became an indefatigable social activist and prolific song-writer. His most famous songs are *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* (1955) and *To Everything there is a Season* (1962). He sang with *The Weavers* from 1948 until 1952, when the group was blacklisted during the McCarthy Era.

Pete Seeger tried to sing *Waist Deep in the Big Muddy* – a song critical of Lyndon Johnson's conduct of the war in Vietnam – on the Smothers Brother Comedy Hour in 1967, but the song was initially censored. After a public outcry, CBS relented and allowed Seeger to perform it in 1968. Lyndon Johnson later wrote to the Smothers Brothers in 1969:

It is part of the price of leadership of this great and free nation to be the target of clever satirists. You have given the gift of laughter to our people. May we never grow so somber or self-important that we fail to appreciate the humor in our lives.



The My Lai massacre occurred in 1968 and the resultant court martial occurred in 1970-1971. There was no way that US involvement in the Vietnam War could be considered honorable or just. Despite the songs and the protests, however, the war continued until the fall of Saigon in 1975.

This famous photograph by Marc Ribaud, entitled *The Ultimate Confrontation: The Flower and the Bayonet* (1967), shows the demonstrator Jan Kasmir, a 17-year old high-school student holding up a chrysanthemum to the bayonets of the National Guard at a peace march on the Pentagon. The photograph became a symbol of the peace movement and “flower power.” The movement became suddenly serious in 1970 when 4 students were killed during an anti-war demonstration at Kent State University.

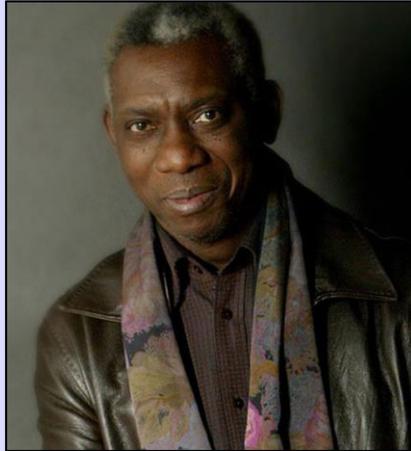


As the 1960s came to an end the dreams of the counter-culture slowly began to die. The new freedom was not all it was cracked up to be. Kris Kristoferson's song served in some ways as an elegy for the age of flower power. In the original, Bobbie was the name of a woman – Barbara McKee – a secretary of the record producer Fred Foster.

Janis Joplin recorded the song in 1970 just before she died of an accidental drug overdose.

## Jusuf Kumunyakaa (1947- )

Born as James William Brown in Louisiana, Kumunyakaa took the name of his grandfather who had come to the U. S. as a stowaway from Trinidad. Kumunyakaa served in Vietnam as a combat reporter from 1969-70. He currently teaches at New York University where he is Professor in the Creative Writing Program.



Poems about the Vietnam War were few. The most important poems were written later. Jusuf Kumunyakaa was one of the poets who tried to distil some truth from the long and bloody conflict.

## Prisoners



How can anyone anywhere love  
these half-broken figures  
bent under the sky's brightness?  
The weight they carry  
is the soil we tread night & day.



The first poem deals with the enemy. Kumunyakaa remembers seeing Viet Cong prisoners at the helipad where Cobra helicopters landed. Their heads were covered in crokersacks (burlap bags such as used for potatoes) and without sight they staggered like marionettes. Their silence and their complete dedication to their cause elicited his respect.

**Facing It**

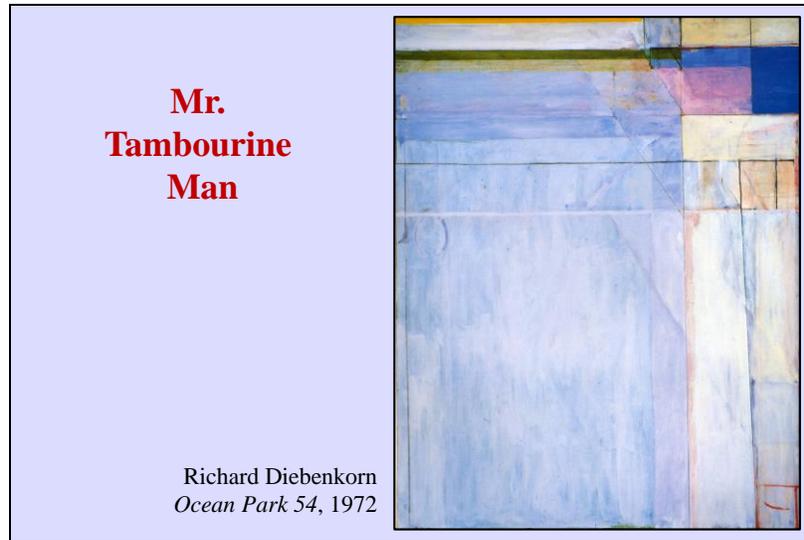


My black face fades,  
hiding inside the black granite.  
I said I wouldn't,  
dammit: No tears.  
I'm stone. I'm flesh.

*Facing It*, probably the most famous of the Vietnam War poems, describes Kumunkayaa's experience at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. The memorial, designed by Maya Lin, consists of a long low wall of polished black granite upon which are listed the names of all the over 58,000 US service men and women who died in the Vietnam War. It was constructed in 1982.

Kumunyakaa recounts several brief occurrences in his visit. He tears up when he finds the name of a colleague Andrew Johnson. He sees himself reflected in the polished granite surface – the poem is a reflection in both the physical and mental meanings of the word. He sees the reflection of another veteran looking for a name as well. Finally he notices the arm of a woman who appears to be trying to erase one of the names, but is actually just brushing a child's hair.

This is the last of the war memorials that we shall consider. We have looked at the memorials at Spion Ridge, the Menin Gate, and Omaha Beach. After the Vietnam War, local outbreaks of war continued, some like the Iraq-Iran war with great loss of life. There is hope, however, that human violence is subsiding – Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (2011).



It is hard to leave this section. I was born at the end of World War II and I came of age in the 1960s. Many of the dreams of those times – of peace, understanding and compassion – have faded or passed away. The final illustration is one of the large series of 145 *Ocean Park* paintings done in Santa Monica from 1967 until his death in 1990. These abstract paintings represent the tranquil light of Southern California. They seem to portray the peace and harmony that the poets and singers of the 50s and 60s were seeking. They differ from Robert Motherwell's earlier series *Elegy to the Spanish Republic* (1948-1967), which perhaps portrayed the violence they were fleeing.