

# SONGS FROM THOREAU'S JOURNAL

This Is What I Go Out to Seek...



HEIDI SKJERVE





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**Heidi Skjerve: Vocals, Tora Stølan Ness: Violin, Rannveig Ryeng: Violin, Karoline Vik Hegge: Viola, Kari Nesdal Sandnes: Cello, Finn Magnus Fjell Hjelland: Piano**

**All lyrics are passages from Henry David Thoreaus's journals.**

**All music composed by Heidi Skjerve.**

Recorded at Sverresborg Church Center, Trondheim April 9-10 2022 by Bendik Lund Haanshus/ Skogvokter Studio, and January 14 2023 by Daniel Formo. Produced by Heidi Skjerve.

Mixed by Daniel Formo and Heidi Skjerve. Mastering by Karl Klaseie at Øra Mastering. Field recordings and photo of wind turbines at Storheia in Fosen, Norway, June 2021 by Daniel Formo and Heidi Skjerve.

Birds, bumblebee, dripping water, walking in the woods and spruce cone percussion recorded in Trondheim and Vemundvik by Heidi Skjerve.

Wood thrush sounds (8) recorded in Illinois in 2013 by Kevin Boucher/ freesound.org. Bullfrog sounds (10) recorded at Brandon March in 2014 by foosiemac/ freesound.org.

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### This Is What I Go Out to Seek

January 7, 1857

This stillness, solitude, wildness of nature  
Is a kind of thoroughwort, or boneset to my intellect.  
This is what I go out to seek.



### Sonorousness

March 3, 1841

Nature always possesses a certain sonorousness,  
As in the hum of insects,  
The booming of ice  
The crowing of cocks in the morning,  
And the barking of dogs in the night,  
Which indicates her sound state.  
God's voice is but a clear bell sound.  
I drink in a wonderful health, a cordial, in sound.  
The effect of the slightest tinkling in the horizon  
Measures my own soundness,  
I thank God for sound;  
It always mounts, and makes me mount.

April 21, 1852

I hear a robin singing cheerily from some perch in the wood,  
In the midst of the rain, where the scenery is now wild and dreary.  
His song is a singular antagonism and offset to the storm.  
As if Nature said, "Have faith, these two things I can do."

They are sound to make a dying man live.



### The Art of Walking

November 25, 1850

I feel a little alarmed when it happens  
That I have walked a mile into the woods bodily,  
Without getting there in spirit.  
I would fain forget all my morning's occupation—  
My obligations to society.  
But sometimes it happens that I cannot easily shake off the village—  
The thought of some work — some surveying will run in my head  
And I am not where my body is —  
I am out of my senses.  
In my walks I would return to my senses  
Like a bird or a beast.

Thoreau would also use this passage almost entirely verbatim  
in his lecture, "Walking; or, The Wild." delivered on April 23, 1851



### A murderer's experience

August 18, 1854

I have just been through the process of killing the cistudo  
For the sake of science  
But I cannot excuse myself for this this murder,  
And see that such actions are inconsistent with the poetic perception,  
However they may serve science,  
And will affect the quality of my observations.

I pray that I may walk more innocently and serenely through nature.

No reasoning whatever reconciles me to this act.  
It affects my day injuriously  
I have lost my self-respect.  
I have a murderer's experience in a degree.



### She Won't Peel

November 13, 1851

A cold and dark afternoon  
The sun being behind clouds in the west.  
The landscape is barren with objects, the trees being leafless,  
And so little light in the sky for variety.  
Such a day will almost oblige a man to eat his own heart.  
A day in which you must hold on to life by your teeth.  
You can hardly ruck up any skin on Nature's bones.  
The sap is down; She won't peel.



### Snow

January 30, 1841

When the wind blows the fine snow comes filtering down  
Through all the aisles of the wood  
In a golden cloud

These particles of snow  
Which the early wind shakes down  
Are what is stirring  
Or the morning news of the wood.  
Sometimes it is blown up above the trees, like the sand of the desert.

You glance up these paths closely imbowered by bent trees  
As through the side aisles of a cathedral,  
And expect to hear a choir chanting from their depths.

You are never so far in them as they are far before you.  
Their secret is where you are not  
And where your feet can never carry you.



### Wood, Water, Earth, Air Are Essentially What They Were

April 8, 1841

The long series of desultory mornings  
Does not tarnish the brightness of the prospective days  
Surely faith is not dead.

Wood, water, earth, air are essentially what they were  
Only society has degenerated.

The lament for a golden age is only a lament for golden men.



### Wood Thrush

July 5, 1852

The wood thrush's is no opera music.  
It is not so much the composition as the strain. The tone, —  
Cool bars of melody  
From the atmosphere of everlasting morning or evening.

Though heard at noon, there is the liquid coolness  
Of things that are just drawn from the bottom of springs.

He deepens the significance of all things seen in the light of his strain.  
He sings to make men take higher and truer views of things.  
He sings to amend their institutions,  
To relieve the slave on the plantation  
And the prisoner in his dungeon,  
The slave in the house of luxury  
And the prisoner of his own low thoughts.



### Open all your pores

August 23, 1853

Open all your pores and bathe in all the tides of Nature,  
In all her streams and oceans, at all seasons.

Miasma and infections are from within, not without.  
The invalid, brought to the brink of the grave by an unnatural life,  
Instead of imbibing only the great influence that Nature is.  
Drinks only the tea made of a particular herb,  
While he still continues his unnatural life, —  
Saves at the spile and wastes at the bung.  
He does not love Nature or his life, and so sickens and dies,  
And no doctor can cure him.

Grow green with spring, yellow and ripe with autumn.  
Drink of each seasons influence like a vial  
A true panacea of all remedies mixed for your special use.



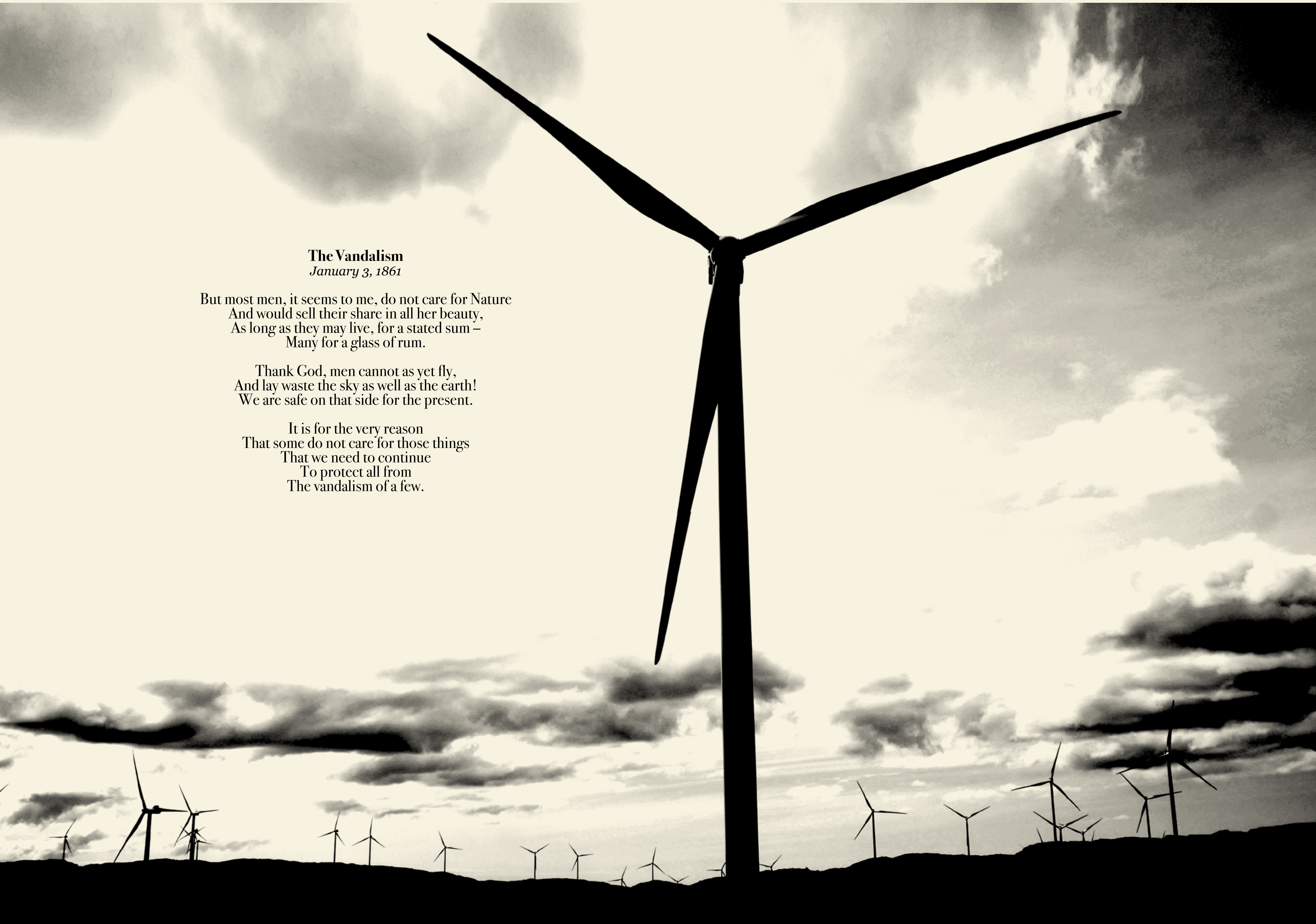
### Bullfrogs

June 25, 1852

There is that dull, dumping sound of frogs, as if a bubble  
Containing the lifeless sultry air of day  
Burst on the surface, a belching sound.







**The Vandalism**  
*January 3, 1861*

But most men, it seems to me, do not care for Nature  
And would sell their share in all her beauty,  
As long as they may live, for a stated sum –  
Many for a glass of rum.

Thank God, men cannot as yet fly,  
And lay waste the sky as well as the earth!  
We are safe on that side for the present.

It is for the very reason  
That some do not care for those things  
That we need to continue  
To protect all from  
The vandalism of a few.



Thanks to my wonderful ensemble: Tora, Rannveig, Karoline, Kari and Finn Magnus for your trust and dedicated work. Thanks to Bendik Haanshus for long work hours and good spirits, and Karl Klaseie for your great ears and great patience. Thanks to Ellen Lindquist for inspiration and advice. Thanks to Oda Valle for beautiful art work. Special thanks to Daniel for helping me out with everything, your skills, your time and encouragement. Thanks to the kids for putting up with me, and sorry you have to deal with the consequences of the thoughtless waste and damages to wildlife caused by my generation. I wish you courage and good luck at taking better care of nature.

