The Primacy of Place in Gary Snyder's Ecological Vision

Dissertation

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by

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For my Mother, Father, and Marlene

with all my love and gratitude
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VITA

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations will be used to identify Gary Snyder's primary works throughout this study:

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CHAPTER I

THE POET'S BACKGROUND AND BEGINNINGS

In my middle years I love the Tao
and by Deep South Mountain I make my home.
When happy I go alone into the mountains.
Only I understand this joy.

Wang Wei (701-756)

A Voice from the Wilderness

In 1992, following the publication of No Nature: New
and Selected Poems, Gary Snyder had the occasion to publicly
reflect on his poetry of the preceding forty-five years.
After stating that he does not consider himself to be a
conventional "nature writer," Snyder said to an interviewer,
"In looking over my poetry again, I noticed that very little
of it is exactly about landscapes. It's a lot more about
what we do in landscapes" (Phillips 16). In its ordinary
sense this statement could be taken to describe simply a
poet's distinction in emphasis, stressing action over
description; events more than scenery. But, in considering
Snyder's poetic career, "what we do in landscapes" also describes the very foundation upon which his poetic voice and ecological vision have been shaped. Landscape, for Snyder, is a place of habitation, not merely the scenery of a region. What we do in landscapes is the expression of our relation to place, our self-defining connectedness to a region. It forms the basis of human community and responsibility. And in Snyder's poetry "what we do in landscapes" is central to his expression of place and ecological conscience.

Snyder's ecological vision is an interconnected network of relationships stemming from a sense of place which he has cultivated since his childhood explorations of the forests and mountains of Washington state. From his earliest poems "about mountain climbing" to his most recent essays about bioregionalism and the wild, Snyder has stressed the importance of knowing one's immediate environment, understanding the plant life, animals, soil, and water of the region where one lives: "You should know what the complete natural world of your region is and know what all its interactions are and how you are interacting with it yourself. This is just part of the work of becoming who you are, where you are" (Snyder TRW 16). The relationship between identity and place is further noted in The Practice of the Wild where Snyder writes, "Our relation to the
natural world takes place in a place, and it must be grounded in information and experience" (Snyder PW 39). For Snyder the experience of growing up at the edge of the forest is inseparably a part of his identity. Once, when asked, "Did growing up near the woods make a big impression on you?" Snyder replied by correcting the supposition of the question: "It was me.... It's the difference between being made an impression on and being something... it made me what I am. It didn't just make an impression on me. I was part of the woods" (emphasis added) (O'Connell 16). As we will see in Snyder's poetry as well, one's being is expressed through one's relation to and interaction with place.

As did Wang Wei in the epigraph above, Gary Snyder in his middle life made his home in the mountains, settling into the wilderness region of the Sierra Nevada foothills (Mao 125). At home in wilderness, Snyder has fashioned a life as well as a body of poetic work around what one does in landscape. The basis of Snyder's ecological vision as it will be examined in the following chapters grows out of the primacy of place that is evident throughout his poetry and in many of his essays.

In his role as poet-ecologist Snyder has for several years expressed a sense of responsibility in contributing to the growth of an emerging regional and global ecological
conscience. In 1970, at a seminar of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Snyder described his work from the perspective of his role as poet and teacher, identifying the landscape of his daily life and poetic practice as well as some of the sources of his own learning:

I am a poet. My teachers are other poets, American Indians, and a few Buddhist priests in Japan. The reason I am here is because I wish to bring a voice from the wilderness, my constituency. I wish to be a spokesman for a realm that is not usually represented either in intellectual chambers or in chambers of government. (Snyder "The Wilderness" 70)

The voice which Snyder brings from the wilderness conveys a view, a perspective, of the world which exceeds the imagery present in his depictions of landscape. Whereas wilderness and back country landscape, particularly that of the Pacific Northwest, have been associated with Snyder's sense of place from his earliest poems, what has remained relatively unexamined by critics as a significant element in his sense of place is the relationship in his poetry between the speaker's presence and the landscape in which he is situated. This relationship and the way in which the structure of the poems contributes to the speaker's presence will be the subject of chapter two. In its apparent simplicity, the poetic form and structure conceal the philosophical complexity of Snyder's ecological vision. The depiction of the speaker's way of being, his voice, and his relation to experience is inseparably tied to Snyder's
overall sense of place in which the way of seeing is as important as what is seen. Moreover, in Snyder's poetry the persona's presence within landscape is as much an expression of a way of being as it is a means for depicting settings and events.

In subsequent chapters I will discuss the relation between a way of being and a sense of place by examining first, in chapter two, the structural and imagistic connections of place to the persona's presence, then in chapter three the philosophical and ontological significance of Buddhism. Chapter four expands the focus from the individual to the community by looking at the importance of primitive and native cultures in Snyder's presentation of place. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I look at questions of ecological politics and environmental ethics as part of an attempt to assess the relation between Snyder's poetry and ecological activism.

However, before turning directly to Snyder's poems as the expression of his sense of place, I wish to emphasize the important relationship between his life and those perspectives which will be examined in the following chapters. Overall, this study is not biographical in nature, and yet the context of the discussions which follow will be clarified significantly if the reader has an understanding of some of the important events in Snyder's
life. Therefore, the brief biographical sketch of Snyder's intellectual life which follows is intended to assist in appreciating the basis for the critical discussion of Snyder's work throughout this study. In the remainder of this first chapter, following the biographical sketch, I will discuss the development of Snyder's poetics from some of his earliest poems to the publication of Riprap (1959) and Myths & Texts (1960).

Moving Through Time

Gary Snyder was born in San Francisco on May 8, 1930. A year and a half later, he and his parents, Harold and Lois Snyder, moved to a rural area north of Seattle, Washington, where they lived for ten years. As Snyder describes it, "[D]uring the Depression there was a small back-to-the-land movement, by which I mean a trend for people with some degree of autonomy to seek a place in the rural economy and look on it as a more spiritually and morally appropriate life than that of wage-earning. My parents' move to a cut-over pasture north of Seattle in 1932 was part of that" (Dardick 68). Snyder recalls that during the Depression his father was out of work for "eight or nine years and we lived in a house that was covered with tar paper" (O'Connell 16). "We opened up a dairy farm with two or three dairy cows ... selling milk to the neighbors" (Kherdian 47).
While Snyder admits that they were "extremely poor for quite awhile," there was great importance placed on his early education. "I learned to read very early, and I read a great deal, although it was my mother who actually introduced me to literature by reading poetry to me every night before I went to bed" (47).

Snyder describes his mother as one who was always interested in his learning. She read to him regularly and was, herself, once a student of writing at the University of Washington (Martin "Coyote Mind" 148). She worked for a time in journalism and had a desire to be a short story writer (Crandall 7). "My mother had this extraordinary literary ambition . . . she imagined herself as a potentially great writer" (Boozer 116). She was a native of the Northwest who came from a family of "woods workers and seamen" (Phillips 16). "[W]e were always going to the public library to get books, and we always had dozens of books around the house. At that time we were quite a bit poorer than most of our neighbors. So what I developed was a certain amount of self-discipline and an enjoyment in doing a certain amount of work, and then a great attachment to nature" (Kherdian 17).

These earliest experiences living near poverty at the edge of the forest while cultivating an interest in knowledge and education had a lasting effect on Snyder's
sense of identity: "[T]he intersection of an intense intellectual curiosity and an early radical political commitment that was never separate from a deep sense of membership in the world of nature" (Dardick 68). "People who have not experienced the fabric of nature in childhood are slightly impoverished, morally and imaginatively. Growing up in that fabric gave me a powerful moral perspective of respect and regard for all sentient beings and gave me a powerful sense of membership in a real world" (Dardick 60).

The political atmosphere in which he grew up was "left-wing, working-class '30s," and he became acquainted with native tribal peoples of the Pacific Northwest. "I also became aware of the presence of the Northwest Coast Indians, seeing them here and there around the area... down by the beach, in the public market. The Salish Indians even used to come by the house, selling smoked salmon... I also tried my hand at a few of their skills and crafts and did a little leather tanning, made moccasins, and made my own tools. In short, I struggled with self-sufficiency... and subsistence" (Woods and Schoonmaker 17).

In a visit to the Seattle Art Museum at the age of nine Snyder discovered Chinese landscape paintings and felt an immediate affinity. "I can vividly remember walking through various rooms at the art museum. I noticed that the English
and European landscape painters were not very interesting. And then in the Chinese room the hanging Chinese scrolls looked like mountains that I knew" (O'Connell 20). This recognition of the similarity in landscapes became a significant and memorable event for Snyder.

In 1942 Snyder moved with his parents and younger sister to Portland, Oregon, where he graduated from the eighth grade. The following year he entered Lincoln High School where his school interests "centered around journalism club and the drama group" (Crandail 5). Although he had been writing poetry and saving it for a couple of years, Snyder did not share his early work with others. "I don't remember any of that poetry very clearly except that it was all concerned with nature or youth" (Kherdian 48). During this time, when he was twelve or thirteen, his mother and father broke up (Tarn 105). Longtime friend, J. Michael Mahar, notes that Snyder's mother "insisted that he commute downtown to Lincoln High, generally known as the most intellectually demanding in the Portland system. In retrospect, it seems clear that she was helping Gary lay the foundation of scholarly excellence that would enable him to attend the college of her choice. They didn't have the money to pay for higher education, but she was setting him up for scholarships that, combined with frugality, would buy him four years at a first-rate college" (Mahar 9).
Snyder developed an early interest in the crafts and culture of native peoples in the Pacific Northwest and sought further information in his reading. "The biggest probable childhood influence on me was Ernest Thompson Seton and his book of Indian woodcrafts, which have a curious mystique of the Indian and of nature..." (Kherdian 48). He also worked as a copy boy on a newspaper from four to midnight (Tarn 105).

Before he was a teenager Snyder began mountaineering and, at fifteen, after climbing Mount Hood, became a member of the Mazamas Mountain Climbers, an adult organization that required its members to climb "a snowpeak on which there is at least one living glacier, and the top of which cannot be reached by any other means than on foot" (Crandall 6). In the summers, 1943-45, as a way to make some good money and help with the poor economic conditions of his family, he worked at a camp at Spirit Lake, Washington. "It was here that I got my first taste of high country and where I learned the rudiments of mountain climbing and back packing, and changed over from lowland wilderness to alpine wilderness. What I learned there I extended later into Forest Service and logging and mountaineering experience" (Kherdian 48).

Snyder's poetry writing, from the age of fifteen, grew out of his immediate outdoor experiences. "The reason I
started writing poetry was because I couldn't find any other way to even come close to expressing what I was feeling about mountaineering on the great snow peaks of the Northwest. I climbed Mt. St. Helens when I was fifteen, and then I did two or three ascents of Hood when I was sixteen. . . . That was a powerful teaching for me. It was an initiation by all of the great gods of the land here. Each one of those climbs was like an initiation. And so I began to write poems" (O'Connell 18-19).

In 1947 Snyder was offered a scholarship at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, "when a professor at the school read some of his poems" (Ingram 227). At Reed he met Lew Welch, Philip Whalen, and Dell Hymes who, like Snyder, were studying linguistics and anthropology. They all became friends, classmates and for a time Snyder roomed with Welch and Whalen. "The next summer [1948] I shipped out from New York as a seaman; I was galley man or pantry man, I forget which.

"Going to sea was part of a long growth and extension of my sympathies and sensibilities outside simply one area and to many classes and kinds of people and many parts of the world so that now I feel at home everywhere" (Kheredian 48).

In 1950 Snyder published his first poems in Janus, the Reed College student publication. During the summer he
worked for the Park Service on the archaeological site of old Fort Vancouver. In May of 1951 Snyder completed his senior thesis at Reed: The Dimensions of a Myth and graduated with an interdepartmental BA degree in anthropology and literature.

My bachelor's thesis was concerned with both areas. I was particularly interested in mythology, folklore, and oral literature. It's curious how in my thesis I mapped out practically all my major interests and I've followed through on them ever since. Most of the things concerning my poetry are handled in there in one way or another as well as my particular approach to history, psychological problems, nature of the mind, nature of mythology, function and forms of literature, and so forth. All of these were foreshadowed there. (48)

In 1951, after graduation, Snyder, Philip Whalen and Lew Welch moved to San Francisco. In the summer he worked as a timber scaler on Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon. That autumn he came across a copy of D. T. Suzuki's Essays in Zen Buddhism in a San Francisco bookstore before leaving for graduate school in Indiana where he entered the graduate program in anthropology at Indiana University. He stayed at Indiana University for one semester, sharing an apartment with Dell Hymes, who had entered Indiana University the previous year. During that time, Snyder says, "Poetry was growing on me very slowly. I think probably somewhere midway through my college career it became hardly fixed in my mind, and then finally after one semester at Indiana University I made a complete and total
choice, consciously turning my back on the professional scholar's career in anthropology—which is where I was headed—and setting myself loose in the world to sink or swim as a poet" (48–49).

Leaving graduate school in the Spring of 1952 he returned to San Francisco, worked odd jobs, including installing burglary alarms at Kodak. Snyder began practicing sitting meditation when he was twenty-two, from reading about it in books, and became aware of Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Confucianism (Faas 115). Through 1952 to the Spring of 1953 he shared an apartment with Philip Whalen who had also been studying Zen Buddhism. That summer Snyder hitchhiked north and worked as a mountain forest lookout on Crater Mountain in the Baker National Forest of northern Washington. He began writing the poems that later comprised Myths and Texts.

Snyder continued working on Myths and Texts through 1953 and moved from San Francisco to Berkeley, where he lived in a small cottage. Soon after, he entered the University of California at Berkeley, majoring in Oriental languages (1953–56), studying Chinese with Shih-hsiang Chen. As part of his study he translated Wang Wei's "At Deer Hedge." During the summer he worked as a lookout in Baker National Forest on Sourdough Mountain in the North Cascades, where he wrote some of the poems contained in Riprap. In
the Autumn of 1953 Snyder met Kenneth Rexroth who encouraged him to study Zen Buddhism. Snyder decided that year that he would go to Japan to study Zen Buddhism after completing his studies.

In 1954 Snyder began the season as a lookout with the Packwood district of the Gifford Pinchot forest in southern Washington. His poem, "Maitreya," was published in Berkeley Buzsel by the Berkeley Young Buddhist Association and later appeared in Myths and Texts, "Burning 4." That summer, he worked as a choker at Camp A of the Warm Springs Lumber Company in north central Oregon and stayed until the winter shut-down operation. These experiences were later recorded in his poetry. In addition to writing poetry at this time he contributed two book reviews on Indian legends and tales to Midwest Folklore which were later reprinted in Earth House Hold.

In Yosemite National Park, the experiential source for many of the poems in Riprap, Snyder worked on a trail crew in the summer of 1955. He has said that "it was in Yosemite Park that I found myself as a poet" (Robertson 52). Returning to graduate study in Oriental languages at Berkeley, Snyder completed all the requirements for the doctorate except the thesis. In the summer he translated twenty-four of Han-shan's Cold Mountain Poems which were published with Riprap in 1965. In the Autumn of 1955 Snyder
met Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac in San Francisco, and on October 13 he participated in the famous poetry reading at the Six Gallery in the Marina. Ginsberg gave his first public reading of "Howl." Snyder read "A Berry Feast," and Kenneth Rexroth acted as master of ceremonies. From the Fall of 1955 to Spring of 1956 Snyder lived in a small cabin on the slopes of Mount Tamalpais in Mill Valley, practicing Zen Meditation and writing poetry. Later, Jack Kerouac moved in with Snyder, and their experiences became the source of Kerouac's The Dharma Bums—the character of Japhy Ryder was fashioned after Snyder. Snyder wrote to the First Zen Institute's Zen Notes, "I can recommend a lookout as an excellent place for anybody with yamabushi tendencies and some physical and mental toughness..." Philip Whalen and Snyder attended Friday night study groups at the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Church where Snyder first met Alan Watts.

In May, 1956, Snyder sailed for Japan to study under a scholarship at the First Zen Institute of America in Kyoto. He went to see Ruth Sasaki at the First Zen Institute, arriving in Kyoto with a letter of recommendation from Alan Watts, who had been married to Ruth Sasaki's daughter by her first husband. Snyder lived in the Rinko-in Zen temple within the precinct of Shokoku-ji, sharing quarters with pianist Walter Nowick. In July he began formal Zen training
under Zen Master Miura Isshu. Prior to his departure for Japan, Snyder had completed the manuscript for *Myths & Texts* and left it in the care of Robert Creeley.

During the following year, 1957, Snyder met Robert Aitken at Daitoku-ji in Kyoto. Miura-roshi accompanied Mrs. Sasaki to visit the First Zen Institute in New York and instructed Snyder to continue his studies with Sesso Oda-roshi, Zuijan Goto-roshi's successor at Daitoku-ji. In August Snyder shipped out from Yokohama, working as a wiper on the *Sappa Creek*. For eight months he worked in the engine room, traveling to the Persian Gulf five times, and Italy, Turkey, Okinawa, Wake, Guam, Ceylon, Pago Pago, Samoa and Kwajalein once each. The poems and journals written during his travels on the *Sappa Creek* appeared in *Riprap* and *Earth House Hold* respectively. In April 1958, after eight months on the *Sappa Creek*, Snyder arrived at San Pedro, California, and went to San Francisco and spent nine months participating in the poetry scene. He lived at his "hermitage Marin-An" in Mill Valley, climbed the Sierras, and in August his twenty-four poems of Han-shan appeared in *Evergreen Review*. In a special "Zen" edition of the *Chicago Review* Snyder's essay, "Spring Sesshin at Sokoku-ji," appeared that fall.

In 1959 *Riprap* was published. He gave a farewell poetry reading at the Bread & Wine Mission and returned to
Japan for the second time, resuming studies (1959–1965) under Zen master Oda Sesso Roshi in Daitoku-ji. The following year *Myths & Texts* (written between 1952 and 1956) was published by Leroi Jones.

Joined by Peter Orlovsky and Allen Ginsberg in 1962, Snyder traveled in the lower Himalayas and Jaipur, India, and met the Dalai Lama. Back in Kyoto he received visits by Alan Watts and the publisher, Donald Allen. The next year Snyder met Nanao Sakaki, the wandering Japanese poet who was organizing communes in Japan. In 1964 Snyder translated poems of the modern Japanese poet, Kenji Miyazawa, who had died in 1933. Snyder returned briefly to the United States and, with Lew Welch and Philip Whalen, gave the Bread and Poetry reading in San Francisco, attended by 800 people. In the Autumn he taught composition and poetry-writing classes at the University of California at Berkeley, and in the same year he received the Bess Hoskin Prize.

*Riprap*, *Cold Mountain Poems* and *Mountains and Rivers Without End* were published in 1965 and Snyder was awarded a Bollingen Foundation Research Grant for Buddhist Studies (1965–66). In October he returned to Japan to continue his study of Zen Buddhism, this time under Sesso Oda Roshi of Daitoku-ji; he also began studying the Mahayana-Vajrayana line of Buddhism and taught English conversation at the Kyoto YMCA.
A collection of previously published poems was published in London in 1966 under the title *A Range of Poems*. In the same year Snyder received the American Council of Arts and Sciences Prize. In February, with Allen Ginsberg and Richard Baker, Snyder inspected a 100-acre site near Nevada City, California, which they later purchased for $45,000. Later Snyder built his home, Kitkitdizze, on the same property in the foothills of the San Juan Ridge. Kenneth Rexroth wrote of Snyder at the time that he was "one of the most remarkable young men ever to show up in American literature" (Rexroth "A Hope" 149).

In early 1967 Snyder was a leader in San Francisco's Great Human Be-In. The following year *The Back Country* was published, he won the Levinson Prize for "Eight Songs of Clouds and Water," and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship (for 1969-70). In December he returned from Kyoto to live permanently in the United States for the first time since 1956, in large part to play an active role in the growing ecological movement. "By the time I came back to the United States," he said, "my sense of membership in place had expanded so much that there was a much huger territory in which I could feel at home" (O'Connell 23).

*Earth House Hold*, a book of wide-ranging journal entries and essays subtitled "Technical Notes & Queries To Fellow Dharma Revolutionaries," was published in 1969. The next
year Regarding Wave appeared in an expanded edition by New Directions. By the Summer Snyder was squaring the foundation of Kitkitdizze, his new home in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. On May 23 Snyder found a farewell note left by Lew Welch who was never seen again. Snyder's barn was named the Ring of Bone Zendo after one of Lew Welch's poems.


The appearance of Turtle Island in 1974 brought together Snyder's ecological concerns, Buddhist understanding, and respect for native myth, tradition, and culture in one of the most highly-acclaimed volumes of his career, for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1975. While continuing to add poems to Mountains and Rivers Without End, he wrote further on ecological issues. The essays on ethnopoetics, myth, and re-inhabitation in The Old Ways (1977) further established Snyder as a versatile thinker in anthropology and ecology. Snyder's growing
popularity contributed to the release, in 1979, of his 1951 Reed thesis, *He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village: Dimensions of a Haida Myth*, and during the same year *Songs for Gaia* was published by Copper Canyon Press.

*The Real Work: Interviews & Talks 1964–1979* was published in 1980, and in 1983 *Axe Handles* appeared. The University of California at Davis acquired Snyder's letters, manuscripts, and papers for its Snyder collection of 100,000-plus items.

Snyder sat on the Advisory Board of Friends of the Earth in 1985, served as a member of the Editorial Board of *Carnivore* journal, and was an advisor to the Asian Elephant Survival Foundation.

In 1986, the release of *Left Out in the Rain: New Poems 1947–1985* presented the largest collection of previously unpublished poetry, including works from his earliest years at Reed College. In the same year, Snyder began his term as a full professor, teaching annual Spring terms at UC Davis. In 1987 Snyder was inducted into the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Snyder's most comprehensive examination of place thus far is his 1990 book of essays, *The Practice of the Wild*, a work which draws upon a lifetime of interrelated studies in anthropology, ecology, native myth and culture, bioregional perspectives and wilderness experience. Also, in
commemoration of his 60th birthday, the year marked the appearance of *Gary Snyder: Dimensions of a Life*, edited by Jon Halper.

In 1992 Snyder's *No Nature: New and Selected Poems* was published by Pantheon.

**Language and the Craft of Culture**

Gary Snyder has commented mostly in general terms about his own sense of a personal poetics. Although his poetry bears the influence of Pound, Olson, Duncan and Rexroth, Snyder appears less concerned than these poets with formulating a theoretical framework that describes his own poetry. More often, his remarks express an anthropologically-related perspective toward the role of song and poetry in primitive and contemporary cultures and the way he joins his experiences and way of life to his primary concentration on place, community, and work within his poetry. What Snyder says about his own work is important more for the way it reinforces the relation between his life and his poetry than in offering a theoretical perspective of his poetic practice. Rather than dwelling on theoretical positions or speculating on abstract assumptions, Snyder tends to maintain a rootedness in the physicality of work and the sensory material of place. Nevertheless, what Snyder says about his work reveals
something of his own changing use of language:

I started writing poetry in my adolescence, to
give voice to some powerful experiences that I had
while doing snowpeak mountaineering in the Pacific
Northwest. At first I wrote "directly as I felt." Then I discovered the work of Robinson Jeffers and
D. H. Lawrence. Aha, I thought, there is more to
poetry. I became aware of poetry as a craft—a
matter of working with materials and tools—that
has a history, with different applications and
strategies all over the world over tens of
thousands of years. I came to understand poetry
as a furthering of language. (Snyder
"Introduction" 3)

By the time he had published his first works, Riprap
and Myths & Texts, in 1959 and 1960 respectively, Snyder had
began to incorporate this understanding of language into his
poetry. It is worth recalling that, despite the order of
their publication dates, the manuscript for Myths & Texts
was completed at least two years prior to the completion of
Riprap. The poems contained in Myths & Texts were all
written between 1952 and 1956 while some entries in Riprap
were composed as late as 1958. Thus, the earliest of
Snyder's poems available to the general public date from
1952, five years after Snyder had begun saving his work.
Except for a few poems that were published in the Reed
College literary journal while Snyder was an undergraduate
student, there has been, until recently, very little
evidence from the period between 1947 and 1952 to reflect
Snyder's poetic apprenticeship or the changes that occurred
in his poetry prior to his writing of Myths & Texts.
With the publication of *Left Out in the Rain* in 1936, a number of Snyder's earliest, previously unpublished, poems were made available for the first time, making it possible to chart the emergence of Snyder's poetic voice and to observe some of the ways in which his representation of place had matured during the years prior to the publication of *Riprap*. The poems from this period reveal that while Snyder was developing a sense of place and attempting to locate some of his poetry in the territory of his Pacific Northwest experiences, he was still very much in search of an effective poetic voice to express his relation to landscape and the conditions of the modern industrialized world. Between 1947 and 1952 Snyder's poetry reflects the influence of a number of poets including Eliot, Pound, and Robert Graves upon his own poetic voice.

In one poem from this period, "Elk Trails," written in 1947 when Snyder was seventeen, the expression of feelings resembles Wordsworth's use of nature as a source for inward reflection, while also bearing a hint of Robinson Jeffers' misanthropic tone and sense of alienation. In this early poem we find a young man attracted to the natural world of mountain and elk, yet in addition to its scenic descriptiveness of ravines, alpine meadows, and mountains, the poem describes a person's feelings of isolation. It is a poem which calls attention to the speaker's emotional
responsiveness to the immediate environment in a way which Snyder's later poems successfully avoid. Borrowing a term from Jack Spicer, the poem contains an excess of "ego interference." While it is an early example of an instance in which Snyder wrote "directly as [he] felt," it also registers one of his earliest efforts to relate the speaker to the landscape. But, in doing so, the poem projects what Charles Olson cautioned against in poetry, the "lyrical interference of the ego, of the subject and his soul" (Martin "Coyote Mind" 166) Snyder, himself, has since stated that "the point is not to let yourself be the main character of what you're thinking. If the sense of self is too narrowly located, then people sound like they're talking about themselves all the time" (Martin 167). Although "Elk Trails" never reaches such an extreme degree of self-absorption, it and other poems of this period are among the most self-reflective works in Snyder's collected body of poetry.

The first three stanzas of "Elk Trails" indicate Snyder's early fascination with the mountains he climbed in Oregon and Washington, while also revealing an individuality and sense of personal exclusivity, an isolation and self consciousness that in later poems gives way to a greater sense of community and connection between personality and surroundings.
Ancient, world-old Elk paths
Narrow, dusty Elk paths
Wide-trampled, muddy,
Aimless . . . wandering . . .
Everchanging Elk paths.

I have walked you, ancient trails,
Along the narrow rocky ridges
High above the mountains that
Make up your world:
Looking down on giant trees, silent
In the purple shadows of ravines—
Above the spire-like alpine fir
Above the high, steep-sloping meadows
Where sun-softened snowfields share the earth
With flowers.

I have followed narrow twisting ridges,
Sharp-topped and jagged as a broken crosscut saw
Across the roof of all the Elk-world
On one ancient wandering trail,
Cutting crazily over rocks and dust and snow—
Gently slanting through high meadows,
Rich with scent of Lupine,
Rich with smell of Elk-dung,
Rich with scent of short-lived
Dainty alpine flowers.
And from the ridgetops I have followed you
Down through heather fields, through timber,
Downward winding to the hoof-churned shore of
One tiny blue-green mountain lake
Untouched by lips of men. (LOR 5-6)

As a transitional poem linking Snyder's adolescence to the mature style identifiable in Riprap and Myths & Texts, "Elk Trails" employs much of the descriptive imagery that later will become strongly identified with Snyder's poetry. The range of sensory detail from "sun-softened snowfields" to the rich "smell of Elk-dung" and "narrow rocky ridges" anticipates much of Snyder's later sensual representation of experience. This and other early poems present a subtly-expressed antagonism toward the cosmopolitanism of
modern life and its effects on human values. The speaker's
direct address of the Elk trails—"I have walked you,
ancient trails" and "from the ridgetops I have followed you
/ Down through the heather fields"—suggests not only an
allegiance and sense of affinity to the remote location
where ancient instinctual activity prevails, but it also
sets the speaker apart from the mass of humanity represented
by the regularity and straightness of man-made paths: "And
their God laughs low and often / At the man-made trails."
Again, the "Thin-flanked God / Laugh in silent wind-like
chuckles / At man, and all his trails." The persona within
the poem is clearly not identified with those who are
"Ignorant of the fine, high-soaring ridges / And the
slanting grassy meadows / Hanging over space." His
awareness of the ancient switchbacks which follow streams
and valleys sets him apart from "man," and he identifies
himself with the trails, "Route and destination seeming
aimless," as he wanders alone. While Snyder expresses his
desire to be in the wilderness, in this poem he has not yet
become "a voice for the wilderness."

What is revealing about the poem is not the poet's
apostrophizing of the Elk trails or the sense of deep
connection with the primitive and instinctual, but the kind
of references which are made to those who do not share his
own implied awareness, and especially the tone with which
the speaker ridicules the remainder of humanity from the superior height of his position. His underlying hint of superiority is an example of the kind of "ego interference" which Snyder later removed or expressed more subtly in his poetry, most noticeably by simply omitting any references to any implied "other" who may not share the insights and understanding of Snyder's persona. The didactic subtlety of Snyder's later poems teaches, then invites, the reader to share the speaker's insights, whereas here the voice tends to distance and alienate, if not confront, the reader.

Other poems of this early period prior to 1952 present a perspective of the world in which persistent wildness will outlive and eventually displace industrial society, and natural processes will supplant modern human structures. In "Lines on a Carp," Snyder provides a glimpse of a post-human world that promises a return to the simplicity of plant and animal life:

old fat fish of everlasting life  
in rank brown pools discarded by the river  
soft round-mouth mudding mud  
among the reeds, beside the railroad track

you will not hear the human cries  
but pines will grow between those ties  
before you turn your belly to the sun (LOR 11)

In another poem, "Spring Songs," Snyder once again concentrates on a landscape changed by modern life; this time in a metropolitan setting:
Out the building's shadow
A seagull bursts
Caught in slanted sunbeam,
Wing-slanted windward, head cocked sideways—
Eyeing the broil of cars
Within the shadow—

what noise, what beasts rush
on those ordered paths
what ugly visions in this cubic tangle
(LOR 14)

In stronger and more direct language than in "Elk Trails," the sentiment in "Spring Songs" condemns the modern industrial state and its conceptions of progress. The "ordered paths" of city streets are the consequence of "ugly visions" put into practice by contemporary "beasts" who, having lost their connection to the environment, are unable to live harmoniously with the creatures who have been displaced. As with the speaker in "Elk Trails" who looks down from the mountain height upon the "precise-cut" man-made trails, the seagull and speaker in "Spring Songs" look down on the "cubic tangle" of the city. Although in these examples the elk and man-made trails are intertwined in a single location; the "old fat fish" and the railroad track are related by the territory they both occupy; and the seagull and the city dwellers share the same space, these pairings are not presented as relationships of symbiotic coexistence. Rather, Snyder presents circumstances in which humans have encroached on the natural habitat of animals which had lived there for millenia, displacing them and
altering the landscape.

At the same time, there is in these poems the suggestion that the instinctual and wild creatures will persevere and prevail in the long term, outlasting humans. The implicit message is that a lack of vision on the part of industrialized contemporary society is ultimately self-destructive, but that the wildness associated with "the old fat fish" and the seagull is inextinguishable.

While these early poems express a sympathy with the natural world in a tone that is unmistakably critical of modern society, Snyder's overall poetry of this period cannot simply be characterized as misanthropic. There are also poems of Snyder's early romantic experiences ("At this" and "Under the Skin of It"), travels at sea ("Seaman's Ditty"), as well as witty tributes to his friend Philip Whalen ("A Sincere for P. Whalen" and "Birth of the Shaman"). And there are occasional glimpses of the style that Snyder was moving toward in poetry generally—the elliptical juxtaposition of images bearing the influence of his introduction to Japanese and Chinese short poems during this time. In one section from "At this," we see an early example of a shift toward the use of a singular self-reference at the conclusion of a series of images, a characteristic found with increasing frequency in Snyder's later poetry:
Half-known stars in the dawn sky
Purple Finch at the feed-tray
A broom beat on the back porch,
tea,
My bent legs, love of you. (LOR 28)

What is especially significant about such a poem in relation
to the previous examples is the way in which it indicates a
cchange in Snyder's representation of subjectivity. In
particular, Snyder here demonstrates his—or the
speaker's--response to the immediate circumstances not by
using emotion-laden adjectives such as "ugly" visions,
"ordered" paths or "man-made" trails, terms imbued with the
speaker's own judgment, but rather the poem is stripped to a
nearly objective series of descriptions that omit his
interpretive assessment. Except for the final line, there
is no direct self reference by an experiencing subject. The
first line does not indicate whether the stars are
half-known to the speaker or to a wider observing audience.
Likewise, the participial structure of the third line does
not suggest who beats the broom on the porch.

The result is a different expression of the
relationship between things and actions. Notably absent is
the claim to human agency. Not only is the speaker no
longer situated at the center of the poem, as in "Elk
Trails," he becomes identified with and connected to a
number of other images. The stars, the finch, the broom and
the tea become as significant as the speaker's own bent legs
in the expression and experience of love in the final line.

This general shift in the depiction of his relation to the immediate environment is significant not only in decentering the poem's emphasis on the speaker's feelings and attitudes toward contemporary Western culture, but there enters into Snyder's work an increasing sense in which he expresses an inseparable connection to the things and events in his environment. The way in which this is accomplished is not through the speaker's commentary, but by means of the organization and placement of images. Without stating it, he suggests a direct relationship between the world as it is and his own present state of mind. It is a state of being which expresses itself through the ordering and arrangement of objects and events, presenting them as immediate and unmediated experience.

The fuller significance of the ways in which form and the juxtaposition of images contribute to a way of being will be the subject of chapter two, but here it is worth noting that the change in Snyder's early poetry to an imagistic method marks a relationship between the persona and his environment that begins to emphasize more of a sense of connectedness. The alienation is not internalized, but is seen, instead, as a condition of modernism which the poet does not embrace. Although Snyder has continued to be critical of a society consumed by acquisitiveness and
motivated by profit, his poetry by 1952 had begun to
redirect more of his attention to a sense of place which
emphasized the cultural values of primitive and native
peoples than with what he found in modern civilization.

In 1952, after his one semester of graduate studies at
Indiana University, Snyder returned to San Francisco,
foregoing an academic future in anthropology in order to
"sink or swim as a poet." The range of cultural historians
influencing his thinking included Levi-Strauss, Franz Boas,
James Frazer, Benjamin Lee Whorf and Carl Jung. The basis
of his emerging poetics was firmly established in his double
interest in anthropology and linguistics. Speaking of his
own sense of poetics, Snyder has said:

[My intellectual theories and visions are not
drawn from philosophers but inductively derived
from reading history and anthropology and
linguistics. I formulate my theories that way
rather than by reading theoreticians, and that's
what my reading has been over the years. So my
poetics are in a sense a kind of linguistic and
anthropological poetics based on what human beings
have done and extracting from that what the
essence of poetry seems to be. So I use the
shamanistic terminology of the magic words and
what that is, the pantric efficacy of sound, and the
genres of poetry as derived from a Tribal
concept: essentially work songs, power vision
songs, love songs, courting songs, death songs,
war songs, healing songs. That kind of
terminology is what I feel comfortable with
because that is how I see it. (Faas 120)

Coinciding with a shift in his poetic voice toward the
"shamanistic terminology of the magic words," Snyder's
approach to writing poetry became "a discipline of openness
and availability" (Graham 76). In regarding the poet as one who "can only be an instrument of what comes" (76), Snyder applied to his own work the claim offered by Robert Graves that "a true poem is necessarily an invocation of the White Goddess, or Muse, the Mother of All Living, the ancient power of fright and lust . . ." (Graves 24). For Snyder, the voice of the muse was unpredictable "and it tends to speak at the most inconvenient times. . . . That's the discipline that I had to learn. Even to wake yourself up in the middle of the night and put it down" (Graham 76). Snyder had long been familiar with the myths and oral tradition of the Haida, as well as the customs of other Pacific Northwest native peoples whose relationship to the landscape was expressed in song. Physical work became both the means of inspiration and the source of much of Snyder's poetry during the years he worked in logging camps and with trails crews in the forest service.

In Riprap (1959) the way that landscape interacts with memory to inform the present moment becomes something different for Snyder than it had for Wordsworth, for instance, and for the Romantics generally. In the example of "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth marks his present experience by the way the landscape brings to mind the recollection of a former event or sensation.
... and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.--Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
(Wordsworth 108)

The mental and emotional process of memory is
foregrounded such that the present experience is not so much
one of direct attentiveness to the landscape as it is an
occasion for the speaker to turn an eye inward upon his
reflections of earlier occasions. Here he is not hearing
and seeing the landscape immediately before him except as
the trigger for his reflections. The immediacy of
experiencing the landscape is, for Wordsworth and Romantics
generally, subordinated to one's own feelings about a
correspondence between the observed natural world and the
emotions elicited by the landscape. For Wordsworth, the
feelings of present experience are also directed toward the
future:

The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years... (109)

For Wordsworth, the past and future are so heavily
invested in the present moment that he often defers the
actual experiencing of the present to its past associations
and future anticipations. Moreover, the "beauteous forms"
of landscape become investments for future moments from
which they can again be regarded, perpetually displacing the immediate presence of experience by the memory of previous events.

In some respects the Wordsworth passage is not unlike the Snyder of "Elk Trails" in which the description of landscape occasions the poet's reflections on his own aloneness. But, in "Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout," the opening poem of *Riprap*, Snyder expresses a state of mind without placing it at the center of the speaker's concern. In this short poem what appears as an elliptical description of sights and feelings experienced by an observer looking over a valley is as much the expression of his presence, a way of being, or state of mind. Without referring to his own attentiveness, he nevertheless expresses a perspective or mode of consciousness that reveals his relationship to the immediate environment.

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. (R 1)

The outwardly-directed attention of the speaker in the first stanza makes no reference or allusion to the consciousness of an experiencing subject. There is, instead, the
appearance of a series of fact-based objective descriptions briefly presented and juxtaposed as images without syntactic connectors. The prepositions, however, suggest that the positioning of things/events in space and time is not simply the consequence of an objective description—they are ordered through the speaker's consciousness, indicating a spatial perspective ("Down valley" and "Across rocks and meadows") and temporal duration ("Three days heat, after five days rain") (emphasis added). Thus, without any reference to the speaker's presence, Snyder's use of language here expresses a relationship that conjoins the experiencing subject and the experienced event.

The implicit interconnectedness becomes further suggested in the second stanza by the single self reference connected to memory, momentarily breaking the focus on the exterior scene to include a fleeting thought as part of his present experience. Unlike Wordsworth, however, here it is not the accumulation of memories and their continuation through recollection, nor is it the imposition of memory upon the experience of the present landscape, but rather it is the absence of "things I once read" and friends now settled in cities that inserts itself into the present moment, suggesting in this case that the present is enriched by the letting go of the past, contributing to the speaker's attentiveness to the present experience. He does not dwell
on the reflection of friends or cities, nor does any sustained thought and reminiscence impinge itself on his attentiveness to the landscape in which he is immersed.

Following the brief inward-turning reflection, the speaker's attention returns immediately to the sensory experience of the present moment, "Drinking cold snow-water from a tin cup" and viewing the landscape he occupies. He remains the unnamed subject of the dependent participial clauses introduced by "drinking" and "looking." Without calling further attention to an experiencing "I," the speaker's presence is implied by a relational necessity of mutual interdependence—the place and the speaker inseparably define the moment. Snyder, in effect, expresses in this poem the meditative process from the perspective of the experiencer. Commenting years later about his poetry, Snyder stated that "what one hopes to pass along is the living experience of being in each moment" (Martin "Coyote Mind" 167). Such attentiveness, for Snyder, increasingly included the importance of place as the locus of experience, the habitat within which landscape acquires value.

Gary Snyder's sense of place was broadened in the 1950s by a number of influences, including his study of Chinese poetry and culture and a growing awareness of the emerging ecological crisis. His poetry began to call for what Robert Kern described as "a transformation of values, a greater
incorporation of the *primitive* in our lives, and the recognition that all creatures, including trees, grasses, water and air, are significant and equal members of the community of being* (Kern "Snyder and Us" 16). One cautionary theme in *Myths & Texts*—and one which recurs in his poetry thereafter—concerns the continuing history of human despoliation of the earth. Early in the "Logging" section Snyder introduces this ecological theme with a criticism of the unmanaged use and destruction of the forests:

>The ancient forests of China logged
and the hills slipped into the Yellow Sea.
Squared beams, log dogs,
on a tamped-earth sill.
San Francisco 2 X 4s
were the woods around Seattle:
Someone killed and someone built, a house,
a forest, wrecked or raised
All America hung on a hook
& burned by men, in their own praise. (MT 3-4)

Here, the speaker is removed entirely as an experiencing figure, while at the same time the voice within the poem becomes stronger in its condemnation of unchecked growth, lack of vision, and an apparent failure of national will to learn, from history, the consequences of an exploitative relation to the natural world. To the degree that Snyder's call for a transformation of values corresponds to the politicization of the landscape within his poetry, he also tends to remove the focus on his own feelings which were more evident in his earliest poetry.
By the mid-1950s Snyder's poetry, while diverse in the range of its subject matter, no longer idealized the landscape or described lakes as "untouched by lips of men." The voice in Snyder's work, without sounding alarmed or urgent, nevertheless began to signal implicit environmental values which opposed those of the expanding consumer culture. In contrast to modern societies' faith in progress and technology Snyder addressed the primitive sacredness of the forests, speaking for values which were being undermined or eroded. One such poem from Myths & Texts in which this becomes evident is "Logging 14," relating tone and a strong indicting poetic voice to descriptive imagery.

The groves are down
    cut down
Groves of Ahab, of Cybele
Pine trees, knobbled twigs
    thick cone and seed
    Cybele's tree this, sacred in groves
Pine of Seami, cedar of Haida
Cut down by the prophets of Israel
    the fairies of Athens
    the thugs of Rome
    both ancient and modern;
Cut down to make room for the suburbs
Bulldozed by Luther and Weyerhaeuser
Crosscut and chainsaw
    squareheads and finns
    high-lead and cat-skidding
Trees down
Creeks choked, trout killed, roads.

Sawmill temples of Jehovah.
Squat black burners 100 feet high
Sending the smoke of our burnt
Live sap and leaf
To his eager nose. (MT 15)
Again, one of the poem's strengths lies, in part, in the positioning of the persona's presence. While the poem serves, overall, as a warning against "both ancient and modern" values and their lack of regard for forests, the speaker is vocal and at the same time invisible. Not only is his concern sympathetic to the position of the trees, creeks, and fish, but at one moment in the poem there is a direct association between the speaker and the trees themselves, in the description of the "Squat black burners 100 feet high / Sending the smoke of our burnt / Live sap and leaf / To his eager nose" (emphasis added). The pronominal reference to "our burnt / Live sap and leaf" suggests that the poem comes as much from the perspective of the trees as it might from a sympathetic logger caught in the ambivalent role of contributing to the very activity he criticizes. Although it cannot be said that the poetic voice is detached from a moral position, the lack of direct narrative intrusion on the part of the speaker softens the intensity of the poem's condemnation of an industry which cuts down groves and forests "to make room for the suburbs."

Without specifying a single target toward which criticism is directed, and without characterizing a particularly identifiable persona from which the criticism is presented, there is in Snyder's work an implicit acknowledgment that it is not a select group of people who
are held responsible or accountable, but rather it is an entire way of thinking that requires transformation. Rather than alienating people for what they do, Snyder is more interested in addressing the importance of people's relationship to the landscape they inhabit. One of the significant but unsettling suggestions in the poem is that we are all implicated, collectively bound together in facing and questioning a way of thinking that was as common to ancient Athenians and Romans as it is to the present-day Americans and their logging industry. Implicitly, contemporary suburbanites are complicitous with Weyerhaeuser in cutting down the groves. What is required is a change in a way of thinking while maintaining a relationship between opposing interests.

Snyder's poetic stance, although not directly confrontational, can be disarming in the way that a didactic and chiding tone is subtly tempered by a seemingly detached or disinterested description. In the poem above, the tone is unquestionably critical of the "thugs" who have cut down and "bulldozed" the groves and choked the creeks, yet the poem is an observation that expresses disappointment rather than an embittered plea for restraint or a call for action. The consequences or ramifications of the critical observations made in the poem remain tacitly connected to the tone rather than explicitly presented as a warning about
the future. Snyder's poetics and ecological activism avoid prophetic speculations or forecasts and instead rely upon statements of existing conditions and historical precedents.

While there is no doubt where Snyder's sympathies rest in such a poem, he has been criticized for the subtlety with which he approaches (or avoids) any direct discussion of solutions to the exposed problems. As I will discuss in greater detail in chapter five, Snyder's overriding emphasis on a way of being generally redirects attention from proposing particular courses of action. Snyder implicitly suggests a reconsideration and transformation of the processes that bind both suburban growth and Weyerhaeuser clear-cutting. Because of Snyder's continued emphasis on the primary importance of a way of being rather than declaring a course of action, the poem does more to call attention to the problem than to outline appropriate responses to it. Nevertheless, in the 1950s such attention to environmental degradation was enough to place Snyder in an adversarial relationship to many of the dominant forces within the culture.

As a poet writing about the need for a cultural transformation of values, and at the same time studying Chinese and Japanese culture, Snyder recognized his own place at the margins of the culture while also discovering differences between Chinese and occidental poets regarding
their relationship to nature. He found, for instance, that unlike the Chinese poet, "when an occidental poet is an adversary to his civilization, he's adversary in terms of two other possible alternatives: an alternative social system, another political form, or another theological system. He does not fall back on nature as the ground of his sanity with which he can pit his sanity against the insanity of the society. So that takes him up and out rather than grounding him" (Snyder "Chinese Poetry" 51).

Given his own background growing up in the Pacific Northwest and working in back country logging camps and on forest lookouts, Snyder found more personal relevance in the poetry and ideas of Han-shan, Tu Fu, Wang Wei and Li Po than in the modernist concerns offered in the works of T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens. Like the Chinese poets, he began to "put his sanity against the insanity of the society." He increasingly developed an affinity for early Chinese poets, particularly their relationship to nature, discovering that "when the Chinese poet fails back, he fails back on natural world as habitat for his reference to a greater sanity" (51). Furthermore, Snyder learned that Chinese poets "were not perhaps interested specifically in nature as nature—and certainly not in nature as wilderness—but, in nature as a habitat for a sage. The sage in the habitat is what is of key importance" (51).
As a poet, Snyder, too, became identifiable with his habitat, recognizing not only that his identity was bound up with the places he wrote about, but that his sense of responsibility as a poet required that he speak for the marginalized and voiceless wild that was becoming increasingly threatened. The inseparability, in Snyder's case, of his identification with the wilderness, his integration of counter-cultural values, and his life as a poet contributed to a poetics grounded in basic human experience. Years later he would call upon poets "to fulfill one of their ancient functions . . . to be interpreters from the otherness realm of the wild and of nature, both as understood inside and outside of ourselves . . ." (Castro and Castro 54).

To interpret present conditions is not, however, the same as providing solutions or envisioning future worlds. Snyder's poetics instead began to revolve around the importance of more clearly expressing and understanding the immediacy of experience, attending to a condition of consciousness which described a human relationship to habitat based on connectedness rather than estrangement. For Snyder, his practice as a poet was inseparably connected to a way of being which acknowledged the primary importance of attending and responding to present conditions.
The work of poetry is really not the work of prophecy. Nor is it, ultimately, the work of social change. That's just part of it. The other part of it is in the eternity of the present, and doesn't have to do with evolutionary processes at all, but has to do with bringing us back to our original, true natures from whatever habit-molds that our perceptions, that our thinking and feeling get formed into. And bringing us back to original true mind, seeing the universe freshly in eternity, yet any moment. (Geneson 72)

Within a decade of his return to San Francisco in 1952 Gary Snyder had articulated a clear relationship between the craft of his poetry, an understanding of the transforming influence of language in culture, and his own connection to a long human history of rootedness in place--one which he found more fully developed during the Paleolithic than in the present. In his famous 1961 statement for the Paterson Society Snyder clarified his role as poet-sage, identified his relation to society and to wilderness, and indicated the values that his poetry would continue to explore and examine:

As poet I hold the most archaic values on earth. They go back to the late Paleolithic: the fertility of the soil, the magic of animals, the power-visions in solitude, the terrifying initiation and re-birth, the love and ecstasy of the dance, the common work of the tribe. I try to hold both history and wilderness in mind, that my poems may approach the true measure of things and stand against the unbalance and ignorance of our times. (Kherdian 52)

What Snyder sees in the primitive peoples of the late Paleolithic is a way of being based on an understanding of the human connection to the animals, rivers and rocks.
Without idealizing or romanticizing their existence, Snyder recognizes old values, "old ways," that have relevance for a present-day civilization that has become detached and alienated from its relation to the natural world:

A line is drawn between primitive peoples and civilized peoples. I think there is a wisdom in the worldview of primitive peoples that we have to refer ourselves to, and learn from. If we are on the verge of post-civilization, then our next step must take account of the primitive worldview which has traditionally and intelligently tried to open and keep open lines of communication with the forces of nature. (Snyder "The Wilderness" 70)

Much of Snyder's poetry, devoted to keeping open such lines of communication, shifted the emphasis away from the centrality of the speaker's personality to express the "forces of nature" in as unmediated a manner as language permits. Much more than a naturalist describing an appreciation for nature, Snyder seeks to present the expressions of the wilderness, establishing a relationship that includes humans and the wild, but which is based on reverence, an understanding of interdependence, and an awareness of the human connectedness to the wild. Speaking before the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in 1970 Snyder further reinforced the connections between his poetry and his ecological vision:

I wish to bring a voice from the wilderness, my constituency. I wish to be a spokesman for a realm that is not usually represented either in intellectual chambers or in the chambers of government. . . . I would like to think of a new
definition of democracy that would include the non-human that would have representation from those spheres. This is what I think we mean by an ecological conscience. (70)

The most significant shift in Snyder's early poetry occurred in the voice within the poems; the speaker's presence receded from prominence to transparency as increasing immediacy was brought into the work. Structurally, the removal of the persona as a visible presence and observable personality contributed to an increased immediacy directly between the images and the reader.

While rendering transparent the speaker who had acted as an intermediary between the depicted events and the reader/observer, Snyder still maintains a "voice" within the poem, a tone which invites the reader to share the perspective of a persona who may not even be present as a an observable figure. The resulting emphasis on the narrative structure of the poem and the form in which images were presented permitted Snyder to omit "ego interference" while furthering the relationships and web of connections linking linguistics, poetics, primitive worldviews, wilderness and labor.

Snyder was working more directly toward a "practice" in which poetry writing, Buddhist meditation, mountaineering, and fence-building became so intricately interwoven as parts of his daily experience that practice itself, "the real
work," came to mean an attentiveness to whatever immediate experience was at hand.

In the title poem from *Riprap* Snyder describes the craft of poetry, using the tools of language as an expression of the same process by which the hard physicality of the universe is ordered and patterned by the mind. The poem is as much an expression of Snyder's poetics and the care with which well chosen words point to the complexity beneath the surface of things as it is about the limitations of a language system that solidifies processes which are fluid, ever-changing, and in flux.

Nevertheless, recognizing "the eternity of the present," Snyder finds a correspondence between words "placed solid, by hands / In choice of place" and the patterns ingrained in stone or the "Solidity of bark, leaf, or wall." The "riprap of things" consists of a diversity of forms within which each object shares a commonality with others in the expression of its individual qualities. In describing riprap as "a cobble of stone laid on steep slick rock to make a trail for horses in the mountains," Snyder found in physical labor a metaphor that corresponds to the poet's craft of language:

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:
Cobble of milky way,
straying planets,
These poems, people,
lost ponies with
Dragging saddles--
and rocky sure-foot trails.
The worlds like an endless
four-dimensional
Game of Go.
    ants and pebbles
In the thin loam, each rock a word
    a creek-washed stone
Granite: ingrained
    with the torment of fire and weight
Crystal and sediment linked hot
    all change, in thoughts,
As well as things. (R 30)

Much of the framework for Snyder's poetics and the
themes he would continue to explore in his poetry were first
established in Riprap and Myths & Texts even though the
complexity of a worldview and ecological conscience was to
become further developed in later works. By 1960, when
Myths & Texts was published, Snyder had already been in
Japan for nearly four years studying Zen Buddhism at the
First Zen Institute in Kyoto. In many ways the "Japan
years," from 1956 to 1968, contributed as significantly to
Snyder's sense of place as did his work in the emerging
ecological movement following his return to the United
States in 1968. In terms of a way of being, Buddhism and
ecology have been complementary in focusing Snyder's
attention on what one does in landscape. The
intensification of an ecological conscience and a way of
being strengthened by his Buddhist practice and his participation in the ecological movement of the late 1960s and 1970s presented in his later poetry a more confident voice—one which at times presented Snyder in the sage and didactic role of a moral teacher. As we will see later, Snyder's didacticism is not without its risks and critics, making it especially important to understand the relationship of Buddhism to the ecological principles Snyder has endorsed.

Although Snyder's Buddhist training and ecological work have been overlapping, ongoing, and mutually reinforcing practices, for purposes of the present study they will be examined individually as developments that grew out of his beginnings as a poet. The contribution of Buddhism to Snyder's sense of place will be the subject of Chapter Three, and in Chapter Four the discussion will concentrate further on the ecological principles that Snyder began to advance in his work. Concurrent with Snyder's Buddhist practice and growing ecological awareness was his attention to form and its relation to a sense of place.

Much of the imagist influence within Snyder's poetry can be found in Pound, Williams, Creeley, the "projective verse" of Charles Olson, and in Chinese and Japanese poetry. If we are to appreciate the full integrative significance of Buddhism and ecology in Gary Snyder's sense of place and his
larger ecological vision it is important to understand first the relation of poetic form to the primacy of place. The imagist or ideogrammic structure of Snyder's poetry is connected to the communicating "voice" of the poems in ways which can be assessed independent of Buddhism or ecology--and this will be the focus of the next chapter. Later, we will see that, unlike other poets, Snyder's integration of a world view and ecological vision maximizes the structural efficacy of the ideogrammic and elliptical form of Snyder's poetry.
CHAPTER II

THE PRESENCE AND STRUCTURE OF PLACE

Form is what happens

—Robert Creeley—

Art does not seek to describe but to enact

—Charles Olson—

Image and the Ideogrammic Method

As the locus of experience, place in Gary Snyder's poetry is more than an observed landscape. Beneath the apparent simplicity of descriptive language is a presentation of experience linking the speaker to place in ways that may not be readily apparent, in part because of the speaker's limited self-referentiality, which renders his presence transparent in many instances. Moreover, the way in which the presentation of place is also directly linked to the formal structure of the poetry oftentimes obscures the associations that exist between the structures Snyder
sees in the world and those he incorporates in the poetry. Robert Creeley's terse observation that form is never more than an extension of content may be applied as well to the relation between place and structure in Snyder's poetry—the form of the poem is an extension and expression of a relationship to place (Olson 16).

In terms of poetic form, Snyder's poetry bears some influence of Pound's imagism and Williams' concrete constructions which tend to emphasize the visual design of images. But, more than Pound and Williams, Snyder emphasizes the aural/oral quality of language, and like Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, he expresses the importance of the breath in the sound structure of the line. The manner with which Snyder maintains both visual and aural modes in his poetry is significant beyond achieving a fuller expression of sensory detail— it contributes to the dissolution of boundaries between place and inhabitant, landscape and speaker, object and subject. Snyder's images incorporate the speaker's presence into place itself, and significantly his use of images is not presented as the poetic expression of a theory of perception or feeling. While such theories accompanied the contributions of the imagists, I hope to show in this chapter that Snyder has used images and poetic form to create a poetry of ontology, one in which a state of being includes but supercedes issues
of perception and emotion.

Although the significance of place in Snyder's work undoubtedly consists of more than imagistic usage, it is important here to discuss in some detail the ways in which imagism has come to play a significant part in Snyder's presentation of place. To do that, it is useful to examine the contribution and influence that the ideogrammic form has had on contemporary poetry (including Snyder's), as it came to be conceived by Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa. Later I will argue that Snyder treats the juxtaposition of images differently than Pound, and in chapter three I will discuss the adaptability of the ideogrammic form to the Buddhist perspectives presented in Snyder's work. Here, though, I wish to establish the theoretical basis of the ideogrammic method as Pound and Fenollosa came to regard it, and raise some of the questions of perception and representation of reality that emerged from their work and from the work of T. E. Hulme and Henri Bergson.

Although Pound is generally credited with the advent of imagism, T. E. Hulme's critical speculations on the image, metaphor, and the conventions of language predate Pound's association with the imagists. Prior to Pound's entry into the imagist circle, Hulme's essays described the importance of images in relation to the poet's immediate perceptions of "things." He saw the image as "the very essence of an
intuitive language" in which poets recorded reality through
the juxtaposition of dissimilar images and associations.
Regarding perception as the basis for these associations of
images, Hulme linked together poetic intuition, the
development of primitive language, and modern poetry. He
said that poetry is always "the advance guard of language.
The progress of language is the absorption of new analogies"
(Gage 11).

One critic observes that Hulme was calling for the
construction of a "new, unconventional" relation of metaphor
and image to the "spontaneous, intensive perception of
reality," and this meant that "the creation of the image
ought to reproduce the process of the evolution of metaphor
in primitive language" (11). According to John T. Gage,
Hulme "understood the metaphor to be the production of a
wholly new idea based on an analogy between two things as
perceived by the senses" (11). Moreover, Hulme's emphasis
on dissimilar things may have derived from Henri Bergson,
whose work Hulme had been translating. Interpreting
Bergson, Hulme asserts that the function of the intellect
"is to present things not that we may most thoroughly
understand them, but that we may successfully act on them"
(Hulme 147). Hulme and Bergson are concerned with action
more than knowledge, with the dynamism associated with
perception more than understanding individual sensations or
percepts. For Bergson, "no image can replace the intuition of duration," and therefore more than a single isolated image was required for time and action to be perceived (Jones 46). In one representative passage, Bergson reveals a central feature of his discussion of images, focusing not on the qualities of individual images, but on the relational importance of their interactions with one another.

Many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized. By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, we shall prevent any one of them from usurping the place of intuition it is intended to call up, since it would then be driven away at once by its rivals. By providing that, in spite of their differences of aspect, they all require from the mind the same kind of attention, and in some sort the same degree of tension, we shall gradually accustom consciousness to a particular and clearly-defined disposition—that precisely which it must adopt in order to appear to itself as it really is, without any veil. (Gage 11-12)

As a poetic process, this "visual chord" of associations, as Hulme called it, was (in Bergson's words) "to proceed by . . . juxtaposition" (12). Pound would call this process of juxtaposed images the "ideogrammic method." While such an intuitive poetic process derived inspiration from sense perception, the relation between inspiration and images was not always clear. Such inspiration or intuition was expressed, according to Bergson, "by choosing images as dissimilar as possible" in order that one image would not supercede or usurp the place of another. "The image," says
Gage, "was more than a means of expressing the true nature of things . . . it was a means of discovering it" (12). For Hulme, the artist's thought was necessary in joining together new analogies, and inspiration was "a matter of accidentally seen analogy or unlooked-for resemblance" (12).

By overcoming habits of perception, the artist's inspiration was revealed in and through new images and metaphors. The intuition of the poet "does not merely take place in language, but the language is the intuition" (Jones 47). For Hulme and Bergson, artistic creation is "a process of discovery and disentanglement" (Hulme 149) in which the artist "pierces through here and there, accidentally as it were, the veil placed between us and reality by the limitation of our perception engendered by action" (147). Rather than creating anything entirely new, the artist discovers what is recognized as true, coming upon metaphors that had not been previously recognized. "It means that a certain individual artist was able to break through the conventional ways of looking at things which veil reality from us at a certain point, was able to pick out one element which is really in all of us, but which before he had disentangled it, we were unable to perceive" (150).

Apart from Hulme's Romantic representation of the inspired poet, what is evident and significant in his theoretical framework is the linkage of perception, feeling,
and the juxtaposition of images. In his essay on Bergson's
theory of art, Hulme notes, "The thing that concerns me here
is of course only the feeling which is conveyed over to you
by the use of fresh metaphors. It is only where you get
these fresh metaphors and epithets employed that you get
this vivid conviction which constitutes the purely aesthetic
emotion that can be got from imagery" (152). The feeling
Hulme discusses here belongs as much to the readers or
observers as it does to the artists. In fact, Hulme's
"purely aesthetic emotion" appears to be a feeling evoked by
the poet but not belonging to the poet. "It is not
sufficient to say that an artist is a person who is able to
convey over the actual things he sees or the emotions he
feels. It is necessary before that that he should be a
person who is able to emancipate himself from the moulds
which language and ordinary perception force on him and be
able to see things freshly as they really are" (166).

While there was not always agreement upon what
constituted an image, it most certainly required more than
sense perception alone, and it seemed, by example, to be
attached primarily to the visual mode. As Hulme stated,
"the new visual art . . . depends for its effect not on a
kind of half sleep produced, but on arresting the attention,
so much so that the succession of visual images should
exhaust one" (Harmer 164).
Significantly then, Hulme's and Bergson's attention is given not to the single individual image as a thing, but to the relation of two or more images as a process in flux, an action derived from the juxtaposition of images. This emphasis marks an important difference between Hulme and Bergson on the one hand and Pound and Fenollosa on the other.

In 1913 Pound defined the image as follows:

An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. I use the term "complex" rather in the technical sense employed by the newer psychologists, such as Hart, though we might not agree absolutely in our application. (165)

J. B. Harmer explains that for psychologist Bernard Hart and dynamic psychology in general, "the complex is a metaphor which serves to represent a cluster of energy in the individual unconscious" (165). In assessing the use of the image, Harmer argues that Pound "seems to be suggesting that such a complex can be actualized by means of the image...

... Pound's image must be regarded as the standard image of the Romantics, a magical kernel of poetic knowledge communicated in an instantaneity in which phrase and insight join. On this view the image is neither a trope, as it had been for the Victorians, nor a percept, as it was reduced to by Hulme" (165).

While continuing to maintain that the image was a complex which drew upon conscious or unconscious
associations, Pound modified his definition when he later entered his vorticist phase:

The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perform, call a Vortex, from which and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing. (165)

Pound's conceptions of the image changed through time, diverging further from Hulme's emphasis on visual perception. Pound sought a quality of emotion associated with the single image, made evident in his description of the way he came to write his poem, "In the Station of the Metro."

Three years ago in Paris I got out of a "metro" train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another, and then a beautiful child's face, and then another beautiful woman, and I tried all day to find words for what this had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion. And that evening... I found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words, but there came an equation... not in speech, but in little splotches of color. (Gage 13)

The result, of course, was his famous couplet:

The apparition of these faces in a crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Understanding the manner in which these impressionistic "little splotches of color," serving as "a radiant node or cluster," conveyed an "emotional complex in an instant of time," became centrally significant in Pound's theory of the image. While its basis still rested in visual perception, the image drew upon a field of mental and emotional
associations connected with language. That is, the particular association of images in "In the Station of the Metro" is significant insofar as the words serve as signifiers for a cluster or complex of previously embedded mental and emotional connections shared by the poet and readers. To this end, Pound sought further support of the significance of the image by examining the relation of the Chinese ideogram to the Chinese language.

Pound's attraction to the ideogram was particularly pronounced since, as he perceived it, here was evidence that written language was directly rooted in the natural order of the world. Pictographs, as linguistic icons, appeared to be direct representations of natural phenomena. In a simplified sense, Pound assumed a direct and isomorphic correspondence between written characters and the things they signified; for Pound a theory of perception such as Hulme's was not required since he believed that the written character could elicit an emotion in the same way as an experiential instant in the metro.

From his translation of Ernest Fenollosa's essay, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry, Pound attempted to build a case in which the image was the fundamental unit of the ideogram. Herbert Schneidau and Laszlo Géfin agree that "the advent of the Fenollosa materials was the single most important event in the
development of Pound's poetics" (Géfin xii). The
significance of the "ideogrammic method," not only for
Pound, but for later poets, including Snyder, is suggested
by Géfin's recognition of the method's implications:
The method as Pound came to use it in various
forms, and as the ideogrammic poets employed it
after him, is not simply a form of poetry in the
same sense that the sestina or villanelle are
forms; it is much more than the scheme of
juxtaposition suggests. The method constitutes
the tip of a whole congeries of concerns related
to the problem of representation in art. It
opened up for Pound and others the possibility of
organizing the poetic utterance in such a way that
it would present an accurate model of the
processes of modern reality. (xii-xiii)

Pound's enthusiastic and, at times, uncritical
acceptance of Fenollosa's essay served his immediate
purposes. Regarding Fenollosa's essay as "a study of the
fundamentals of all aesthetics," Pound used Fenollosa's work
as a legitimation of his own theoretical differences with
Hulme. The relation of the written character to nature was
garded by Pound as a natural correlation and not a
linguistic convention. In terms of the image, Pound saw
metaphor as "at once the substance of nature and of
language" (Fenollosa 27). For Pound, the ideogram signified
a written character which corresponded directly to the
perceived things in one's experience, and he located the
source of meaning and emotion in individual ideogrammic
images unlike Hulme and Bergson who emphasized the
comparative and juxtapositional relations among images as
the means to "aesthetic emotion." Unlike Hulme's position that perception was the origin of inspiration, Pound sought a direct correlation between the written character and the things of the natural world. Furthermore, whereas Hulme and Bergson emphasized duration, action, and process, achieved only when images were seen in relation to one another, Pound and Fenollosa assumed an isomorphic relationship between written characters and objects of perception, and thus tended to argue that duration and action were inherently suggested by the individual written characters themselves—that the feelings and emotions elicited by a written character were of the same order as those experienced in responding to common objects of perception.

In *The Written Character As a Medium for Poetry* Fenollosa contends that the ideogram and the universality of sentence form in all languages "correspond to some primary law of nature" (17). He claims that "the sentence form was forced upon primitive men by nature itself. It was not we who made it; it was a reflection of the temporal order of causation" (18). Accordingly, the Chinese character or ideogram, as form, so correlates with natural phenomena that its linguistic use serves as a representation of things and actions in the same manner that one experiences and mentally processes particulars in the phenomenal world. According to Fenollosa, "Chinese notation is something much more than
arbitrary symbols. It is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature. In the algebraic figure and in the spoken word there is no natural connection between thing and sign: all depends upon sheer convention, but the Chinese method follows natural suggestion" (15).

The distinction made by Fenollosa and Pound between written and spoken language is a significant one insofar as the aural/oral component of language is regarded as "sheer convention" and thereby inconsequential, even though Fenollosa also recognizes that "the prehistoric poets who created language discovered the whole harmonious framework of nature . . . [and] sang out her processes in their hymns" (34). Relying entirely on the effects of written characters as the linguistic representation of reality, Fenollosa correlates the act of interpreting ideogrammic form with the processing of information in daily experience:

Perhaps we do not always sufficiently consider that thought is successive, not through some accident or weakness of our subjective operations but because the operations of nature are successive. The transferences of force from agent to object, which constitute natural phenomena, occupy time. Therefore, a reproduction of them in imagination requires the same temporal order. (14)

In addition to the obvious problematic claims for "natural" operations, there is a paradox in ascribing an inherent temporal quality to individual written characters.

As Fenollosa and Pound state, "these ideographic roots carry
in them a *verbal idea of action*" (16). This appears to contradict Pound's earlier assertion that an image presents an intellectual and emotional complex "in an instant of time," which he displays in his "Metro" poem. How the instantaneity of the image can be reconciled with the verbal idea of action in the ideogram remains to be seen, but Pound's shift in perspective may reflect his accommodation of Huile's and Bergson's emphasis on the experience of time and duration that occurs when multiple images are juxtaposed.

Pound and Fenollosa seem to suggest that time and action are inherently contained in the single image because in the world of experience things and actions are inseparably bound together. "A true noun, an isolated thing," says Fenollosa, "does not exist in nature. Things are only the terminal points, or rather the meeting points, of actions, cross-sections cut through actions, snapshots. Neither can a pure verb, an abstract motion, be possible in nature. The eye sees noun and verb as one" (17). Again, Fenollosa suggests that the ideogram does evoke a sense of duration and action when he states, "Like nature, the Chinese words are alive and plastic, because *thing* and *action* are not formally separated" (22).

Simply stated, Pound adopted a theoretical perspective in which a single image, primarily visual-based and
 instantaneous, could carry with it the idea of action, even though the image consisted primarily of nouns and adjectives. Furthermore, in doing so, Pound and Fenollosa argue for the superiority of the verb, stating that "the verb must be the primary fact of nature, since motion and change are all that we can recognize in her" (23).

Pound's paradoxical stance has not gone unnoticed. Some critics discredit his poetic theory not only for the ambiguities it contains, but, more important, because of Pound's omission of the aural/oral component of language, and his assumptions that written characters were never formalized as the spoken form had been. J. B. Harmer, in particular, criticizes one of the supporting pillars of Pound's theory when he writes:

His notion of the function of the ideogram was almost totally incorrect. The study of even half a dozen Chinese characters will confirm that their original pictorial qualities have long ago been formalized as brushstrokes. Even Classical Egyptian, which is ideographic in a far more exact sense than Chinese, offers little encouragement to Pound's theories. When ideograms are in common use the original pictorial effect is quickly eroded. In Egyptian, the original hieroglyphic writing was in continuous modification into a more cursive hieratic script. . . . The fallacy of Pound's reasoning was that it separated the pictorial and the auditory functions of language, thus ignoring the fact that if language exists to describe things, it is also and in essence a system that depends on auditory relations. (Harmer 168-69)

While Harmer's charges correctly identify a representative criticism, and Pound's omission is a serious
one, considered in the context of Pound's entire poetic theory, it may be beneficial to recognize the contribution of his ideogrammic method and to acknowledge the poets—including Snyder—who have subsequently brought into their practice the aural/oral elements of language that were among Pound's theoretical shortcomings.

If one looks to Pound's interest in Chinese poetry as the basis for his ideogrammic method, something which critics seem not to have discussed in very much detail is that the Chinese poet's use of imagery also corresponds to a diminishing reference to the poet or speaker within the poem. While Pound's poetic theory addressed the feelings associated with images, what neither Pound nor the critics have addressed is the positioning of the persona in relation to the scene that is depicted. Returning briefly to Pound's "In the Station of the Metro," what prevents the poem from becoming purely descriptive is the positional word, "these," as much as the subjective experience of "apparition."

The apparition of these faces in a crowd: Petals on a wet, black bough.

Like the title itself, the word "these" places the speaker in proximity to the faces of people being described, and yet there is nothing overtly self-referential about the couplet. The locus of this experience, the "place" in which the speaker views the impressionistic apparition, is not
presented as his experience; the speaker is not in a proprietary relationship to the event—he does not own his experience. Instead, the distances that separate the speaker from the environment or place are erased, just as the artificial distance that separates the reader from the poem—like a proscenium arch—is dissolved when the poem is no longer strictly descriptive or objectifying. The reader is drawn into the place of the poem, surrounded as it were by the apparition of these faces in a crowd, not simply due to Pound’s imagery but also because the poet/speaker has disengaged his presence in the poem from his self-reference. That is, what is required—and supplied by "these"—is a hint of the speaker’s presence to avoid a purely descriptive setting, but also invisibility or transparency of that presence in order to allow the experience of the reader to oscillate between that of an observer of an impressionistic display to that of a participant in an expressionistic reenactment of the experience, feeling, or state of mind being presented in the poem.

Speaking of the poet in Chinese poetry, David Lattimore has asked, "Is Chinese poetry very individualistic and self-expressive or is it not? Is it something in which the poet does make himself very small in nature or in part of nature? I think both of these things are true. But there is a great decorum in the poetry where, for example, the
poet almost never used the first person pronoun. He does not assert himself, call attention to himself in these obvious ways. But this is a kind of way of not being too obvious and crude about the fact that the poet really is talking about himself and expressing himself. . . . It is at once extremely individualistic and yet unassertively individualistic" (Orr 17–18).

Pound's imagism and poetic theory were in some ways attempts to bring to Western poetry what he was observing in the Chinese poets. Concentrating as he did on the verbal image, emphasizing the visual and the action-based, Pound neglected the aural/oral component of the image, which is significant in the presence and self-expression that Lattimore speaks of in Chinese poetry and which I have been referring to as the speaker's presence. If it was part of Pound's "complex" of ideas, he did not appear to address it within his theory of the ideogrammic method.

Charles Olson's poetic interest in "the kinetics of the thing" took him in the direction of what he called "COMPOSITION BY FIELD" in which the poet "can go by no track other than the one the poem under hand declares, for itself" (Olson 16). For Olson, "ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION" (17). The result was a greater emphasis on the aural effect of the poem. In his essay, "PROJECTIVE VERSE," Olson alludes to Fenollosa and
refers to Pound as having influenced his work, but in his own poetry and theory of poetics he directed a greater focus upon the breath and hearing: "I take it that PROJECTIVE VERSE teaches, is, this lesson, that that verse will only do in which a poet manages to register both the acquisitions of his ear and the pressures of his breath" (17). Similar to Creeley's idea that "the typographical context of poetry is still simply the issue of how to score--in the musical sense to indicate how I want the poem to be read" (Géfin 108-109), Olson felt that "breath is man's special qualification as animal. Sound is a dimension he has extended. Language is one of his proudest acts" (Olson 23). A few years later, Gary Snyder would likewise declare, "The poet must have total sensitivity to the inner potentials of his own language--pulse, breath, glottals nasals & dentals. An ear, an eye and a belly" (Snyder "Yips & Barks" 357).

The Presentation of Place as Process

To extend the discussion from Pound's ideogrammic method to the poetic structure in Snyder's work requires that we broaden the context in which "ideogrammic method" has served as a useful structural designation by describing in more precise detail the linguistic and formal elements that accompany Snyder's juxtaposition of images. In the end
this will take our discussion beyond the presentation of images into the silent interstices of Snyder's poetry where ellipses and eided pronouns point the way to the failure of logic, the inadequacy of language, and the immediacy of experience that links persona and place.

In his insightful study of the ideogrammic method, Laszlo Géfin describes the paratactic method and the importance to poetic representation of placing one thing or image beside another. Particularly significant for the study of Snyder's poetry, parataxis signifies a mode of juxtaposition or asyndetic composition "where connectives have been omitted," a feature found frequently in Snyder's poems as well as in Chinese ideogrammic composition (Géfin xii). The images in Snyder's poems, while they may be visually depicted, as in "A Volcano in Kyushu," also often include olfactory and tactile sensory detail, but what is striking about this poem is the way that its images become "a union of particulars transposed onto the conceptual plane" (xii). Moreover, Snyder's images are not static products described as end points, but instead are elemental processes invested with time and memory, and presented to the reader as opportunities for reflection and illumination. This process is particularly remarkable in the following poem, which consists of a structural starkness in which two images are set in relation to one another without any
further context, comment or explanation:

Mount Aso uplands
horses, rimrock

the sight seeing buses crammed.
to view bare rock, brown grass,
space,
sulphury cliffs, streakt snow.
--whiffing the fumaroles
a noseless, shiny,
mouth-twisted middle aged man.

bluejeans, check shirt, silver buckle,
J. Robert Oppenheimer:
twenty years ago
watching the bulldozers
tearing down pines
at Los Alamos. (BC 43)

In this as in many of Snyder's poems, one finds that
place is more than one thing: it is on the one hand the
immediate present just as it is depicted in its solid
material expression, and it is the combined field of mental
and emotional associations connected to the present
circumstances such that traces of the past remain embedded
in the present as evidence of a former time. This is not
the same as suggesting that the past is always contained in
the present as an inseparable amalgamation. But,
paradoxically, while the present is such an embedded complex
of associations, in Snyder's work it is also at the same
instant only the present experience.

The stanza that begins with the crammed sight seeing
buses presents a moment that is complete in itself, and upon
reading it we recognize its presentness--a brief and
self-contained vignette. Likewise, the final stanza is a
different and yet autonomous image in itself. In each
instance the places--Kyushu, then Los Alamos--display
separable "scenes" perceived by the reader as independent
and isolated, and it is possible for readers to regard the
two images as having no intrinsic relation to one another.

Nevertheless, a reading of the former stanza can become
altered by the latter in ways that are profoundly disturbing
even though there are no connectives in the poem apart from
the juxtaposed proximity of the two images. At one level
these are two independent images (not including the two
opening lines) placed before the reader's mind without the
influencing presence of an interpreting observer or
commentator.

At another level, however, the first image is made more
poignant after processing information derived from
suggestions in the second. The initial reading in which
they are regarded as distinct and separate images still
remains valid and need not be displaced or supplanted by the
second one which combines the two images. Both readings
persist and, paradoxically, coexist.

Is J. Robert Oppenheimer implicated in the middle aged
man's "noseless, shiny, / mouthtwisted" condition? The
reference to the groundbreaking activities for the secret
atomic bomb development in New Mexico "twenty years ago"
(the poem was written about 1962 or 1963) offers an implicit connection to the suggestive desolation of the Japanese landscape—"bare rock, brown grass / space, / sulphury cliffs"—but the interpretation is thrown back on the reader. There is nothing in the poem either to confirm or deny that the middle-aged sightseer is an atomic bomb survivor. The poem, it could be argued, simply presents two images set in relation to each other, and that any further correlations are derived from the reader's mind rather than from the images themselves.

In all of Gary Snyder’s poetry there is no juxtaposition of images more powerfully presented than this linkage of volcanic and atomic destructive capability and the before-and-after images of barren landscapes and survival. While the images are at the same time independent of each other and dependent upon each other, their appearance together is not the consequence of a chance operation. Although there is no organizing persona evident within the poem, the selection of these two images points to the poem’s moral underpinning.

Additional parallels and contrasts indicate such a moral ideal behind the juxtaposition of images. At Mount Aso sightseers view a post-volcanic landscape that has been reshaped by powerful natural forces. At Los Alamos, Oppenheimer, a key participant (not merely a curious
observer) in the Manhattan Project watches the landscape being leveled by machinery in a pre-holocaust atmosphere of calm informality. Although Snyder does not generally use objects as symbolic representations, the metaphorical force of the bull dozer and atomic bomb in America as human-constructed counterweights to the natural volcano in Japan is unmistakeable. Because the images are also separated in time by twenty years the material consequences move temporally in the direction from Los Alamos (bomb preparations) to Mount Aso in Japan, while the memory links move in the other direction, recalling the past to the present.

One of the necessary and unavoidable consequences of employing such powerful imagery is of course the risk of ameliorating subtlety altogether. "A Volcano in Kyushu," morally provocative and profoundly suggestive, is not representative of the way Snyder generally applies the asyndetic juxtaposition of images to express a sense of place. It does, however, illustrate more clearly than any other poem the paradox of a place being just what it is and no more—a volcano site in which sightseers, including a middle-aged noseless man, have congregated—and, at the same time, a place that has its present moment invested with all the moral weight of a past from which it cannot be disentangled. We can appreciate this paradox further by
next examining the way that poetic structure holds time in
abeyance by concentrating attention on the present moment
and the way poetic structure complements temporal elements
such as thought, memory, and language when place is invested
with past associations.

One such poem that is indicative of Snyder's
presentation of place, and which serves to illustrate a
number of other interrelated structural elements is "Thin
Ice." Among the first things that is noticeable about the
poem is the omission of pronoun references. Only in the
latter half of the poem does the first-person speaker make a
self-reference during his action-based account of events.
For the present study, which insists throughout on the
inclusion of the speaker's presence in the discussion of
Snyder's sense of place, the omissions and elisions of
pronouns coupled with the participial structure are among
some the most significant contributing features in Snyder's
expression of a way of being and its effect on place. Here,
also, our treatment of Snyder's presentation must consider
the part that human agency and individual ego involvement
play in the representation of experience and the
introduction of time into present moments of attentive
concentration.

A warm day after a long freeze
On an old logging road
Below Sumas Mountain
Cut a walking stick of alder,
Looked down through clouds
On wet fields of the Nooksack—
And stepped on the ice
Of a frozen pool across the road.
It creaked
The white air under
Sprang away, long cracks
Shot out in the black,
My cleated mountain boots
Slipped on the hard slick
—like thin ice—the sudden
Feel of an old phrase made real—
Instant of frozen leaf,
Icewater, and staff in hand.
"like walking on thin ice—"
I yelled back to a friend,
It broke and I dropped
Eight inches in \(R\) 14

Rather than following the course of Hulme and Bergson by drawing upon images as dissimilar as possible, Snyder frequently focuses on a single scene, which, in all its ordinariness, offers a greater subtlety in the images that are juxtaposed. In "Thin Ice" Snyder presents the most common kinds of actions—walking, cutting a stick of alder, looking into a valley—without transitions. The concision of language resulting from the omission of connectives not only concentrates a number of actions in a few lines, but the structure itself suggests the focused concentration on activity that is taking place within the poem by the person performing the actions. The speaker's attention is directed entirely toward action/environment as integrated in his experience.

In addition to the concentration on action, characterized by the initial cataloguing of experience
through the use of numerous verbs ("Cut," "Looked," "stepped," "Sprang," "Slipped," "yelled," "dropped"), the omission of pronouns also "plunges us emphatically into activity . . . rather than detached consciousness" (Williamson 72). In fact, there is such concentration by the poem's speaker on the action and scene of the place that until the frozen pond creaks there is no indication of a state of self-recognition separate from the activities.

One of the consequences of Snyder's omission of pronouns is that human agency is de-emphasized; activity is expressed with the use of participial verb forms without subjects. The significance of Snyder's poetic characterization of human agency will be discussed further in the next chapter's consideration of the Zen Buddhism's contribution to Snyder's work, but by removing self-referential pronouns Snyder diminishes the projection of a dualistic split between actor and action. The experiential unity presented by omitted pronouns in the early activities and descriptions in "Thin Ice" makes no differentiation between the speaker and action/place until the "long cracks" in the ice alert him, dividing his concentration for the first time, at which point he expresses a recognition of self: "My cleated mountain boots / Slipped on the hard slick."
The ensuing actions keep him in this state of divided attention through the remaining events of the poem, but not without the concluding epiphanic moment concerning the futility of language itself. As his boots slip, an instantaneous recognition is felt—not cognitive at first, but "the sudden / Feel of an old phrase made real." That is, the present experience makes real the former phrase which, until then, had been an abstract concept; there is a merger of experience and language in the feel of the old phrase made real. However, at the moment of communicating the phrase, "like walking on thin ice," the reality changes—he falls through the ice making the utterance of the phrase obsolete, insufficient, and abstract even as it is spoken. The fleeting and transitory instant during which the phrase was recognized as being made real by experience is quickly overturned in the witty conclusion in which dropping through the ice makes the phrase immediately inapplicable once again. The truth and the utterance never coincide.

The selfless attentiveness to the movement and activity early in the poem is broken just as the surface of the ice is, and language enters when self and action are divided. Here, language emerges from the division formed between self and action where previously there had been no division, no self-reference and no spoken utterance. Then, as if to
underscore the inadequacy of language's effectiveness in conveying experience, the "old phrase made real" is only real during that instant of silent recognition before it is uttered to a friend—at which time he falls through the ice, and the actual experience is no longer "like walking on thin ice."

The contrast between the concentrated attentiveness with which the speaker begins this "warm day after a long freeze" and the concluding recognition following the break in concentration, leads to the kind of wisdom and insight that mark many of Snyder's poems as self-revelatory, epiphanic, and un-self-conscious meditations. It is significant that in Snyder's work the fleeting moment of insight occurs in silence, and where language enters it is often to illustrate its inadequacy in communicating those instances of human experience.

The importance of silence in Snyder's poetry is tied to the omission of connectives in the paratactic structure of the poetry. The spaces which mark the aural quality of the poem—as a "scoring" for the way a poem is to be read—give attention to the music of the poem and the breath connected with its movement. The importance of silence and emptiness in Buddhism will be examined further in chapter three, not as an absence to be avoided, but as the potential out of which possibilities arise. Snyder's structural
incorporation of silence in the form of spaces, elisions, and omissions of connectives contributes to the opening of interpretative possibilities.

form---leaving things out at the right spot
ellipse, is emptiness (EHH 5)

At the conclusion of "Thin Ice," while the speaker does yell the phrase made real by the experience, only to discover that in its utterance it is no longer describing the present moment, the actual insight derived from those coinciding events is itself unspoken, silent, and unexpressed within the poem. Robert Kern observes that "the silence which is organized into [the poem's] structure becomes increasingly dominant and finally takes over, as language gives way to vision" (Kern "Silence" 41). As for the readers encountering the structural gaps and silences, the form requires of them that they supply connectives where they are required. Like Fenollosa, Géfin points out that readers are already familiar with filling in omitted connectives since the asyndetic method of composition correlates to one's ordinary daily experiences. "[T]he mind of the reader . . . will organize [particulars] into a coherent whole just as he or she does with particulars in the real world. Not only are connectives relics of an outmoded transitional practice, but they are redundant, in fact, because they are not present in nature" (Géfin xvi-xvii).
Similarly, Jody Norton adds that not only does the reader organize the particulars in the poem, but he or she also "comprehends the poem only to the extent that he... (or she) is able to achieve a similar intuitive perception through the re-created experience of the poem" (Norton "Importance" 52).

Encountering the asyndetic form, whether of the kind in "Volcano in Kyushu" without a speaker to enact the "intuitive perception," or the more common example of "Thin Ice" with its speaker/character who presents and experiences the epiphanic moments, the reader is placed in a participatory relation to the poem, not only in interpreting and filling in the silences, but in arriving at his or her own moments of insight and connectedness that might be said to exist in the silences and omissions within the poems.

In de-emphasizing individual ego involvement and self importance, Snyder's poems omit overt expressions of emotion and judgmental valuations, and therefore do not interfere with the reader's direct access to images. The result approximates an unmediated experience for readers who, if they achieve the intuitive perception "through the re-created experience of the poem," will have also achieved some measure of self-knowledge in the process. The reader's participatory involvement also validates the poem as process, not so much in completing the poem or its
"meaning," but in deepening the inquiry initiated by the poem.

Here again, poetic form coincides with acts of mind and representations of experience. In elaborating on his recognition that Snyder's poetry is "less a description than a registration of experience" (Kern "New Nature" 214), Robert Kern observes that the "antimimetic presentation approach" that is associated with contemporary open form theory--most notably with Olson and Williams--is an approach "opposed to any simple imitation of external reality that would render the writing merely descriptive and secondary. In terms of this stance, the poem is seen as a direct embodiment of presentation of creative activity that is similar to that of external nature except that it is the poet's" (Kern "Recipes" 176). Continuing his explanation, Kern draws upon Ronald Sukenick's adaptation to fiction of this open form theory:

Here the writer is conceived, both by himself and the reader, as "someone sitting there writing the page," so that the page becomes "a model, or better, record--not of 'reality'--but of the way the mind works, the way we experience things, including the way we experience creative thought." Thus, what the writer "imitates" is not imitated at all but presented directly--the writer writing the page. External environment is replaced by the writer's own unfolding or developing acts of mind. (176)

Although Snyder may not agree that "external environment is replaced" in his poetry by "the writer's own
unfolding or developing acts of mind," and might prefer instead the shared attention given to landscape and acts of mind, here we arrive at one of the most important theoretical distinctions to be made for Snyder's poetry and the relationship of place and presence, environment and acts of mind.

The presentational and mimetic approaches alluded to by Kern and Sukenick were also discussed in some detail in Charles Altieri's 1975 essay on reconciling the two theories. At one end of the spectrum, "pure presentational theories" were those of Williams and Olson "which tend to be objectivist," while at the other end were the "pure expressionist theories, which tend to concentrate on the implicit activity of the author in the poem" (Altieri "Poem as Act" 108). Between these extremes, Altieri's discussion of the differences between presentational and mimetic theories sheds further light on our present examination of Snyder's integration of place and ontological states of being.

In addition, the distinctions between presentational and mimetic approaches help us to recognize the importance of Snyder's poetic structure in connection with a way of being, or as Altieri has stated elsewhere, Snyder "has developed a lyric style which itself embodies a mode of consciousness" (Altieri "Lyric Poetry" 48). While some
major contributing factors to Snyder's mode of consciousness such as Buddhism will be examined in chapter three, it is important to establish first the structural features of what I regard as the primacy of place in Snyder's poetry. The central difference, Altieri asserts, between presentational and mimetic theories is "the way they consider the poem as action" (Altieri "Poem as Act" 108).

Presentational theories see the poem as an immediate process or activity dramatizing the movement of a mind as it tries to establish a meditative equilibrium with an external scene... Mimetic theories, on the other hand, are concerned more with the poem as a completed action than as an activity: they treat the poem as product rather than process, and they stress the rhetorical structure as the primary context for interpreting the dramatic experience as a typical embodiment of characteristic or universal human problems. (108)

It should be noted that, as the earlier discussion of "Volcano in Kyushu" suggested, one reader may treat the poem as a completed product while another recognizes the activity of mind that occurs in the process of interacting with it. This may explain why readers who "don't get it" and insist upon narrative action that leads to a definite end which rounds off the poem with discernable closure, look to the poem and to its "completed action" for further interpretive assistance rather than to the dramatic movement of the mind that occurs within the poem and which can also occur between the reader and the poem.
Although one of the major emphases of discussion in the present chapter is directed toward the structural elements in Snyder's poetry it is not meant as "the primary context for interpretation," nor is it the basis for a claim that Snyder's poetry is mimetic in Aristotle's cathartic sense in which (in Altieri's words) "literature imitates actions in order to purify our understanding of their nature and probable consequences by leading us to see a single process of action as a coherent structure of causes and probable effects" (110).

The mimetic theory, with its Aristotelean "insistence on plot as the shaping of a single narrative action," directs it emphasis toward the surface experience of the lyric poem, generally ignoring "processes of expression or meditation which aim to intensify our awareness of qualities in particular acts of mind and to give us access to particular moods or modes of feeling" (110). It is necessary, however, for our further understanding of the poet's experience, as well as our own, to be aware of the relationship between the structure and stylistic elements of a poem and the states of being or acts of mind that are experienced and communicated through the poetic form. In reading Snyder's poetry, Altieri observes, "we do not simply see a mind in nature; we consider the poem's syntax as a sign of the way the mind composes itself in order to have
access to what is valuable in the scene, and we reflect upon
the poem's specific development of the action as a way of
dramatizing how human desires and natural scenes reinforce
one another's value" (111).

There are, as Altieri presents them, five basic claims
that are made for presentational and expressionist theories.
Taken together, they describe many of the characteristics
that have been discussed in the present exploration of
structure and presence in Snyder's poetry: (1) "The poem
does not imitate or copy an event outside the poem to which
it must be faithful" (108). Rather, if the poem imitates
nature at all, it is in terms of its emphasis on the process
of "continuous creative activity." (2) "Instead of
imitating experiences, the poem brings experience into being
by naming or articulating what had been merely vague or
diffuse impressions. Thus the poem presents what is in
effect a new way of experiencing the world" (109). To
Altieri's observation it should be added that the importance
of silence and omission in Snyder's work needs to be
considered here. Sometimes it is what remains unarticulated
and merely hinted at that contextualizes the expressed
"diffuse impressions." The new way of experiencing the
world also includes chance occurrences, serendipity, the
insight gained from acts of folly as much as from
experiencing wonder in the ordinary. (3) "Because the poem
is a new experience, the presentational theorist stresses its immediacy. The poem literally places the reader in direct contact with an act of mind by virtue of his sharing the poet's speech, [and] by his recreating the embodied author's struggles to give form to feeling" (109). With respect to Snyder's poetry in particular, feelings are conveyed and elicited impressionistically through the presentation of images rather than through emotion-laden language or explicit self reference to how one feels. It is through indirection—in not speaking about feeling—that feeling retains its immediacy for readers. Often, by not giving words to the feeling, but only to the concreteness of experience itself, Snyder leaves available to the reader the articulation of accompanying feelings. (4) "The stress on immediate experience leads the critic to reject spatial and formal models of literary meaning and to insist on one's treating the poem as a temporary construct whose meaning unfolds and deepens as he follows the movements of mind" (109). While the dominant model for immediacy may indeed be a temporal construct, the spatial elements that comprise "the movements of mind" should not be underestimated. The act of mind often associated with a present moment in Snyder's poetry is a consequence of the layering of memory over the present moment. While this is temporal insofar as it is the recollection of an earlier time, there are also
experiences of immediacy in which perceptual sensory details link one place with another. In "Mt. Hiei," for example, the spatial cannot be rejected or dismissed for it is inseparable from the temporal:

I thought I would
sit with the screens back
and sing: watching the
half gone moon rise late
but my hands were too numb
to play the guitar
the song was cold mist
the wine wouldn't warm
so I sat at the border
of dark house and moon
in thick coat--seeing stars rise
back of the ridge.
like once when a lookout
I took Aiidebaran
for fire. (BC 38)

While the past is temporally invested in the present, so too the lookout tower across from the ridge in invested in that borderland between house and moon. Elements in the present place trigger connections with another place, the memory of which further enriches the present experience--the connection of one place with another is as much spatial as it is temporal.

Similarly, it can be said that "At White River Roadhouse in the Yukon" is a poem in which there exists a temporal integration of the immediate experience of sleeping in a little room at the roadhouse and the chanting of sutras in a Japanese temple, united by the sound of the bell. The visual and auditory images of both places, however, raise a
question about immediacy itself. Is the recollection of the past an intrusion in the present, a momentary disruption of attention, or is it indicative of an ongoing "present" in which the speaker is equally in the Buddha-hall and in the roadhouse? To the degree that one accepts the integration of spatial components as readily as one recognizes temporal connections, the "dream" in the poem is certainly as much spatially located as it is temporal, and it demonstrates that the immediacy of the moment is not disconnected from other places and other times, but rather that the immediacy of an experience always contains within it the unremembered connections of other places and times.

At White River Roadhouse in the Yukon
A bell rings in the late night:
A lone car on the Alaska highway
Hoping to buy gas at the shut roadhouse.

For a traveller sleeping in a little room
The bell ring is a temple in Japan,
In dream I put on robes and sandals
Chant sutras in the chilly Buddha-bail.

Ten thousand miles of White Spruce taiga.
The roadhouse master wakes to the night bell
Enters the dark of ice and stars,
To sell the car some gas. (LOR 148)

To reject the spatial component while privileging the temporal not only perpetuates a false division, but it can only lead to a partial appreciation of the connectedness in Snyder's poetry between time and space, identity and place.
The final basic claim of presentational theory is directed toward the issue of meaning itself. (5) "Given the emphases on immediacy and temporality, the meaning of the poem is not considered to reside in any conceptual interpretation of the poem, but rather to be inherent in the disposition or act of mind the reader experiences in reading the poem. Meaning resides in the quality of the experience and cannot be reduced to discursive statements: in Fenollosa's terms, what a poem means is what it does" (109). Altieri does not develop any further the paradox in the claim that the meaning of a poem, itself a linguistic construction, does not reside within (nor can it be expressed by) language or "any conceptual interpretation." Nevertheless, there is a degree to which meaning is constructed by readers out of their interpretations. Meaning, rather than residing in events (poems) themselves, takes shape in the active process and relationship of interpretations—what philosopher Gianni Vattimo calls a "matrix of interpretations." That is, meaning, rather than being something inherent and already present in history, may be regarded, instead, as something constructed out of the signs and interpretations made available to readers. Meaning is therefore never singular and fixed but is instead fluid and interactive.
Although this differs from Altieri's consideration of meaning in that it allows for conceptual interpretation to give rise to meanings (plural), it also recognizes the inadequacy of concepts and language. The risk in Altieri's formulation that meaning is "inherent in the disposition or act of mind the reader experiences in reading the poem" is the possibility of reducing meaning to a radical relativism in which meaning becomes whatever a reader claims. The various qualities of minds involving numbers of different readers and interpretations interacting with one another will develop a "matrix of interpretations" at the conceptual level from which "meanings" are derived.

Still, where I agree with Altieri's model is that concepts and language always remain approximations, pointing the way or the direction, beyond which an intuitive leap, an inspirational moment, is required to glimpse the correspondence between experience and "the phrase made real" by that experience.

There are, in some of Gary Snyder's poems, occasions in which he assists his readers more directly and guides them toward an ethics in a manner not as subtly presented as the above discussion would assume for much of his work. Some critics, including Charles Altieri, have expressed impatience with Snyder's lack of moral subtlety in such poems. "By Frazier Creek Falls" contains an example of a
concluding didactic message stated to underscore the experience and act of mind within the poem. Without the final three couplets the poem may be too subtle an expression to convey the appreciation that is unavoidably reached by the poem's last line.

In its opening line the poem introduces the speaker, as in "Thin Ice," with an omission of the pronoun "I," then the descriptions and actions which follow are not those of the speaker who remains motionless, but they are the descriptions and movement of the landscape over which the speaker is looking. The quiet and reverent moment passes, and the standing observer shifts imperceptibly from seeing to listening:

Standing up on lifted, folded rock
looking out and down--

The creek falls to a far valley.
hills beyond that
facing, half-forested, dry
--clear sky
strong wind in the
stiff glittering needle clusters
of the pine--their brown
round trunk bodies
straight, still;
rustling trembling limbs and twigs

listen. (TI 41)

Structurally, the risk in using numerous generic natural images is that, in spite of the movement and variation in the landscape, what is conveyed is perilously close to a stark and static description of a half-forested panorama, in
which case the viewer's receptive act of looking and
listening may be construed as passivity rather than an act
of mind that reveals a moment of insight or appreciation.
The word "listen" here may be either a self-directed
reminder to open up to the immediacy of the moment and
experience it as it is, or it may be an injunction by the
speaker directed to a general audience, particularly read in
the context of the three couplets which follow, and conclude
the poem:

This living flowing land
is all there is, forever

We are it
it sings through us--

We could live on this Earth
without clothes or tools! (TI 41)

What has troubled some critics about Snyder's overt
moral statement is more its overtness than the message
itself. If Snyder had conveyed an ecological perspective in
a manner that would have permitted readers to participate
more actively in discovering their own insight, the
criticism may have been less pronounced. To be told so
directly is what has raised the ire of some.

As a poem about place, again emphasizing "what we do in
landscapes," "By Frazier Creek Falls" is an important hymn
of praise to the Earth, prayer-like in the closing lines, a
reverent song of possibility, respect, and self-respect: "We
are it / it sings through us." Identity and place are
inseparably interfused in the perspective that Snyder has long associated with the paleolithic, a primary connection with the earth that joins the individual to place. In writing elsewhere about the relation of one's identity and the place one inhabits, Snyder has observed:

How does knowledge of place help us know the Self? The answer, simply put, is that we are all composite beings, not only physically but intellectually, whose sole individual identifying feature is a particular form or structure changing constantly in time. There is no "self" to be found in that, and yet oddly enough, there is. Part of you is out there waiting to come into you, and another part of you is behind you, and the "just this" of the ever-present moment holds all the transitory little selves in its mirror. . . . Thus, knowing who and where are intimately linked. (TOW 63-64)

An assessment of the intimate link between self-knowledge and place in Snyder's poetry, if restricted simply to its structural components, reduces to a lifeless technique what has been for Snyder a vital and vibrant way of seeing the world, a way of being in relation to it. While Snyder has contributed to moving the imagistic or ideogrammic form beyond the concerns with perception and action that occupied the theories of Hulme and Bergson as well as Pound and Fenollosa, he has never lost sight of his role as poet in communicating the evanescent moments of human experience which elude language. Although he is fluent in the language of technique, theory, and form, his poetry seems not to be driven or guided by these as
something separate from what it is to live attentively and purposefully.

Snyder's use of ellipses and elided pronouns, sensory-based concrete imagery and participial constructions work effectively in his poetry not because they support a theoretical framework or a new form that he advocates as representing reality more accurately; instead it appears that the most appropriate structure emerges in consequence of a trust that it will be most effective when it corresponds with one's vision. Snyder is very much aware of the form he employs, but how he comes by it is more intuitive than calculated.

For me every poem is unique. One can understand and appreciate the conditions which produce formal poetry as part of man's experiment with civilization. The game of inventing an abstract structure and then finding things in experience which can be forced into it. A kind of intensity can indeed be produced this way—but it is the intensity of straining and sweating against self-imposed bonds. Better the perfect, easy discipline of the swallow's dip and swoop, "without east or west." (Snyder "Yips & Barks" 357)

While the presentational approach of Snyder's poetry—discussed in this chapter as formal components observable in the structure of poems—may be seen as the tracings left behind from the "easy discipline of the swallow's dip and swoop," not all of the effect of such an approach within his poetry can be adequately explained through structure alone. Stated differently, there are
other factors in addition to poetic methods that contribute to the effectiveness of the poetic forms Snyder uses. While alluding in this chapter to the influence that ways of seeing and being have on technique and poetic methods, there have been only occasional references to what, in particular, has contributed to the ontological importance of presence in Snyder's presentation of place. The emphasis upon what is apparent and visible offers, at best, an incomplete appreciation of the form itself as Snyder has come to use it. Certainly we are faced with a paradox in claiming that there is more to the poetry than structure when all we have are the words, punctuation and spaces, and their ordered structure on the page.

Nevertheless, if we consider the perspective from which Snyder arranges these structural components, and I believe we must include a discussion of the context which differentiates Snyder's use of form from that of Pound, Williams, Olson or Creeley, then it is important if not essential to examine further contributions such as those made by Snyder's study of Buddhism and Amerindian myth and culture. If, as with Pound, Snyder was interested in Chinese written characters for the support it lent to his poetic theories, the pursuit of such an interest would be justified simply to determine how influential those connections became in his work. How much more significant
such a study of Buddhism must be in a study which claims it to be essential to our understanding and fuller appreciation of Gary Snyder himself and his expression, through poetry, of that self. Any presentational theory which includes Gary Snyder and his poetry ought to expand its discourse to include non-traditional and non-Western ontological and epistemological systems if it purports to describe forms of poetry influenced by such systems.
CHAPTER III
PLACE, PRESENCE, AND WAYS OF BEING:
TRACING HUA-YEN PHILOSOPHY AND ZEN PRACTICE
IN SNYDER'S POETRY

The purpose of a fish trap is to catch fish, and when the fish are caught, the trap is forgotten. The purpose of a rabbit snare is to catch rabbits. When the rabbits are caught, the snare is forgotten. The purpose of words is to convey ideas. When the ideas are grasped, the words are forgotten. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words? He is the one I would like to talk to.

——Chuang Tzu——

Syncretic Perspectives: Gary Snyder and Hua-yen Buddhism

In chapter two I attempted to expand the consideration of place beyond geography by linking location and presence, place and subject, landscape and speaker, and to suggest that through a study of structure and images, we may see that form, itself, expresses a state of being. Moving from the study of structure, I wish to focus the present chapter on a discussion of some of the major philosophical perspectives, ways of seeing, and practices that are
reflected in Gary Snyder's poetry, linking his sense of place to a larger syncretic worldview and ecological vision. In particular, an understanding of Snyder's evocation in his poetry and ecological perspectives of Hua-yen philosophy, Zen Buddhist practice, and Taoist principles is important to an expanded appreciation of his view of interacting and interpenetrating systems. Besides serving as a complement to the discussion of poetic structure and form, the present chapter is intended as the foundation for a discussion in chapter four of Snyder's community-based sense of place.

A number of critics have discussed the relation between Snyder's study and practice of Zen Buddhism and the selflessness that is projected in his poetry, but only a few have examined the important connection between Snyder's understanding of Hua-yen Buddhism and his larger ecological framework. Snyder himself, devoting more discussion to Zen Buddhism than perhaps any contemporary American poet, has offered only infrequent observations on the importance of Hua-yen philosophy in his work. While the scarcity of Snyder's own statements may have some bearing on the general critical silence, the greater reason for the lack of critical attention to Hua-yen's influence on Snyder's ecological vision is a basic and very important difference between Hua-yen and Zen.
Whereas Hua-yen Buddhism embodies a philosophy or metaphysics without a praxis, Zen Buddhism is a practice and way of living that does not rest upon a system of philosophical principles, logic or rationality. Snyder has combined the syncretic philosophy of Hua-yen with a Zen Buddhist praxis transformed further by his social activism, community-based self-governing political work, and an eclectic borrowing from anthropology and Amerindian culture. Consequently, it is easy to assume, as many critics have, that the philosophical basis of Snyder's Zen Buddhist practice is itself provided by Zen Buddhism. In terms of Snyder's ecological perspective such an assumption can be misleading since Zen Buddhism does not offer prescriptions for action while Snyder presents an ecological worldview which he acts upon from a consistent and coherent philosophical base. And while Snyder's ecological vision of a world consisting of interconnected systems is supported by Buddhist perspectives, the philosophical basis of such a worldview is more directly associated with Hua-yen than with Zen.

It is useful not only to clarify the connections between Hua-yen Buddhism and Gary Snyder's ecological perspectives but to understand that many of the most important and influential Buddhist principles to be found in Snyder's ecological vision are not explained by Zen Buddhism alone.
Hua-yen (in Japanese, Kegon), the Chinese term for "flower wreath," "flower decoration" or "garland," is the Chinese development of a doctrine of "all-embracing" totality and has been regarded as "the 'crown' of all Buddhist teachings" (Chang ix). At the height of Buddhist philosophical development during the Sui T'ang Period (559-900), Hua-yen unified Buddhist teachings with its central concern for "causation," leading to the introduction of totalistic thinking, the core tenet of which is the Law of Dependent Origination, known variously as interdependent existence and conditioned co-production. From this central tenet, "the Hua-yen sect worked out an intricate philosophy to elucidate the vision of the world arising from the Buddha's dhyana experience described in the Avatamsaka Sutra ..." (Huang 195).

The central Hua-yen teaching of interdependent existence contained in the Avatamsaka Sutra (Garland Sutra) is important for students and scholars of Buddhism, and is commonly included as part of the initial instruction and training of students of Zen. Gary Snyder, as we will see, not only became acquainted with the Hua-yen or Avatamsaka doctrine of dependent origination, but the doctrine and its related tenets became an inseparable part of his own ecological philosophy. The Law of Dependent Origination is clearly an important source of Snyder's interest in and
perspective of interconnectedness and mutual interdependence:

I find it always exciting to me, beautiful, to experience the interdependencies of things, the complex webs and networks by which everything moves, which I think are the most beautiful awarenesses that we can have of ourselves and of our planet. Let me quote something:

The Buddha once said, bhikshus (ordained Buddhist monks), if you can understand this blade of rice, you can understand the laws of interdependence and origination. If you can understand the laws of interdependence and origination, you can understand the Dharma. If you understand the Dharma, you know the Buddha.

And again, that's one of the worlds that poetry has taken, is these networks, these laws of interdependence—which are not exactly the laws that science points out. They are—although they are related—but imagination, intuition, vision clarify them, manifest them in certain ways—and to be able to transmit that to others is to transmit a certain quality of truth about the world. (Snyder TRW 35)

Hua-yen Buddhism saw itself as the "creative synthesis" or "syncretic harmonization" of a number of Buddhist schools—including Madhyamika, Yogacara, Ch' an, T'ien-t'ai, Pure Land and Hua-yen (Odin 9). From the perspective of its own "doctrinal innovations" (9), Hua-yen "teaches something which is new in Buddhism, or which at least had existed before in only a partial, incomplete form; that is, the universe as the infinitely repeated identity and interdependence of all phenomena. Specifically, Hua-yen teaches shih shih wu-ai, the interpenetration of all things, and ch'ung ch'ung pan chü-tzu . . . [which] means
"infinitely repeated" (Cook 36).

Fa-tsan (643-712), the Third Patriarch and "systematizer of the Hua-yen sect," elaborated upon the meaning of "interpenetration" (Odin 9). In terms of shih shih wu-ai or "the unhindered interpenetration between particular with particular" (9), a dharma (or particular in the phenomenal world) that is considered to be the cause "includes within it, by a kind of borrowing or usurpation, the qualities possessed by the contributing conditions" (Cook 68).

Interpenetration results from a situation in which the cause includes the conditions within itself while at the same time, being a result itself of other causes, its qualities whole while the whole includes the part. (68)

The most famous metaphor in Hua-yen Buddhism to illustrate the relationship among all things in existence is the Jewel Net of Indra. The network image it presents has become widely used by Snyder in describing the interconnectedness of things in his own ecological vision. In the heavenly domain of the great god Indra, there is a vast net which covers the palace and stretches, in infinite dimension, throughout the entire universe. At each intersecting knot or eye in the net's intricate design hangs a brilliant glittering jewel. The polished surface of each individual jewel reflects all the other jewels in the net. In addition, each of the other jewels also reflects all the
other jewels, including the reflections contained in each of those individual jewels, so that an "interpenetratively reflexive infinity" is formed by the infinite reflecting. The image, used frequently in Hua-yen Buddhism, illustrates the infinitely repeating and interpenetrative relationships of all phenomena in the cosmos, symbolizing the major theme of mutual identity and mutual intercausality in Hua-yen Buddhist literature.

Gary Snyder draws upon the Avatamsaka model of infinitely-repeating relationships in his descriptions of "High ceilinged . . . double mirrors" in "Bubbs Creek Haircut," the opening poem of *Mountains and Rivers Without End*.

out of the memory of smoking pine The lotion and the spittoon glitter rises Chair turns and in the double mirror waver The old man cranks me down and cracks a chuckle "your Bubbs Creek haircut, boy."

(HP 11)

Remarking on the poem and indicating the Hua-yen influence within his work, Snyder has said, "'Double mirror waver' is a structure point. Mutually reflected mirrors. Like, you see yourself many times reflected in a barber's shop. You look and you see yourself going that way and you see yourself going that way. It's a key image in Avatamsaka philosophy, Buddhist interdependence philosophy. Multiple reflections in multiple mirrors, that's what the universe is like" (Faas 135).
Given the importance of Indra's Net within Buddhism, it is possible that Snyder came across descriptions of Hua-yen philosophy or the Avatamsaka Sutra in his early independent readings, but it is more probable that he was introduced to the image of Indra's Net during his Zen studies in Japan. Nevertheless, he has since applied the Hua-yen metaphor of interdependence as an ecological model for the natural world. "It is clear," he writes, "that the empirically observable interconnectedness of nature is but a corner of the vast 'jewelled net' which moves from without to within" (Snyder TRW 129).

Snyder's earliest reference indicating a familiarity with Hua-yen and the Avatamsaka Sutra occurs in a 1956 journal entry written after he had begun Zen studies in Kyoto. Not only does he describe his simultaneous interests in three different schools of Buddhism and his understanding of the net of interdependency, but he refers to "emptiness" and the "void" as significant Buddhist doctrines which also play an important role in his ecological framework:

... one begins to see the connecting truths hidden in Zen, Avatamsaka and Tantra. The giving of a love relationship is a Bodhisattva relaxation of personal fearful defenses and self-interest strivings—which communicates unverbal to the other and leaves them to do the same. "Enlightenment" is this interior ease and freedom carried not only to persons but to all the universe, such-such-and void—which is in essence and always, freely changing interacting. The emptiness of "both self and things"—only a Bodhisattva has no Buddha-nature. (Lankavatara-sutra.)
So, Zen being founded on Avatamsaka, and the net-network of things; and Tantra being the application of the "interaction with no obstacles" vision on a personal-human level--the "other" becomes the lover, through whom the various links in the net can be perceived. (Snyder EHH 34)

In 1956, when Snyder wrote these words, he was studying a number of Buddhist schools and traditions and one can see his effort to integrate Hua-yen philosophy with his study and practice of Zen and Tantric Buddhism. Shu-chun Huang has rightly observed that "with his knowledge of Zen Buddhism acquired in Japan, Snyder becomes informed that Hua-yen Buddhism should serve as a relevant philosophical foundation for non-philosophical Zen" (Huang 204). This point is worth stressing, not only in appreciating Snyder's nontraditional integration of Vajrayana (Tantric) and Hua-yen (Avatamsaka) Buddhism with Zen, but also to understand clearly that Zen Buddhism alone does not articulate an ecological vision or a philosophy to support it.

Snyder's references to "emptiness" and the "void" are not only significant as elements of the Buddhist doctrines of mutual identity and interdependence, they are indispensable for an understanding of the relationship among particulars in the phenomenal world. Consequently, if we are to appreciate the further connections between Buddhist doctrines and Snyder's ecological vision, a discussion here of "emptiness" in relation to the laws of interdependence and origination is important.
Within the totalistic philosophy of Hua-yen the Buddhist laws of interdependence and origination, closely connected to the Buddhist doctrines of identity and emptiness, are ways of "accounting for the cause of existence" (197). One of the most significant connections between Snyder's Buddhist studies, poetry, and sense of place is his application of the laws of interdependence and origination which can best be demonstrated in connection with the doctrine of "emptiness." As Garma C. C. Chang notes, "When we observe the momentary and constant changes of all things in the phenomenal world, we can conclude that all beings (i.e., forms or rupa) are empty" (Chang 69). Emptiness here means that "things do not exist in their own right, independently, but rather exist only in dependence upon something else" (Cook 95). Francis Cook explains:

When the Buddhist subjects the solid rock to a careful scrutiny, he finds nothing about the rock which would give it an independent existence. It is lacking in a svabhava, an independence or self-existence which would allow it to exist apart from any contributing or supporting conditions. This is its emptiness; it is nothing but its complete dependence on conditions for its own existence. (95)

From the Buddhist viewpoint, all dharmas are sunya (empty); that is, all particulars in the phenomenal world are interdependent. Existence is seen as relational rather than absolute, so that identity is never solitary or autonomous.

... "identity" is only another way of saying "interdependent"; they are one and the same. The
point to the doctrine of interdependence is that things exist only in interdependence, for things do not exist in their own right. In Buddhism, this manner of existence is called "emptiness" (Sanskrit sunyata). Buddhism says that things are empty in the sense that they are absolutely lacking in a self-essence (svabhava) by virtue of which things would have an independent existence. In reality, their existence derives strictly from interdependence. (15)

Regarding all things as projections of the mind, Buddhism recognizes that there are no independent existences to which language and concepts refer. The inadequacy of language, or any symbolic representational system, is due not merely to a differentiation between an abstract concept and a concrete object. For Buddhism, both are mental projections. The doctrine of emptiness, which precludes the "existence" of things as independent and self-existent, can only find language and concepts inadequate in reflecting or expressing reality.

Emptiness is not some entity "out there" in the objective world but rather a term which negates the system of words and concepts with which we categorize that which is "out there." Whenever we attempt to grasp experience through the medium of any concept, such as "existent" or "nonexistent," we are superimposing a character on the objective world which is in fact not there in the world at all; "existent" and "nonexistent" (or any other character) exist only in our minds, not "out there." Emptiness functions as a weapon which destroys the naive, uncritical belief that such concepts refer to entities. (40)

The interdependence of all things is the basis of the Buddhist doctrine of mutual- or dependent-arising. That is, all events and things exist only in relation to one another,
and as such there is not the emphasis in Buddhism on tracing origins of events since that presupposes events are independent and autonomous. Hua-yen Buddhism, recognizing the emptiness in all things and forms, places emphasis not on origins but on conditions of "mutual penetration" for the existence of all phenomena:

... mutual penetration corresponds to the principle of dependent-arising of the sunyata [emptiness] doctrine which states that no thing, whether concrete or abstract, mundane or transcendental, has an independent or isolated existence, but all things depend upon one another for their existence and functions. (Chang 121)

The Hua-yen perspective recognizes the world as "an indivisible whole" consisting of "interlinked relations" forming an integrity composed of "mutually identical and interpenetrating relationships among all things which spontaneously co-arise as a wondrous creation" (Huang 199).

In his book, Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra, Francis Cook explains that emptiness is not a mere abstract concept in Buddhism. It reflects a profound recognition of interrelatedness in the world, each part depending upon all others for its existence:

... everything, from an atom to the universe itself, functions as the cause for everything else. In Buddhist terminology, this is the emptiness of things, and if there were anything which is not empty, which is to say anything that is not causal in this manner, then it is really a nonentity. Emptiness does not at all rob existence of its vitality and color, rather, the full, round, solid form of the object and its vigorous life of activity are in reality precisely its emptiness.
Its concreteness, discreteness, and true individuality are indeed realities of the most vivid kind, and it is only the manner in which this object exists that is an issue, not these qualities. (73)

It is a vitality of precisely this sort that Snyder presents in a poem like "Regarding Wave," where the sense of place is expressed in the intricate interconnection of things. The concreteness of objects presents a network of relationships which, as Snyder says, connects nature and moves in the "vast 'jewelled net' . . . from without to within." Contained in an instant of time there is a swirl of activity, a flow of interpenetrating particulars which move the poem beyond scenic description to bind images together in a single living pattern.

The voice of the Dharma
the voice
now

A shimmering bell
through all.

Every hill, still.
Every tree alive. Every leaf.
All the slopes flow.
old woods, new seedlings,
tall grasses plumes.

Dark hollows; peaks of light.
wind stirs the cool side
Each leaf living.
All the hills.
The Voice
is a wife
to

---

him still.

om ah hum

(RG 35)

Snyder has said, "We live in a universe, 'one turn' in which, it is widely felt, all is one and at the same time all is many" (TOW 9). This includes the human "interdependence with other life forms" which are manifested in "the voice of the Dharma." "Regarding Wave" is a celebration of the vital interaction of flowing forms, the connections that run "through all," while maintaining a non-obstructive relationship between the one and the many. At once reverent and filled with awe at "Each leaf living," the poet sees overlapping regeneration and movement in the "old woods, new seedlings" when observed close up, while from afar every hill appears still. Besides the Buddhist interdependencies in the poem there is a Taoist perspective in the expressions of light growing out of darkness, activity arising from stillness, interactions in which qualities give rise to their opposites.

In the "Burning" section of Myths & Texts, Snyder similarly registers the interdependence of forms and identity, an ecological principle which draws upon an awareness that emptiness means interdependency. Here, as in
"Regarding Wave," the interaction of forms is at once an expression of multiplicity and unity.

Intricate layers of emptiness
This only world, juggling forms
    a hand, a breast, two clasped
Human tenderness scuttles
Down dry endless cycles
Forms within forms falling
Loosely, what's gone away? clinging

Here, forms within forms lose their differentiation, are not judged, but experienced. In a manner that is at once detached and caring, removed from the "endless cycles" and yet compassionate, the perspective expressed is that of the patient Bodhisattva.

Uniting an ecological perspective with the speaker's voice (discussed in chapter two) is the Bodhisattvic presence within Snyder's poetry. But rather than approaching the poems from the structural framework of chapter two, I will address briefly some of the consequences of the laws of interdependence and co-origination which have been presented in the above discussion of emptiness. In particular, within the poems in which there exists a recognition of interdependence and the reciprocal relatedness of all things, there is what may be regarded as the ethical position of the Bodhisattva, the patient, compassionate, and enlightened being dedicated to helping others attain liberation. In "Regarding Wave" and the above example from Myths & Texts the "speaker" is expressing such a Bodhisattvic presence, and by
recognizing the interdependence of all phenomena (dharma), he recognizes the reciprocal nature inherent in relationships.

Chang, in recalling once again the Hua-yen metaphor of the jewelled net, describes this reciprocal relationship in terms of the "mirror" and the "image":

According to the totalistic Hwa Yen viewpoint, each and every thing in the universe is at once a "mirror" and an "image." It is a mirror, because it reflects all things; it is an image, because it is simultaneously reflected by all other things. This is to say that inasmuch as one thing is--at least in some manner--related to all other things, it reflects them all; and inasmuch as the existence of any particular thing must depend on other things, it can be said to be an image, or reflection, of objects other than itself. (Chang 125)

The mirror-image analogy, illustrating the universe as "the infinitely repeated identity and interdependence" of all dharma or phenomena, contributes to an ethical stance of nonjudgmental recognition that things are not, in themselves, "good" or "evil," but instead are necessary reflections of all other phenomena. Snyder's understanding of this point is presented from the perspective of the Bodhisattva who assists those who are suffering. Although I will have much more to say about Buddhist and ecological ethics in chapter five, it is worth noting here the Buddhist approach to "good" and "evil." Once again, Snyder draws upon his understanding of Hua-yen Buddhism to derive a philosophical and moral point:
Avatamsaka (Kegon) Buddhist philosophy sees the world as a vast interrelated network in which all objects and creatures are necessary and illuminated. From one standpoint, governments, wars, or all that we consider "evil" are uncompromisingly contained in this totalistic realm. The hawk, the swoop and the hare are one. From the "human" standpoint we cannot live in those terms unless all beings see with the same enlightened eye. The Bodhisattva lives by the sufferer's standard, and he must be effective in aiding those who suffer. (Snyder TRW 91-92)

In Myths & Texts the Bodhisattva is the "monk bum,"
endlessly patient in his dedication to assisting others:

Meeting conscious monk bums
Blown on winds of karma from hell
To endless changing hell,
Life and death whipped
On this froth of reality (MT 39)

Occasionally, as in "Sustained Yield," the poem, like the actions it records, is as much a political act as it is a moral stand. Its dedication reading "For the treeplanters," it is a poem which, once again, demonstrates the enlightened perspective of the Bodhisattva who is a person of action. The suffering, ecological in this instance, is addressed blamelessly in the first three lines, while the remainder of the poem is an individual act in recognition of the widespread deforestation that has occurred on a vast worldwide scale:

Spain, Italy, Albania, Turkey, Greece,
once had hills of oak and pine
This summer-dry winter-wet
California
manzanita, valley oak, redwood,
sugar pine, our folk
sun, air, water,
our toil,

Topsoil, leafmold, sifted dirt,
hold-in-the-ground

Hold the whip of a tree
steady and roots right
somebody tamp the
    earth, as it's slipped in,
down.

Keep trees growing in this
Shasta nation alta California
Turtle Island
ground. (LOR 134)

The recognition of interdependence, relating what has occurred in Spain, Italy, and Greece to what could also happen in California, while expressed as a non-judgmental understanding, does not translate into complacency or acquiescence. The Bodhisattva's responsiveness, "our toil," is an act of tree-planting which, in observing the larger network within which it occurs, becomes a moral act as much as an act of physical labor. The final four lines are unequivocal in stating the moral duty that is required. Snyder, seeing the consequences of failed practices in nations that "once had hills / of oak and pine," responds in a clear and unqualified manner, stating perhaps as an injunction, perhaps as a moral plea, "Keep trees growing in this / Shasta nation alta California / Turtle Island / ground."
In the naming of place, he refers to the sacredness of Turtle Island, "the name given this continent by Native Americans based on creation mythology," and the region is designated by its geographical features rather than the political and arbitrary demarcation and designation of California (Snyder PW 40). The naming of place, the care with which the "topsoil, leafmold, sifted dirt" are prepared as if part of a sacred ritual planting of forest, is a conscious act of conscience.

In terms of its Buddhist influence, while there is a tradition of Buddhist community work and peaceful service, the very act of tree-planting, in its worldly interaction with economic and ecological forces, becomes a political act, an empowering act of regeneration. The poem itself is a political act from the standpoint that it complicates the role or duties of the Bodhisattva. Consider the following description of the Bodhisattva as a "man of Tao," from "Bojang's Big Lecture," translated by Snyder:

As for all kinds of circumstances, the mind of such a man is without either tranquility or disorder—neither concentrated or scattered. Then there is no obstruction to the complete comprehension of Sound and Form. Such may be called a man of Tao. He is bound in no way by good or bad, purity or impurity, or the uses of worldly happiness and wisdom. This is what we call Buddha-Wisdom. Right and wrong, pretty and ugly, reasonable and unreasonable—all intellectual discriminations are completely exhausted. Being unbound, his mental condition is free. Such a man may be called a Bodhisattva whose Bodhi-mind arrives the instant it sets out. (Snyder EHH 74)
Not to be bound by good or bad or the uses of worldly happiness need not prevent one from acting upon one's comprehension of the world, but Snyder does challenge the degree to which the traditional Bodhisattva can be recognized or accepted as an ecological activist.

Similarly, Snyder, in the concluding lines of "Sustained Yield," expands his role as poet from observer to advocate (from seer to prophet in Charles Altieri's terms) which is regarded by some critics as a transgression of Snyder's duty as a poet to remain faithful to one's insights while maintaining a safe distance from didacticism. I wish to argue that, read from the standpoint of Snyder's Buddhism, all his poems are, in varying degrees, teachings, some more explicit in their moral expression than others, but each can be seen as the record of a way of being, however subtly or boldly presented.

In Snyder's poem, "Among," the Bodhisattva/poet expresses a quality of patience with the natural course of things with a subtlety that conceals the moral position of the Bodhisattva. This patience with the world is expressed in the persistence of the Bodhisattva's practice, the incremental growth and change in the processes of the natural world, and a non-human scale of time that intersects human experience. Again, the Buddhist doctrine of interdependence in the poem is interfused with a Taoist
recognition that the way of being is embodied and reflected in the processes of the natural world.

   Few Douglas fir grow in these pine woods
   One fir is there among south-facing Ponderosa Pine,

   Every fall a lot of little seedlings sprout
   around it--

   Every summer during long dry drought they die.
   Once every forty years or so
   A rain comes in July.

   Two summers back it did that,
   The Doug fir seedlings lived that year

   The next year it was dry,
   A few fir made it through.
   This year, with roots down deep, two live.
   A Douglas fir will be among these pines. (AH 10)

Much of the way things are is a consequence of chance occurrences, the accumulated conditions of both "long dry drought" and occasional summer rains. Snyder brings a recognition of these alternations into "Among," stripped of any direct authorial comment, and in doing so, deftly combines in a subtle way the philosophical tradition of Hua-yen interrelationship--the "net-network" of things--and the presentation of a way of being, a perspective toward the world that will be more fully explored in the examination of Zen and Taoism which follows.

Zen, Taoism, and Snyder's Poetic/Bodhisattvic Practice

In spite of their syncretic advantages in synthesizing a number of Buddhist doctrines and providing the
philosophical foundation for a world view, Hua-yen Buddhism and the Avatamsaka Sutra leave the question of practice to the individual schools. Although Hua-yen offered a way of seeing, it did not provide a way of living in accord with such a view. In looking at Zen Buddhism and Taoism I will direct my discussion to their intersection with Gary Snyder's "practice" or way of being, as it is expressed in his poetry and presentation of place. As a continuation of the expanded sense of place developed in chapter two, which includes, in addition to the geographical locale, the presence of the persona who contributes his awareness of interdependence, "emptiness," and other Buddhist doctrines, I wish to concentrate on the Bodhisattvic presence as an essential element of Snyder's overall sense of place.

What interests me here is what Dogen, the founder of the Soto Zen tradition, called the presencing of things as they are, which in Snyder's work includes the expression of that elusive presence behind and within his poetry, and the state of being that may be glimpsed in the traces set down in his work. By "practice" I mean that way of responding to the world and to daily experience which, as an act of attentiveness, is also the expression of a way of being, and for Snyder this is embodied in Buddhist principles and other philosophical or cultural approaches not directly associated with Buddhism. Practice refers not so much to a meditation
regimen or to the discipline of poetry writing but to the
attentiveness with which Snyder approaches lived experience.
Practice is indistinguishable from the attentiveness and
purposefulness of living or from the condition of being that
is presented in his poems. Poetry is one aspect or
expression of Snyder's practice—it is not his whole life.
As he has stated, "I only use poetry to help me live my own
life with more clarity" (Pickett I-58-59). For Snyder,
"Practice simply is one intensification of what is natural
and around us all of the time" (Snyder TRW 134).

Practice is to life as poetry is to spoken
language. So as poetry is the practice of
language, "practice" is the practice of life. But
from the enlightened standpoint, all of language
is poetry, all of life is practice. At any time
when the attention is there fully, then all of the
Bodhisattva's acts are being done. (134)

One poem from *Turtle Island* which expresses Snyder's
practice and insight, and serves as an entry into the
present discussion of Zen, is "Without," which presents the
inward-turning importance of Zen in terms of "the power
within." It also demonstrates the aural importance of
Snyder's poetry, using space to emphasize the silence
between spoken words, rendering further significance to
their concentrated import and meaning. When, as Snyder
says, "attention is fully there" in the present moment,
there is "no / end in itself," no goal beyond the present
activity. "Without" is an example of the inseparability of
life and practice, a graceful chant reminding one that the path is a way of being, "a course of action, of life, of art or craft" that gives rise to a direct responsiveness to whatever passes immediately before one ("On the Path" 228). The person who adapts to any situation is Lin-chi's "true person without status," one who is open to circumstances and brings a single-minded response to what is there.

the silence
of nature
within.

the power within
the power
without.

the path is whatever passes--no end in itself
the end is,
grace--ease--
healing,
not saving.

singing
the proof
the proof of the power within. (TI 34)
The poem itself is a form of inward teaching, addressing "the power within," which, for Snyder, "is not concerned with political power, but the knowledge of the self, the power of no-power; this is the practice of Zen" (TRW 4). It is also the shamanic power of healing and the Bodhisattvic power of assisting those who are suffering. This power of self-knowledge is not limited to Zen; "it's a basic human possibility that can be uncovered any place, any time. It's, in part, a process of tearing yourself out of your personality and your culture and putting yourself back in it again" (4).

We can reach beyond our social nature and see our relationships in nature, or reach inward and see the relationships that hold there. It's here, too, that we can understand the Buddhist concept of oneness and uniqueness: our social or ritual nature and our personal perception. It's at this level of awareness that I feel all these relationships; my best poems come from such a state and plot these relationships for a listener, who really knew about them but didn't know he knew. (4)

As in most of Snyder's poems, the sense of connectedness to the natural ecological community is expressed in the ordinariness of daily experience, and the awareness of such a connection is the poetic expression itself. The poem does not call attention to itself as a moment of revelation so much as a reverent recognition.

In "O Waters," Snyder presents an inward recognition of interrelatedness with natural processes that occur in
overlapping scales of time—the personal and the geologic, and the interpersonal waking and sleeping—but sharing a moment in which time scales intersect. The same processes with which one observes "mountains hummming and crumbling" are also "building on tiny ledges" the soil necessary to support wild onions and flowers. The process occurs whether one offers a benediction to the waters and the whole earth community or sleeps beneath the pine trees. Snyder recognizes that these, too, are alternating activities, and preference is not given to one or the other.

O waters
wash us, me,
under the wrinkled granite
straight-up slab,

and sitting by camp in the pine shade
Nanao sleeping,
mountains humming and crumbling
snowfields melting
soil
building on tiny ledges
for wild onions and the flowers
Blue
Polemonium

great
earth
sangha (TI 73)

In poems such as "Without" and "O Waters" the "voice" or "speaker" carries with it a set of qualities which, if not addressed, leave the significance of presence insufficiently explained as part of Snyder's sense of place. Apart from structural considerations, the poems express a perspective, a way of being, that is an important element in
Snyder's treatment of place. In the following description of Zen as practice, Snyder may just as well be describing the inward-turning nature of his poetry and the elusiveness attached to it.

We all realize by now that Zen is not aesthetics, or haiku, or spontaneity, or minimalism, or accidentalism, or Japanese architecture, or green tea, or sitting on the floor, or samurai movies. It's a way of using your mind and practicing your life and doing it with other people. It has a style that involves others. It brings a particular kind of focus and attention to work. It values work. It values daily life. It values such old-fashioned terms as responsibility and commitment. At the same time it has no external law for doing it. So you must go very deep into yourself to find the foundation of it. In other words it turns you inward rather than giving you a rule book to live by. Zen is a practice that is concerned with liberation, not with giving people some easy certainty. (153)

For Snyder, the ongoing practice of attentiveness associated with Zen can also be seen in the way poetry helps him live his life with greater clarity; both are what Snyder does as expressions of liberation, community, and interconnectedness. The degree to which poetry and Zen are mutually supporting and interdependent in Snyder's practice further suggests the importance of the speaker's presence as the means by which Snyder conveys his practice through the medium of poetry. The Bodhisattvic presence in Snyder's poetry expresses a way of being that is found in Snyder's discussions of Zen and global ecological interrelationships. What Francis Cook describes as the necessity for "a
particular mode of activity," in his general discussion of Buddhism as practice, corresponds closely to what I am calling the Bodhisattvic presence:

Primarily, Buddhism is praxis, something that one does. Although elements such as having faith, possessing a warm feeling about the religion, and adhering to certain credal formulas are not absent from Buddhism, it may safely be said that these things are not in themselves enough. Likewise, there is a lot of "philosophy" in Buddhism, in the form of logic, cosmology, and epistemology, but to be a Buddhist entails much more than having a certain philosophy of existence. One must make the philosophy a lived reality, so that systems of thought such as Hua-yen must give rise to a particular mode of activity. (Cook 109)

This mode of activity, as it is expressed in Snyder's poetry, draws heavily upon Zen Buddhism and Taoist ideas of living in accord with nature as well as "re-inhabiting" place—putting oneself back into the culture and landscape from which one had previously torn oneself away.

At times, Snyder's poems reflect the direct influence of Buddhist and Taoist texts, displaying the qualities of the "man of Tao" which have occurred throughout Zen and Taoist literature. In the classic Taoist text, the Tao_té Ching (Dao De Jing), Snyder explains, "The word Dao itself means Way, route, road, trail, or to lead/follow. In this text 'way' functions as a subtle and elusive term for the nature of nature" ("On the Path" 228). In the famous opening lines of the Tao_té Ching the elusiveness of the Way is presented as that which can be expressed as lived
experience, but cannot be described or communicated. Here are two versions of the opening lines:

There are ways but the Way is uncharted
There are names but not nature in words (Blakney 53)

The Tao that can be told of
Is not the Absolute Tao;
The Names that can be given
Are not Absolute Names. (Yutang 41)

The ineffable quality of the Tao appears in Snyder's translation of twenty-four Cold Mountain poems of Han-shan (700-780), where he renders the Taoist Way as a mountain path or trail; in one poem Han-shan asks, as does Chuang Tzu in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, who can live in accord with nature? Such a man of virtue can be said to live with the Tao.

Clambering up the Cold Mountain path,
The Cold Mountain trail goes on and on;
The long gorge choked with scree and boulders,
The wide creek, the mist-blurred grass.
The moss is slippery, though there's been no rain
The pine sings, but there's no wind.
Who can leap the world's ties
And sit with me among the white clouds? (R 44)

The place among "The white clouds" is not reached by means of "the world's ties" or the path taken by the many. In another poem, Han-shan again indicates "there's no through trail" which one takes to arrive "right here":

Men ask the way to Cold Mountain
Cold Mountain: there's no through trail.
In summer, ice doesn't melt
The rising sun blurs in swirling fog.
How did I make it?
My heart's not the same as yours.
If your heart was like mine
you'd get it and be right here. (R 42)

As if in response to Han-shan's request for the man
"who can leap the world's ties," Snyder's poem, "The Trail
Is Not a Trail," directly echoing the opening of the Tao-te
Ching, gives an account of moving from the world's ties to
the trail which, in turn, is left behind, in order to arrive
at a place which is as much a way of being as it is a
location off the trail.

I drove down the Freeway
And turned off at an exit
And went along a highway
Til it came to a sideroad
Drove up the sideroad
Til it turned to a dirt road
Full of bumps, and stopped.
Walked up a trail
But the trail got rough
And it faded away--
Out in the open,
Everywhere to go. (LOR 127)

As noted previously, the state of being which Snyder
presents in his poems is expressed within everyday settings.
The significance of ordinariness in Buddhist and Taoist
literature is directly related to the understanding that
enlightenment or realization is an expression and way of
experience which occur within the context of daily life.

Again, Snyder draws upon a long tradition in
associating the following lines from Myths & Texts with the
nature of Buddhist and Taoist insight:
it was nothing special
misty rain on Mount Baker,
Neah Bay at low tide. (MT 49)

These three simple lines from Snyder's poem resonate with additional significance when viewed in relation to the tradition of Chinese poetry and Buddhism to which they refer. In homage to the Chinese poem which it mirrors, and also in recognition of the subtlety of the realization experience, Snyder achieves a number of associations using only fourteen words. Here is the original poem from Su Tung-p'o:

Mount Lu in misty rain;
the River Che at high tide.
When I had not been there,
no rest from the pain of longing!
I went there and returned . . .
It was nothing special:
Mount Lu in misty rain;
the River Che at high tide. (Watts 126)

In the Buddhist understanding of "original mind," at its root the mind is pure but covered over with attachment to concepts, which if cleaned away one could experience reality as it is. As we saw earlier in "O Waters" and in the above passages, attentiveness to the immediacy of experience is the means by which the original mind expresses itself. D. T. Suzuki explains the nature of liberation associated with the realization that "it was nothing special," a quality of "original mind":

All the treatments . . . which are most liberally and kindheartedly given by the masters to inquiring souls, are intended to get them back to
the original state of freedom. And this is never really realized until we once personally experience it through our own efforts, independent of any ideational representation. The ultimate standpoint of Zen . . . is that we have been led astray through ignorance to find a split in our own being, that there was from the very beginning no need for a struggle between the finite and the infinite, that the peace we are seeking so eagerly after has been there all the time. (Suzuki 24)

Ch'ing-yüan Wei-hsin explains further the nature of the changes which occur in the student of Zen who attains the insight represented in the poems of Snyder and Su Tung-p'o regarding the seeing of things as they are.

Before a man studies Zen, to him mountains are mountains and waters as waters; after he gets an insight into the truth of Zen through the instruction of a good master, mountains are not mountains and waters are not waters; but after this when he really attains to the abode of rest, mountains are once more mountains and waters are waters. (24)

The particular significance of Buddhist realization to the present discussion is that it represents in Snyder's poetry the non-philosophical way of being, the praxis of seeing things as they are, which accompanies the philosophical Hua-yen doctrines of interdependence discussed earlier. Furthermore, the realization itself is never stated as such within the poetry, but is instead embedded within the everyday ordinariness of things. Without considering the Bodhisattvic presence as part of Snyder's sense of place and presentation of experience, the poems become "nothing special" for readers in the unenlightened
sense of being descriptions of experience that have no
deep er significance beyond their descriptiveness. Steve
Odin addresses this point about the true reality of things
seen as they are:

Zen Buddhism often states that in the field of
sunyata or openness, all phenomena are seen
"exactly as they are" in their "suchness" so that
"willows are green and flowers are red,"
"mountains are mountains and waters are waters,"
and true reality is the "cherry blossoms glowing
in the morning sun." With respect to the Hua-yen
doctrine of li-shih-wu-ai the key idea to be
assimilated here is that the region of openness is
in fact no different from a particular phenomenon
situated at the core of the perceptual field, but
is simply that phenomenon itself in its manifest
nonconcealment or unhiddenness, stand-out into
openness in its fullness of presence as primordial
truth... (Odin 42)

The understanding that "true reality" is no different
than the particular phenomena (dharma), accounts for the
number of poems in Snyder's overall work which appear
primarily descriptive. Without repeating the significance
of omitted pronouns, except to emphasize that in connection
with the Bodhisattvic presence such omission de-emphasizes
ego-attachment and individuality, such descriptive poems of
place conceal the realization or insight associated with
them—at least until we consider the importance of the
presence behind or within the poem. Snyder's "Old Pond,"
from Axe Handles, almost entirely descriptive in appearance,
is another poem that echoes a famous Chinese poem:
Blue mountain white snow gleam
Through pine bulk and slender needle-sprays;
little hemlock half in shade,
ragged rocky skyline,
single clear flat nuthatch call:
down from the treetrunks
up through time.

At Five Lakes Basin's
Biggest little lake
after all day scrambling on the peaks,
a naked bug
with a white body and brown hair
dives in the water,
Splash! (AH 70)

The title, "Old Pond," and the closing lines of the poem recall Basho's most famous haiku:

The old pond.
A frog jumps in--
Plop!

Commenting on the haiku, R. H. Blyth asserts his preference for the onomatopoeic "plop" rather than "sound of water," which is the way it has frequently been translated. What is of further interest is his statement that "other translations are wide of the mark. 'Splash' sounds as if Basho himself had fallen in" (217). It is quite likely that Snyder was familiar with Blyth's well-known study, Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics, in which case his use of "splash" in "Old Pond" suggests that it is the speaker who, "after all day scrambling on the peaks... dives in the water"—he may be a bug, perhaps, in relative
proportion to the surroundings and the "up through time" geologic vastness of the landscape, but, using Blyth's argument, an actual bug would not make a "splash." Nevertheless, the representation of particulars and the echo of Basho point to the poem's expression of reality stripped of any commentary, interpretation or self-reference, even though there is a presence within the poem which recognizes that the "meaning" of the event is the event itself.

In a pun on the *Tao te Ching*, Snyder's poem, "The Way is Not a Way," plays with the irony that reality consists of the particulars of phenomena that are presented in the poem, and that the examples, which demonstrate disorder, are also the way of nature. The title asserts a Taoist truth expressed in the *Tao te Ching*, but the poem seems to suggest that the undisciplined appearance of things is also an expression of the way of nature.

scattered leaves
sheets of running
water.
unbound hair. loose
planks on shed roofs.
stumbling down wood stairs
shirts un done.
children pissing in the roadside grass (RW 51)

The connections that a reader makes between the juxtaposed images in this poem are assisted by the reference to Taoism suggested in the title. The Tao or Way that can be named is not the eternal Tao, as the *Tao te Ching* states, but likewise, in a non-discriminating and non-judgmental
way, the universe depends upon all things as they are. The images in the poem may at first suggest an entropic and chaotic series of things and events as if to say, this is not the way to an ordered and disciplined life; but, seen from an enlightened perspective, these images, too, represent the necessary and ordinary features of the world in which the Way is lived.

In Snyder's poems of landscape, place, and location, there is almost always a turn from the primarily descriptive toward a recognition at the end of the poem, often offering only the slightest glimpse of the presence of an observing consciousness to prevent the poem from becoming the juxtaposition of wholly descriptive images. As with "Old Pond," "Pine Tree Tops" presents the juxtaposition of visual and auditory images perceived from a single point of reference, quietly noted by the persona within the poem whose presence emerges only in the final lines, although it has been there throughout, ordering the images. It is rather that the reader becomes aware of the human presence within the landscape only at "the creak of boots" and the projection of thought in the final line:

in the blue night
frost haze, the sky glows
with the moon
pine tree tops
bend snow-blue, fade
into sky, frost, starlight.
the creak of boots.
rabbit tracks, deer tracks,
what do we know. (TI 33)
Had the final line of the poem been excluded, the reader would have been provided with only sensory detail, and thereby left to interpret what is essentially an evening forest landscape. In fact, given the nature of the imagery, the scene is almost a still life except for the motion suggested by the creak of the boots, so the reader has little to do except observe, not having been provided any embedded suggestion of what is to be done with the images. While this, in itself, may create its own moment of stillness for the reader, it is not likely to be the inward-turning reflection that is encouraged by the question in the last line.

Recalling the discussion, in chapter two, of Pound's use of ideogrammic juxtaposition, the presence of a witness or speaker was only slightly suggested by the reference to "these faces" (emphasis added), providing the least intrusion or influence of a persona. One major difference, however, in the Pound poem is that since the emphasis was on the representation and experience of motion in an instant of time, the presence (or absence) of a speaker would not change the reader's experience of the poem as primarily sensory. While it can be said that any interpretation of "meaning" rests with the reader, the information provided is entirely visual and places the reader in an oppositional relationship to that visual field, encouraging an
outwardly-directed experience.

What is fundamentally different about Snyder's juxtaposition of images, although they, too, are often highly visual in their emphasis, is that the presence within the poem which often emerges in the closing lines, initiates some element which provides the opportunity for the reader to turn the outwardly-directed perception to an inward-turning inquiry involving the relationship of oneself to the things perceived. And whereas Wordsworth's presence, for instance, within his poems generally tended to leave readers observing Wordsworth's feelings more so than their own, Snyder's persona is present only enough to assist the shift in the reader's experience from observational to experiential. The presence is enough that it subtly guides the reader's shift from a perceptual to a relational experience, but not so much a presence that the reader is left only observing someone else's--the speaker's--engagement in experience. In the case of Pound's "Metro," the presence didn't markedly alter the reader's experience because the emphasis within the poem never moved from the visual. Pound felt that the reader would connect the images and recognize motion because in the phenomenal world of daily experience things interacted with other things, there existed no verbs in nature, and therefore motion would be recognized as an inherent part of the way
objects were juxtaposed with other objects. The emphasis of the ideogrammic method rested at the level of perception.

Snyder, using the same ideogrammic method, attempts something different than Pound in the connections he elicits. Expressing his awareness that, on the surface, the juxtaposition of images by one poet may appear very much like that of another, Snyder is interested in making deeper connections with the ideogrammic form.

There are two things. One is, say, a fragmented text which appears fragmented and which is fragmented and which leads nowhere. Another is ideogrammic method, a fragmented text which appears fragmented but actually leads you somewhere because the relationships that are established between the fragments express a deeper level of connectedness, which becomes clear to the reader's mind if he is able to follow it. . . . The ideogrammic method is intended as a method of communication in the sense of juxtaposing apparently unrelated things that show the connections automatically. That, of course, is what I'd have in mind in my work. Not that I want to make fragmented form but that I want to make a whole form. (Faas 134-35)

The "deeper level of connectedness" in Snyder's poems generally could not occur with a poem that consists entirely of sensory detail, not only because he is attempting to make connections of a different order than Pound and Williams by moving into deeper self-inquiry and therefore requiring more variation in the effects of images, but also because his readers would have to share a general common ground of realization experience in order to make deep connections based on description alone, along the order of what is
required to intuit the meaning of Basho's poem which can be said to be entirely descriptive and without a presence which directs or guides the reader's inward turn.

The "obscurity which serves to communicate" in Snyder's poetry is Zen-like in the manner that it does not impose upon readers the experience they are to have, and yet Snyder is subtly teaching by example and through indirection. The persona expresses a recognition of interconnectedness without describing it as such, and if the reader shares the insight, it is the consequence of making connections which were only hinted. The intuitive leap required in many of Snyder's poems demonstrates the extra-linguistic manner of Buddhist teaching, similar to the Zen koan studies which require an instantaneous act of spontaneity rather than a systematic and logical approach to understanding. As with the old proverb that counsels one not to mistakenly take the pointing finger for the moon, what is required of readers of Snyder's poetry is to look beyond the words to deeper connections.

The difficulty is in balancing descriptions and Bodhisattvic presence. Too much of a purely descriptive poem in a culture that is not trained or educated in reflection such as in the Buddhist tradition—in the way Basho's descriptive haiku has been used as an object of meditation—results in the division between the observer and
the poem such as that which is maintained by Pound's "Metro" poem. Too much of the speaker's presence leaves the reader observing the speaker's experience, a role not much different from observing the landscape. In addition, too much of the persona's presence guides the reader in too obvious a manner, a risk which has led to criticisms of didacticism in Snyder. As an example, the conclusion of "By Frazier Creek Falls," which announces "We could live on this Earth / without clothes or tools!" is an abrupt and influential interjection of the speaker's voice into a poem that had been almost entirely descriptive until then. The reader's experience changes from one of observing the description of landscape to observing the perspective that the speaker projects. Critics, including Charles Altieri, observe that Snyder imposes his own moral perspective into some poems, preventing the reader from arriving at his or her own reflective understanding.

The most effective balance of description and presence within Snyder's use of the ideogrammic form occurs when the reader is no longer merely the observer of perceptual details (as with Pound's "Metro") or the observer of the speaker's experiences and feelings, but becomes engaged in reflection upon deeper connections and relationships (as with Basho) without being explicitly guided by specifics of an insight. Unlike Basho, Snyder requires the use of the
Bodhisattvic presence to insure that the poem functions at a deeper level than the description of place alone. Without the inclusion of such a presence the imagism would lack the vitality associated with the deeper connections and associations Snyder makes with images and presence.

The importance of Zen Buddhism to Snyder’s sense of place is evident in ways which also include an understanding of the interconnectedness of the present moment and past experiences. In poems such as "Axe Handles" and "Soy Sauce" Snyder presents examples of work experiences in which the attentiveness to a particular task calls to mind other associations which, when considered in the context of the present task, illustrate the Buddhist view of the moment as the interpenetration of past, present, and future. Snyder’s associative use of recollection does not lead to reminiscence or nostalgic longing; the specific connections between present and past serve to deepen the current moment, reinforcing its connectedness with previous experiences. For Snyder the attentiveness to the immediacy of experience includes past associations and thoughts which act as part of the inward-turning reflection on the relationship and the interaction between past and present experiences.

In "Axe Handles," Snyder expresses connections between art, language, family, and culture through associations that
are drawn from a shared experience with his son, Kai, while working with tools:

One afternoon the last week in April
Showing Kai how to throw a hatchet
One-half turn and it sticks in a stump.
He recalls the hatchet-head
Without a handle, in the shop
And go gets it, and wants it for his own. (AH 5)

The father and son begin to fashion a new hatchet handle from an old broken axe handle, when the speaker (Snyder) brings further connections to the present moment, transforming one kind of lesson into the insight for another:

There I begin to shape the old handle
With the hatchet, and the phrase
First learned from Ezra Pound
Rings in my ears!
"When making an axe handle
the pattern is not far off."
And I say this to Kai
"Look: We'll shape the handle
By checking the handle
Of the axe we cut with--"
And he sees. And I hear it again:
It's in Lu Ji's Wen Fu, fourth century
A.D. "Essay on Literature"--in the Preface: "In making the handle
Of an axe
By cutting wood with an axe
The model is indeed near at hand." (AH 5–6)

The layers of teachings in the poem multiply into familial, literary, and cultural influences, turning the task of tool-making into a reflection on the cultural transformation that takes place with language and the teachings of poets who are, in turn, fashioned and reshaped by the influence of earlier poets:
And I see: Pound was an axe,
Chen was an axe, I am an axe
And my son a handle, soon
To be shaping again, model
And tool, craft of culture,
How we go on. (AH 6)

The attentiveness to the present task is not, from a Buddhist perspective, restricted only to the activity of the present moment. The doctrine of emptiness, a recognition that all phenomena are without self-essence and therefore exist only in their interrelatedness with other phenomena, indicates the connectedness of past, present, and future. Snyder's attentiveness to the immediacy of experience is maintained while using memory and recollection in his poetry.

In "Soy Sauce" it is a sensory experience that elicits the recollection of former experiences, connecting them to the present moment:

Standing on a stepladder
  up under hot ceiling
tacking on wire net for plaster,
a day's work helping Bruce and Holly on their house,
I catch a sour salt smell and come back
down the ladder. (AH 30)

The smell is from the window frames, constructed from a redwood soy sauce tank. Snyder connects the present smell with that from a earlier experience, and appreciably acknowledges the recollection:

Out in the yard the staves are stacked:
I lean over, sniff them, ah! it's like Shinshu miso,
the darker saltier miso paste of the Nagano uplands, central main island, Japan--
it's like Shinshu pickles!
I see in mind my friend Shimizu Yasushi and me,
on one October years ago, trudging through days of snow
crossing the Japan Alps and descending
the last night, to a farmhouse,
taking a late hot bath in the dark—and eating
a bowl of chill miso radish pickles,
nothing ever so good!  (AH 30-31)

Significantly, the memory is noted and the speaker returns
his attention to his present work:

   Back here, hot summer sunshine dusty yard,
      hammer in hand.  (AH 30)

The return from the recollection to the present task
parallels the Buddhist practice of meditation,
acknowledging the memory as an inseparable part of the
present moment, without turning the recollection into a
reverie about the past. Snyder makes the further
connection between his memory and Holly's reference to the
window frames, that "Deer lick it nights":

   But I know how it tastes
      to lick those window frames
      in the dark, the deer.  (AH 31)

"Soy Sauce" and "Axe Handles" demonstrate the way
Snyder moves temporally within a poem while maintaining a
focus on the immediacy of events, avoiding nostalgic
recollections. Christopher Ives observes that the Buddhist
view of immediacy offers such an expanded awareness of the
present:
... Zen Buddhists usually state that "immediacy" does not indicate that one is stuck in the present moment with no memory of the past and "no thought for the morrow." Practice gradually releases the anxious morass of thoughts about the future and past, the mental static that fills lives with unnecessary anxiety and struggle. But this does not mean that all thought about past and future ceases. Immediacy indicates a clear and expansive awareness in the present, and what arises in that awareness as content may be memory or anticipation. ... [W]hen Zen speaks of immediacy in the present, it is referring not to the normal objectified present standing apart from past and future in a linear series, but to the awakened Present, which includes past and future—and the normal objectified present—within itself. (Ives 43)

As we will see in chapter four, from an ecological perspective the recognition of the interrelatedness of past and present are central to Snyder's reverence for place. Values derived from primitive cultures and their relationship to place have been important to Snyder's ecological conscience. Not only is Buddhist practice instrumentally supportive to Snyder's larger ecological vision, it has become inextricably joined to his relation to place. When asked in an interview about how one develops one's conceptions of life with the innumerable possibilities and choices available, Snyder joined his Buddhist practice and sense of place:

It is true that we have all these choices available to us, but that doesn't mean that we can simply construct a world view out of pieces and fragments from everywhere .... That's where a specific discipline or practice holds it together, gives it a center. You have to have a place that you work from before you can do that .... So,
for me, the practice of Zen . . . has been a center, and later a center becomes living in place. And everything has to fit to that. I measure every idea or myth in the world against singing and working, and bearing in mind ultimately that what human beings have to do is work and make their living by the sweat of their brow. And they have to do it in a specific location and in a specific way. (Pickett I-58)

The importance of place and a way of being runs through Snyder's poetry just as he recognizes that it is essential in life that one has "a specific location" and "a specific way" in which to live and work purposefully. The presence within his poetry is oftentimes subtle, but on some occasions almost insistent, in communicating the importance of a way of being that is harmonious with one's sense of place.

Snyder's poems are expressionss of being, not doctrines of how one should live; they provide glimpses of the "net-network" of things; they open up insights into the interconnections of the world which reside in everyday occurrences, and, as with the long lineage of Zen poets to which Snyder's voice may be added, they are the trail markers which point the way toward the open territories where there are no trails.

About this connection between living in place and the presence within his poetry, Snyder writes:

When we talk about a "norm" or a "Dharma," we're talking about the grain of things in the larger picture. Living close to earth, living more simply, living more responsibly, are all quite
literally in the grain of things. It's coming back to us one way or another, like it or not—when the excessive energy supplies are gone. I will stress, and keep stressing, these things, because one of the messages I feel I have to convey—-not as a preaching but as a demonstration hidden within poetry—is of deeper harmonies and deeper simplicities, which are essentially sanities, even though they appear irrelevant, impossible, behind us, ahead of us, or right now. (TRW 112)

In the following chapter those "deeper harmonies and deeper simplicities" will be further explored, as well as some of the values associated with Snyder's sense of place. While the philosophy of Hua-yen and the practice of Zen are undeniably inseparable from Snyder's way of being—within his poetry and in his life—-an examination of their importance does not prepare us for the specific details of Snyder's bioregional perspectives. The philosophy and way of being that have been discussed in the present chapter are instrumental in Snyder's poetry and ecological vision, and they are compatible with other values and practices not associated with Buddhism, and so to expand the discussion of place I will next examine some of the important ecological perspectives within Snyder's work.
CHAPTER IV
DEEPER CONNECTIONS IN PLACE:
COMMUNITY, MYTH, AND PRIMITIVE CULTURE

Given an understanding that culture is a mosaic of ever-changing and yet recoverable parts that can be reintegrated into the present, it follows that humankind can recognize its many affinities with the Paleolithic past. By clearing away the undergrowth that obscures our connection with the archaic, we may discover vital relations between wildness and human beingness.

--Max Oelschlaeger--

Coexistent and compatible with Gary Snyder's Buddhist-influenced way of seeing and being is the importance of values connected with primitive cultures, myths, and communities. The relationship to place that is characteristic of native cultures and traditions from the Paleolithic to the present offers, for Snyder, the clearest demonstration of a way that humans can relate to and be interconnected with their immediate environment. It is the values and principles derived from archaic and native
culture, as well as from his Buddhist training, that Snyder emphasizes most frequently in his work; it is their application to a way of seeing the world from a contemporary context—not a return to Paleolithic living conditions—that interests Snyder (Snyder TRW 111).

Although the philosophy and ontology of Buddhism is generally supported by native and primitive values and ways of living in relation to place, it is worth noting the differences in their significance to Snyder's sense of place. Whereas native cultures contain a body of traditions, religious practices, myths and song, and a sense of community as integral parts of a cultural context all associated with place, Zen Buddhism as studied by Snyder in Japan still requires—after a period of training—a social and cultural context and a place (apart from the monastery) in which one's living practice is to be carried forward.

Whereas place is inseparably joined to the spiritual and daily practices of life in native, primitive, and archaic cultures, the Buddhist philosophy of interdependence and the Zen ontological way of being are part of a training that occurs in a place removed from the daily interactions of a culture, and therefore requires a relocation, following training, into another place to continue one's practice within a social context. Snyder has remarked that a Zen monastery "could be more reasonably described as a sort of
seminary; it's a training school, and when you've finished your training you move on. Moving on means you reenter the world and you do what you can do" (Snyder "WHYY interview").

One of the reasons Snyder devoted himself to the formal study of Zen in Japan is that whereas his cultural background did not prevent him from Buddhist training, there was no opportunity available to an outsider like himself to enter a Hopi community and study their cultural and spiritual practices (Snyder TRW 94). He has, however, integrated Buddhism and native concepts in his overall sense of place, drawing upon values that he finds absent in the general social structure of contemporary America. One of his greatest concerns is that "we suffer from a lack of sense of nativeness . . . a lack of commitment to spending time in place, to the building of a culture over the centuries. These concepts haven't occurred yet to most Americans" (Woods and Schoonmaker 18).

Snyder has therefore sought values and concepts outside the Western philosophical and religious traditions, and has cultivated a deepening sense of nativeness during the two decades he has lived in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. In his essay, "Four Changes," he declares the task he has set for himself, enjoining others to dedicate themselves to an understanding of the importance of the primitive: "Master the archaic and the primitive as models of basic
nature-related cultures—as well as the most imaginative extensions of science—and build a community where these two vectors cross" (TI 102). Snyder's pursuit of community and nativeness in primitive culture has led to a number of interconnections in his work, ranging from a critique of Western ideas of progress and their environmental consequences, to the reverence for native song, myth, and tradition which reinforce a sense of community and enliven the poet's task of giving voice to the silent wilderness. Throughout his depictions of the primitive there is a regard for place that joins individual and tribal identity to a larger conception of community that includes the non-human. These connections to place will be examined below.

The anthropologist Stanley Diamond has said, "The sickness of civilization consists in its failure to incorporate [and] . . . move beyond the limits of the primitive" (Snyder EHH 126). The significance of the primitive in Snyder's study, and in his work, is that "looking . . . into what the primitive represents provides us with the only empirical alternative models, actually, to what civilization represents, and from inside civilization, we get some of the same echoes of what the possibilities might be" (Castro and Castro 36-38).

There are often two related emphases within Snyder's work depicting native Indian ways and values. One is the
idea that the wisdom of the past has been forgotten or destroyed and must be relearned, and the second is a criticism of modern industrialized societies which have become disconnected from an intimate understanding of the land, characterized by policies and practices which reflect a sense of alienation and detachment from the landscape.

In Snyder's poem, "Control Burn," there is an expressed wish to act "with respect for laws / of nature," and burn the brush as the Indians "used to do," but there is the suggestion in the poem that man-made laws have been enacted which prevent such a burn. While the tone expressed in the poem appears impartial and accepting, there is a sense that the wisdom of the Indians' annual practice is being forgotten and that expediency has replaced the practices which had been mutually beneficial to the land and to the people.

What the Indians
here
used to do, was,
to burn out the brush every year.
in the woods, up the gorges,
keeping the oak and the pine stands
tall and clear
with grasses
and kitkitdizze under them,
ever enough fuel there
that a fire could crown.

Now, manzanita,
(a fine bush in its right)
crowds up under the new trees
mixed up with logging slash
and a fire can wipe out all.
Fire is an old story.
I would like,
with a sense of helpful order,
with respect for laws
of nature,
to help my land
with a burn. a hot clean
burn.

(manzanita seeds will only open
after a fire passes over
or once passed through a bear)

And then
it would be more
like,
when it belonged to the Indians

Before. (TI 19)

It is "a sense of helpful order," a direct connection
with place, that Snyder respects in native cultures and
finds missing in modern technological societies. In
"Control Burn" the speaker yearns for a sense of nativeness
that he sees further diminished by the prohibition on the
burning of brush. Rather than raising the issue as a source
of conflict, Snyder records the way that precautions to
protect the pine stands are prevented by policies which do
not embody the old wisdom of the Indians.

Other poems depict changes in values with a tolerance
that, at first, seems neither entirely accepting nor
critical. In "Stovewood," for example, there is a
recognition of the need for logging, presented in one sense
as part of a process of transforming energies. The final
two lines, however, may be regarded as a critique of a
society which disposes rather than reuses, but it is
presented as if understanding that the transformation from
tree growth to firewood is part of a process in which long
periods of growth are followed by short moments of human
use.

two thousand years of fog and sucking minerals
from the soil,
Russian river ox-team & small black train
haul to mill;
fresh-sawed rough cut by wagon
and built into a barn;
tear it down and split it up
and stick it in a stove. (RW 71)

Other descriptive poems, such as "Black Mesa Mine # 1,"
depict transformation less benignly. Here, the destruction
of the land is a violation of spirit directly connected to
the Navaho way of life.

Wind dust yellow cloud swirls
northeast across the fifty-foot
graded bulldozed road,
white cloud puffs,
juniper and pinyon scattered groves
--firewood for the People
heaps of wood for all
at cross-streets in the pueblos,
ancient mother mountain
pools of water
pools of coal
pools of sand
  buried or laid bare

Solitary trucks go slow on grades
smoking sand
writhes around the tires
and on a torn up stony plain
a giant green-and-yellow shovel
whirs and drags
house-size scoops of rock and gravel

Mountain,
be kind,
it will tumble in its hole
Five hundred yards back up the road
a Navajo corral
of stood up dried out poles and logs
all leaned in on an angle,
gleaming in the windy April sun. (TI 42)

In these poems we find that Snyder's ecological vision includes a recognition of impermanence and change. In "Control Burn," the understanding that "Fire is an old story" reflects not only the natural occurrences of fire as a factor in the regenerative processes of nature, but also that the Indians understood their connection to these natural processes and likewise used fire to protect the life of the land. Snyder does not separate human action from natural processes. What humans do in (or to) a landscape is also recognized as natural. A control burn as well as a logging practice that preserves the sustainability of the forest can indicate an understanding of and an affinity with nature. An important distinction, for Snyder, between human action that reflects understanding and one that is motivated primarily by self-interest is the degree to which the land remains sustainable and regenerative. The activity of the Indians, "to burn out the brush every year," suggests that their practice assisted the sustainability of the forest and reflected the Indians' relationship of coexistence with the forest from year to year. Their own sustenance does not threaten the integrity of the forest.
In "Stovewood," the process that is described is not rejuvenative and the habitat is not protected and sustained as it is in "Control Burn." The "two thousand years of fog and sucking minerals from the soil" that is part of the recirculating life cycle of the forest is presented not as part of a process that will continue indefinitely, but is seen rather as the means to acquisition of a product for human use—wood to build a barn and eventually burn in a stove. What is particularly revealing about the poem is that corresponding to the linear (rather than cyclical) movement of events from forest growth to wood-burning, there is an increased quickening of the time frame from the two thousand years of sustained old-growth forest to the rapidity with which the barn is torn down, split into wood, and burned in the stove. The pacing in the lines of the poem reflects the disparity between the time required for a forest to mature and the little time necessary for human activity to alter the processes of nature.

"Black Mesa Mine #1" significantly magnifies the worldview presented in "Stovewood," a treatment of place not as habitat, an action not "to help my land," as in "Control Burn," but an act that destroys the sustainability of the "ancient mother mountain" which humans depend upon in a relation of coexistence. An invasion of equipment capable of dragging "house-size scoops of rock and gravel"
transforms the sacred groves into "heaps of wood for all / at cross-streets in the pueblos." At one instance in the poem, a patient (and perhaps prophetic) voice, addresses the mountain, speaking as much about the civilization that has wrought such destruction as about the "giant green-and-yellow shovel" that has carried it out: "Mountain / be kind, / it will tumble in its hole." Again, Snyder presents a native culture being further encroached upon, its connection to place severely restricted if not severed, and its integrated habitat displaced by the long-lasting scars of a way of seeing progress detached from place.

While there is no speaker within these poems commenting directly or overtly upon the moral acceptability of the actions that are presented, Snyder does indicate that the way a people engage in logging and burning reflects their relation to place and the degree to which they either live as a part of that place and are sustained by it, or are detached and disconnected from it and view forests instead as lumber, minerals, and a repository of usable resources distinct from habitat. For Snyder, these distinctions describe the differences between the native, archaic, and Paleolithic regard for place and a profit- and progress-motivated interaction with place:

Primitive cultures first and foremost challenge our sense of progress. They challenge all of the myths—secular myths—by which civilizations maintain themselves, and the foremost secular
myth, at the present time, is the myth of progress, the myth that what we are now represents an inevitable historical line, and our society is the end product of some kind of social evolution ... (36)

Snyder's understanding of the history of wilderness and forest depletion, and the drastic human alteration of the environment, extends beyond the immediate idea of progress associated with modern societies. In his poetry there is a recognition that the East, like the West, has depleted its environment for more than two thousand years:

The ancient forests of China logged
and the hills slipped into the Yellow Sea. (MT 3)

And, again, in Turtle Island, Snyder writes:

Pere David's Deer, the Elaphine,
Lived in the tule marshes of the Yellow River
Two thousand years ago--and lost its home to rice--
The forests of Lo-Yang were logged and all the silt & Sand flowed down, and gone by 1200 AD-- (TI 47)

In Western environmental degradation, Clarence Glacken, in his study of the relation of nature and culture, notes:

Plato ... describes the former arable hills, fertile valleys, and forested mountains "of which there are visible signs even to this day." ... Cultivated trees provided pasturage for flocks, and the soil was well watered and the rain was "not lost to it, as now, by flowing from the bare land into the sea. . . ." (Glacken 121)

Snyder, aware of this history, connects in his poetry, modern environmental abuses with the ancient logging practices of the Greeks and Romans by indicating their deviation from an understanding of the interdependencies in the natural world which were recognized in the Paleolithic
and carried through in native cultures. In *Myths & Texts*, ancient and modern Roman and Greek cultures epitomize the violation of the sacred relation previously held between humans and their environment.

The groves are down
cut down
Groves of Ahab, of Cybele
Pine trees, knobbed twigs
thick cone and seed
Cybele's tree this, sacred in groves
Pine of Seami, cedar of Haida
Cut down by the prophets of Israel
the fairies of Athens
the thugs of Rome
both ancient and modern; (MT 15)

As early as Cicero there are accounts of an anthropocentric worldview connected with the dominant theology of the Western world. The view that "the world and all the things that it contains were made for the sake of gods and men" came to be echoed later as a doctrine of manifest destiny (Glacken 57).

By the middle of the thirteenth century, Lynn White Jr. notes, "a considerable group of active minds ... were beginning to generalize the concepts of mechanical power. They were coming to think of the cosmos as a vast reservoir of energies to be tapped and used according to human intentions" (134).

It is the expression of these views in recent history that has drawn Snyder's harshest response. In Stockholm, attending the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human
Environment, Snyder wrote "Mother Earth: Her Whales," a poem which contains one of his most explicit condemnations of the self-interest, greed, and irresponsibility of the modern "robot nations" that convened to discuss global ecological problems:

Brazil says "sovereign use of Natural Resources"
Thirty thousand kinds of unknown plants.
The living actual people of the jungle
sold and tortured--
And a robot in a suit who peddles a delusion called "Brazil"
can speak for them

... 

And Japan quibbles for words on
what kinds of whales they can kill?
A once-great Buddhist nation
dribbles methyl mercury
like gonorrhea
in the sea.

... 

North America, Turtle Island, taken by invaders
who wage war around the world.
May ant, may abalone, otters, wolves and elk
Rise! and pull away their giving
from the robot nations. (TI 47-48)

The poem underscores the loss of humanity that occurs when the fundamental relationship of people to their place of residence breaks down into a detached and fragmented view of the world, perpetuating further self-interestedness and a deepening sense of disconnectedness from the larger planetary ecological network.

In a poem which traces the geologic and human transformation of place, "What Happened Here Before"
describes changes in the region of the Sierra Nevada over the course of 300 million years, demonstrating the vast geological time scale prior to human habitation, then the tens of thousands of years of human coexistence with place prior to the arrival of white Europeans and the environmental changes which attended the gold rush of the mid-nineteenth century:

-300,000,000-

First a sea: soft sands, muds, and marls
—looding, compressing, heating, crumpling, crushing, recrystallizing, infiltrating,
several times lifted and submerged.
intruding molten granite magma
deep-cooled and speckling,
gold quartz fills the cracks--

... 

-40,000-

And human people came with basket hats and nets
winter-houses underground
yew bows painted green
feasts and dances for the boys and girls
songs and stories in the smoky dark.
(TI 79)

-125-

Then came the white man: tossed up trees and
boulders with big hoses,
going after that old gravel and the gold.
horses, apple-orchards, card-games,
pistol-shooting, churns, county jail,
(TI 79)

In addition to the vastness of geologic time which places into perspective the questions of proprietorship that arise in the poem—"We asked, who the land belonged to"—the poem presents identity in terms of one's relationship to experiences in place.
we sit here near the diggings
in the forest, by our fire, and watch
the moon and planets and the shooting stars--

my sons ask, who are we?
drying apples picked from homestead trees
drying berries, curing meat,
shooting arrows at a bale of straw.

military jets head northeast, roaring, every dawn.
my sons ask, who are they?

Their existence is bound up with all that they see, but "the
land belongs to itself."

Turtle Island swims
in the ocean-sky swirl-void
biting its tail while the worlds go
on-and-off
winking

In the end, the sons' questions, like Zen koans or mythic
inquiries for the surrounding world to answer, are given a
direct response:

WE SHALL SEE
WHO KNOWS
HOW TO BE

Bluejay screeches from a pine. (TI 80-81)

In contrast to the lack of vision associated with modern
industrialized societies rooted in the traditions of Western
culture, Snyder looks to primitive cultures as a model for
ways of relating to place. "We all know what primitive
cultures don't have. What they do have is this knowledge of
connection and responsibility which amounts to a spiritual
asceticism for the whole community" (Snyder EHH 121). At the
center of Snyder's ecological vision is the interrelatedness of place, community, myth, and poetry—which bind together people and place. As Snyder has had to point out a number of times, this is not a retrograde return to the Paleolithic or a neo-Luddite call to abandon modern technologies: "It isn't really a main thrust in my argument or anyone else's I know that we should go backward" (TRW 111). In order for the values associated with primitive and native cultures to take hold in the context of modern history what is required is that people re-establish their connection to place. Snyder, in proposing "to talk about place as an experience" (PW 25), recognizes the challenges in the process he calls "re-inhabitation":

Although it's clear that we cannot again have seamless primitive cultures, or the purity of the archaic, we can have neighborhood and community. Communities strong in their sense of place, proud and aware of local and special qualities, creating to some extent their own cultural forms, not humble or subservient in the face of some "high cultural" over-funded art form or set of values, are in fact what one healthy side of the original American vision was about. (TRW 161)

For Snyder, an important part of developing a strong sense of place begins at the basic level of knowing the plants in one's region, living with a sense of connection with the place. Such a sense of "nativeness," as Snyder calls it, "of belonging to the place . . . is critical and necessary." When a people live as if they genuinely belong to a place, Snyder suggests, they are more apt to preserve
it rather than exploit it, to interact with their habitat in a manner that sustains it as long as possible.

Some people are beginning to try to understand where they are, and what it would mean to live carefully and wisely, delicately in a place, in such a way that you can live there adequately and comfortably. Also, your children and grandchildren and generations a thousand years in the future will still be able to live there. That's thinking as though you were a native. Thinking in terms of the whole fabric of living and life. The Native American people lived fifty thousand years in California, perhaps. (86)

For people in modern industrialized societies there is no return to the relationship with place that existed for Paleolithic people. As Max Oelschlaeger explains, the human relationship to place changed forever with the emergence of the idea of "wilderness" itself, an idea which is located within the context of human history and evolved out of human interactions with the environment:

The idea of wilderness with connotations of wasteland, badlands, or hinterlands was not conceivable, just as a "round earth" is not conceivable to people who believe in a "flat earth." . . . Home was a natural world of plants, animals, and land with which archaic people were bound. The idea of "being lost in the wilderness" logically necessitates a geographical referent conceptualized as home as distinct from all other places; but for Paleolithic people home was where they were and where they had always been. They could not become lost in the wilderness, since it did not exist. (Oelschlaeger 14)

The implications of Oelschlaeger's observations are far-reaching in describing first the split between the idea of "home" and those other places which became increasingly
separate, threatening, and feared. Secondly, his study offers an explanation for the ways that "wilderness" came to be associated with the wild which had to be conquered, tamed, and beaten into submission as part of the growing misapprehension that it is not an extended part of the original home.

The task for people in modern societies, as Snyder describes it, is to re-connect with place in full recognition of the history of the changing human relationship to habitat during the last several thousand years. Snyder speaks from an ecological perspective that understands the interconnections between identity and place, "knowing [that] who and where are intimately linked" (TOW 64). The way for some people of industrialized societies to become reacquainted with place is through a process of re-inhabitation:

Re-inhabitory refers to the tiny number of persons who come out of the industrial societies (having collected or squandered the fruits of 8000 years of civilization) and then start to turn back to the land, to place. This comes for some with the rational and scientific realization of inter-connectedness, and planetary limits. But the actual demands of a life committed to a place, and living somewhat by the sunshine green plant energy that is concentrating in that spot, are so physically and intellectually intense, that it is a moral and spiritual choice as well. (65)

The re-inhabitation of place re-establishes the sense of belonging to a community that extends beyond the immediate human community. In "Control Burn," the speaker
sought such a re-connexion, and in "Black Mesa Mine #1" the detachment from place is so fully institutionalized as to go unquestioned by many people who regard it as the price of progress. The importance of such interconnectedness with place has its foundation in ecological as well as cultural considerations of community. Eugene Odum, in The Fundamentals of Ecology, writes:

The community concept is one of the most important principles in ecological thought and in ecological practice. It is important in ecological theory because it emphasizes the fact that diverse organisms usually live together in an orderly manner, not just haphazardly strewn over the earth as independent beings. (246)

Snyder states that "we ourselves are not merely individuals each trying to survive, but always part of a kin group or work group. The health of our community—culture—society is essential to our own individual well-being" ("Poetry and Magic" 25). The interrelatedness of the individual and the place may be seen in their interdependent reliance upon one another. Alan Watts has similarly noted:

If you will accurately describe what any individual organism is doing, you will take but a few steps before you are also describing what the environment is doing. . . . the doing, which was called the behavior of the individual, is found to be at the same time the doing which is called the behavior of the environment. ("Individual" 140)
The spiritual and ecological explanations of the inextricable bonds between individual and place share considerable common ground. So, too, as Eugene Odum describes, the relation of individual to community has significance in ecological theory as it does in the previous discussion of the destruction of native Indian habitat:

The community concept is important in the practice of ecology because "as the community goes, so goes the organism." Thus, often the best way to "control" a particular organism, whether we wish to encourage or discourage it, is to modify the community . . . (Odum *Fundamentals* 246)

As discussed in previous chapters, Snyder de-emphasizes the self-reflexive individual in his work—he is not concerned with the "ego-interference," the self-absorbed or confessional features of individualism, but he does emphasize the individual in relation to community and place. The question "who am I" does not become for Snyder an opportunity for the psychological exploration of self as an isolated individual, as a detached and alienated product of the modern world. Instead, insofar as he is concerned with the question of the individual, it is in one's relation to others, to the natural world, and to traditions, myths, and ceremonies connected with primary experiences which occur in place.

The psychological side is *who* am I? The bioregional side is *where* am I? *Who? and where?* are not such different questions. Where am I is a way of asking am I at home where I am? Am I in touch with the whole of the community, which means
the natural community as well as the human community? Do I know where my water comes from? What's my watershed? Do I know where my fuel comes from? Who's growing the food? It's a much more concrete and personal sense of relationship to the whole of your surrounding terrain and the mutuality that exists in it than people in this country, with their high mobility, tend to feel. (Hertz 53)

The dynamics of inhabiting a place for long periods, within a culture whose identity is inseparable from the well-being of the non-human community in that place, extend beyond deep familiarity and respect. Important in Snyder's sense of place is the myth base that emerges within cultures that regard place as sacred. Paul Shepard, in his study of the psychopathology of "why men persist in destroying their habitat," further describes the significance of place in establishing a sense of individual and community identity:

Individual and tribal identity are built up in connection with widely separate places and the paths connecting them. Different places are successively assimilated or internalized. They become distinct . . . elements of the self, enhanced by mythology and ceremony, generating a network of deep emotional attachments that cements the personality. Throughout life, those places have a role in the evocation of self and group consciousness. They are . . . integrated components of a sacred history and the remembered and unconsciously felt past. (Shepard Nature 24)

The way individual identity is often depicted in Snyder's poetry is within the context of that connection between "who" and "where." We find in his work a full range of interfused elements including the importance of myths which build community, bring the imagination of song and legend into one's sense of living in a location, and teach
others about the plants and animals within a place. In his 
poem, "Foxtail Pine," Snyder presents the imaginative 
processes of learning the plants, myth, anecdote and 
history, told with light self-deprecating wit. In addition, 
Snyder demonstrates the importance to one's identity in 
learning "the 'where' of our 'who are we?'" (Snyder TOW 58).

bark smells like pineapple: Jeffries 
cones prick your hand: Ponderosa

nobody knows what they are, saying 
"needles three to a bunch."

turpentine tin can hangers 
high lead riggers

"the true fir cone stands straight, 
the doug fir cone hangs down."

--wild pigs eat acorns in those hills 
cascara cutters 
tanbark oak bark gatherers 
myrtlewood burl bowl-makers 
little cedar dolls, 
  baby girl born from the split crotch 
  of a plum 
  daughter of the moon--

foxtail pine with a 
clipped curve-back cluster of tight 
  five-needle bunches 
  the rough red bark scale 
and jigsaw pieces sloughed off 
  scattered on the ground. 
--what am I doing saying "foxtail pine"? 
these conifers whose home was ice 
age tundra, taiga, they of the 
naked sperm 
do whitebark pine and white pine seem the same?

a sort of tree 
its leaves are needles 
like a fox's brush 
(I call him fox because he looks that way) 
and call this other thing, a 
foxtail pine. (BC 16–17)
Here Snyder displays the relationship of present experience to an understanding of its mythological importance as a creative and imaginative act. The "mythological present" is a generative process, a participatory co-creative process that includes the use of language in the naming of a foxtail pine or in learning that "wild pigs eat acorns in those hills." The crafting of the mythological "daughter of the moon" from "the split crotch / of a plum" reinforces the connections between the physical elements of a place and the mythology that binds the past and present, the creative and the imaginative. The naming of things—"I call him fox because he looks that way"—is an important part of the relation of myth to place, investing further importance in the things that comprise one's habitat and community.

In a passage from *He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village*, Snyder describes the relation of myth to culture as an important part of a culture's oral tradition.

Every myth and tale is merely one aspect of the total life of a culture, integrated in varying degrees with other factors, and changing as other elements change. . . . The study of an oral literature can be regarded . . . as simply one of a number of areas one must investigate to get an understanding of a whole culture. (10)
In a poem such as "Anasazi" we see the rich interweaving of mythology and place, the real and imaginative, in ways that one becomes indistinguishable from the other, reflecting the intermingling of tradition, ritual, and religious ceremonies and daily practices of living in the same desert canyons and cliffs for thousands of years.

Anasazi,
Anasazi,
tucked up in clefts in the cliffs
growing strict fields of corn and beans
sinking deeper and deeper in earth
up to your hips in Gods
your head all turned to eagle-down
& lightning for knees and elbows
your eyes full of pollen

the smell of bats.
the flavor of sandstone
grit on the tongue.

women
birthing
at the foot of ladders in the dark.

trickling steams in hidden canyons
under the cold rolling desert

corn-basket    wide-eyed
red baby
rock lip home,

Anasazi (TI 3)

In writing about the Anasazi, from whom the Hopi people are directly descended, Snyder is recognizing a culture of cliff dwellers who lived by agricultural means, and who "inhabited Mesa Verde (in the southwest corner of Colorado)
and, before that, Chaco Canyon (in Arizona) for at least 10,000 years" before abandoning the site (Mander 269).
Snyder honors their abilities to sustain a culture on the "strict fields of corn and beans" which were watered by the "trickling streams in hidden canyons," amounting to a form of dry farming, demonstrating the close and precarious link between the people and their environment.

As the opening poem in Turtle Island, "Anasazi" presents a culture which lived in a balanced and harmonious relationship with place, a society which established a high culture and mythic base, "sinking deeper and deeper in earth," connecting its myths directly to its ways of life, its food source, and ceremony, "up to your hips in Gods"—all tied to their location, "tucked up in clefts in the cliffs." The Anasazi are a link to the Paleolithic relation to place, a reminder that myth is derived from the conditions of daily life.

... myth in a way is our primary intellectual and poetic vocabulary, is the 50,000 year old international myth lore corpus, the world folklore motifs, world mythologies, world themes, world gods and goddesses, that whole thing is our fundamental vocabulary... Mythology is an inner thing that is almost biological and in a sense almost pre-cultural. Mythology also is man's most archaic lore and one which culture by culture incontrovertibly binds men together. It both liberates and binds. (Faas 139-40)

The identity of the Anasazi becomes a melding of myth and place—"your head all turned to eagle-down & lightning
for knees and elbows / your eyes full of pollen."
Throughout Snyder's poetry, myth is presented as an integral part of lived experience, related, in contemporary life, to the sense of "nativeness" and re-inhabitory possibilities available to people in industrialized societies. In connecting one's self to place, "place is a kind of metaphor," the re-establishing of a sense of belonging to place so thoroughly that it isn't regarded as wilderness apart from home.

We are all members of quite a system and maybe that's what we really are . . . that whole thing. Our real self is, in a sense, our belongingness. Another aspect of our real self is the separateness of our individual fates. You can say that your own place is a place you have to find in your own mind. You can also say your real place is your language. You are really at home wherever you have lived and have many deep connections. On the other hand, you can be dropped down someplace else and say, "This is home, too." (Hertz 53)

There is in Snyder's long-term outlook neither a sense of urgency nor a feeling of hopelessness about the ability of "wildness" to persevere within nature. He suggests that throughout nature, including the seeming inhospitable large-city environments, there is an indefatigable and everpresent process in nature in which "wildness" expresses itself. Taking nature in its broadest sense to mean "the physical universe and all its properties" (PW 9), Snyder argues that "science and some sorts of mysticism rightly propose that everything is natural . . . there is nothing unnatural about New York City, or toxic wastes, or atomic
energy, and nothing—by definition—that we do or experience in life is 'unnatural'" (8). Furthermore, to clarify the distinction between the terms, "we can say that New York City and Tokyo are 'natural' but not 'wild.' They do not deviate from the laws of nature, but they are habitat so exclusive in the matter of who and what they give shelter to, and so intolerant of other creatures, as to be truly odd" (11-12). And while New York City is regarded as natural, and containing within it "wild systems," Snyder points out, there are important distinctions between "wilderness" and "wildness" in nature:

By the wild I mean something a little different from wilderness. By the wild I mean the essential processes—unmediated nature—and, as processes, they're found on every level from the microscopic to the cosmic, and consequently the "wild" permeates cities, permeates factories, and it is really what our own bodies are—wild organisms. "Wilderness" would be those territories where the processes of the wild are maximized; but the wild is nothing endangered at all." (WHYY interview)

One poem that demonstrates Snyder's confidence in indomitable wildness is "Walking the New York Bedrock Alive in the Sea of Information," which describes the resilience and adaptability of the life forms within human-constructed environments that have displaced wilderness. Within a city that thrives on the "new green" of capital, there are the emergent signs of life that represent the adaptive processes inherent in change and the wildness always present in nature:
Maple, oak, poplar, gingko
New leaves, "new green" on a rock ledge
Of steep little uplift, tucked among trees
Hot sun dapple--

...

Time and Life building--sixty thousand people--
Wind ripples the banners.
Stiff shudder shakes limbs on the
Planted trees growing new green,

...

Down deep grates hear the watercourse,
Rivers that never give up
Trill under the roadbed, over the bedrock
A bird angles way off a brownstone
Couloir that looks like a route,

...

Drop under the streetworld
Steel squeal of stopping and starting
Wind blows through black tunnels
Spiderwebs, fungus, lichen.

...

A cross street leads toward a river
North returns to the woods
South takes you fishing
Peregrines nest at the thirty-fifth floor

The unceasing persistence of nature, engaged in the same process which, in "What Happened Here Before," is described as the "warm quiet centuries of rains / . . . .
[that] wear down two miles of surface," is here expressed as "Rivers that never give up / trill under the roadbed, over the bedrock." The adaptability of spiders, fungus, and lichen beneath the streets is part of the same expression of wildness in which "Peregrines nest at the thirty-fifth
floor." Snyder, whose constituency he has stated is the wilderness—that "otherness" without a voice whose song he sings—seems also to celebrate the "wildness" wherever it is found reclaiming, in some measure, territory which has been given over to human occupancy.

We can see it has been one of the jobs of poetry to speak for these things, to carry their voice into the human realm. That it is in poetry and in song and in ritual and in certain kinds of dance drama that the nonhuman realms have been able to speak to the human society. (TRW 74)

"Walking the New York Bedrock Alive in the Sea of Information" is one of Snyder's few "metropolitan" poems, but in it he portrays the birds and trees as living consistently within their nature while humans are described as scavengers in the food chain, far removed from the life that goes on around them.

As the street-bottom feeders with shopping carts
Slowly check out the air for the falling of excess,
Of too much, flecks of extra,
From the higher-up folks in the sky

Thus, while New York may be regarded as "natural but not 'wild,'" it is the wild systems that are most closely connected to place and which persist in their survival, even though the landscape has been transformed by human action. In "Black Mesa Mine #1" the Navaho, likewise, persevered, gathering "dried out poles and logs" while only five hundred yards away their sacred land was being bulldozed and their juniper and pinyon groves "scattered."
Occasionally, as in "Meeting the Mountains," Snyder expresses in his poetry a pure childlike joy and connectedness to place. A postscript to the poem reads, "Kai at Sawmill Lake VI.62," indicating Snyder's son, fourteen months old at the time, as the central figure in the poem.

He crawls to the edge of the foaming creek  
He backs up the slab ledge  
He puts a finger in the water  
He turns to a trapped pool  
Puts both hands in the water  
Puts one foot in the pool  
Drops pebbles in the pool  
He slaps the water surface with both hands  
He cries out, rises up and stands  
Facing toward the torrent and the mountain  
Raises up both hands and shouts three times!  
(RW 60)

In contrast to the subtlety with which Snyder often presents a sense of belongingness, here the expression is ecstatic, primal, and direct. The actions, while those of a child, are presented as if they are part of a deliberate and reverent practice of paying homage to the mountain. At the same time, the three shouts are the unmediated expression of joyful existence, being part of the water and mountains; a pre-linguistic, "almost biological" immediacy.

There is also something of that wonder in "For All," where the range of connections includes individual experience and continent-wide ecosystems, and where the tone is as much a Thoreauvian appreciation of the immediate lived experience as it is an anthem to the interdependencies that
join together all beings--human and non-human:

Ah to be alive
on a mid-September morn
foraging a stream
barefoot, pants rolled up,
holding boots, pack on,
sunshine, ice in the shallows,
northern rockies.

Rustle and shimmer of icy creek waters
stones turn underfoot, small and hard as toes
cold nose dripping
singing inside
creek music, heart music,
smell of sun on gravel

I pledge allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the soil
of Turtle Island,
and to the beings who thereon dwell
one ecosystem
in diversity
under the sun

With joyful interpenetration for all.

(AH 113-14)

The poem is a bridge between the individual and the community. In it we hear the "bardic breath" of Whitman, happy to be alive, giving voice to a song which can be taken as the pledge of a commitment to a way of seeing the interdependencies and interconnections within "one ecosystem / in diversity"--an extension outward from the place of one's immediate experience to the "net-network" of relations which one may never see directly, but feels intuitively as part of oneself. For Snyder, it is the poet's task to connect this "singing inside" with the "creek music, heart music" of communal experience, transmitting and reinforcing
the most primal relationships of people and place.

Poetry must sing or speak from authentic experience. Of all the streams of civilized tradition with roots in the Paleolithic, poetry is one of the few that can realistically claim an unchanged function and a relevance which will outlast most of the activities that surround us today. Poets, as few others, must live close to the world that primitive men are in: the world, in its nakedness, which is fundamental for all of us—birth, love, death; the sheer fact of being alive. (EHH 118)

In a poem which carries within it the Paleolithic, archaic, and native elements of where the first stories, myths, and songs may have originated—around the campfire—Snyder links the art of poetry with the exploration of those territories at the edge of wilderness, the unconscious, the unknown terrains of human experience. In "How Poetry Comes To Me," Snyder describes the active interchange from which poetry and myth arise as part of an ancient function of human imagination:

It comes blundering over the
Boulders at night, it stays
Frightened outside the
Range of my campfire
I go to meet it at the
Edge of the light (NN 361)

As a vital part of the mythic relation to place, Snyder emphasizes the role of the poet who is centrally important in maintaining the connection of the community and culture to the tradition, ritual, songs, and experiences, all of which are intimately tied to the place of the community.

... the function of poetry is not only the
intensification and clarification of the implicit potentials of the language, which means a sharpening, a bringing of more delight to the normal functions of language and making maybe language even work better since communication is what it's about. But on another level poetry is intimately linked to any culture's fundamental worldview, body of lore, which is its myth base, its symbol base, and the source of much of its values— that myth-lore foundation that underlies any society. That foundation is most commonly expressed and transmitted in the culture by poems, which is to say by songs. (TRW 70)

With the responsibility of the poet, Snyder emphasizes, there is also the necessity of being open to experience, receptive at the moments when chance occurrences reveal insights about one's relation to experience. In "Poetry Is the Eagle of Experience," Snyder describes the poetic "walk back into the brush" where one comes upon those connections to the world:

All the little mice of writing letters,  
Sorting papers,  
And the rabbits of getting in the wood,  
The big buck of a lecture in town.

Then, walk back into the brush  
To keep clearing a trail.  
High over even that,  
A whistle of wings!  
Breath of a song. (LOR 128)

Engaged as Snyder is in a way of being that is projected through his poetry and prose essays, there is the unavoidable consequence of the moral and ethical questions that are raised by his ecological viewpoints. What, precisely, is he advocating or failing to advocate, and does it matter whether it is a way of seeing (and being) or a
course of action? To what degree must we consider the relation of Buddhism, ecology, and values of "nativeness" as significant factors in our assessment of the ethics of Snyder's ecological vision? While the discussion in this chapter has presented some of the ways in which place is connected to community, myth, and archaic cultures, there remain questions about Snyder's role as poet, and whether it is possible to reconcile a vision and way of being with a resistance to advocate general policies and measures about contemporary environmental and cultural issues. In the next chapter I will take up some of the specific questions that arise from the previous chapters--questions upon which critics have differed and to which it is my hope that the previous chapters have offered a useful context.
CHAPTER V

BEYOND POETRY AND BACK:

THE ECO-POLITICS OF PLACE

Where is the literature which gives expression to Nature? He would be a poet who could impress the winds and streams into his service, to speak for him; who nailed words to their primitive senses, as farmers drive down stakes in the spring, which the frost has heaved; who derived his words as often as he used them,—transplanted them to his page with earth adhering to their roots . . .

--Henry David Thoreau--

Bioregional Perspectives, Ecological Ethics:

Whither the Vision?

Gary Snyder's poetry presents a vision of humans as part of the environment, emphasizing the strongest connections to place through the individual's and community's ways of being and seeing. Although the poems do not serve as treatises or lessons in how to live, their ecological and ontological import is primarily moral and
philosophical. They reinforce the relational connections of the individual and community (or tribal group) to place, offer indirect teachings in ways of being, and, by contrast, illustrate the consequences of imbalances within societies whose ecosystems have been depleted through long-term policies that fail to maintain sustainable environments.

In his prose essays Snyder pursues with more directness many of the philosophical and moral perspectives that are illustrated, suggested or left inchoate within his poetry. Consequently, the local and global politics of his ecological perspectives become more evident within his prose writings. Even in his essays, however, Snyder writes about values rather than methods when addressing environmental issues or ecological problems; as Patricia Greiner observes, Snyder's writing "is not about environmentalism, but rather a product of a highly developed environmental consciousness" (14). And while his essays and published interviews are not simply prose elaborations of values contained in his poetry, they become necessarily linked to the poetry by readers and critics in assessing Snyder's overall ecological perspectives.

In terms of the interdependent relationship between humans and environment which runs through Snyder's work, one of the most significant political and ethical consequences of his ecological vision grows out of his discussion of
re-inhabitation and bioregionalism. Snyder suggests that people establishing themselves within a bio-region for generations would be more inclined than a highly mobile population to develop "ecosystem-based cultures" (TOW 60). In contrast to the centralized power of a national state, Snyder offers a perspective in which smaller self-governing communities would determine land use policies, water rights, and development issues within their own localized environments and cultures. He proposes a bioregional perspective which challenges the arbitrary political boundaries that currently separate one state or nation from another.

[The] older human experience of a fluid, indistinct, but genuine home region was gradually replaced--across Eurasia--by the arbitrary and often violently imposed boundaries of emerging national states. These imposed borders sometimes cut across biotic areas and ethnic zones alike. Inhabitants lost ecological knowledge and community solidarity. In the old ways, the flora and fauna and landforms are part of the culture. The world of culture and nature, which is actual, is almost a shadow world now, and the insubstantial world of political jurisdictions and rarefied economies is what passes for reality . . . (PW 37)

Snyder argues that "we can regain some small sense of that old membership by discovering the original lineaments of our land and steering--at least in the home territory and in the mind" by defining a region, instead, by "some set of natural criteria" such as "biota, watersheds, landforms, and elevations" (37). In making such regional distinctions
Snyder emphasizes the ecological "association of natural systems" rather than political entities which he says "are not real" (TRW 24).

...we all actually live as members of natural communities in natural systems that are not very clearly defined for us by our current American political boundaries and are not always recognized as such by people who are always on the move. So the bioregional program is, first, don't move. Find a place to live, live there, take responsibility for where you live, learn what's going on there and become involved, both in terms of human politics and in terms of natural politics. It's a really grass-roots, community or neighborhood-based way of seeing what to do. (Hertz 53)

What is radical about bioregionalism, as Snyder presents it, is the extent to which the political self-governing responsibilities are redirected to the local community. As such, bioregionalism is a decentralization and "critique of the state. In part, it draws on the history of anarchist thought: the line of thought that argues that we do not need a state, and that the state or government is not necessarily synonymous with the social order and organization inherent in society" (Woods and Schoonmaker 19). By redefining political boundaries based on regional distinctions the local politics and ecological issues become more directly the concerns of the local community where the policy decisions are initiated and implemented.
Environmental concerns, then, begin to enter the bioregional perspective, saying, in effect, that if we had political boundaries more appropriate to the regions in which we live—following watersheds or mountain ranges, following plant zones and soil types—that would be a step in the right direction, both socially and ecologically, in that it would enable us to tune our local societies more precisely to the natural resources that are already in place, and to form our human communities and associations more appropriately to the natural communities. (19)

According to Snyder, the benefits to the people and the region, from a bioregional perspective, would be economic, ecological, and spiritual. While he describes the economic benefits only in "the long-range," requiring people "to learn to live by photosynthesis and with the watersheds once again" (TRW 139-39), and not to be beholden to agri-business and petrochemical companies, he does not conjecture the means by which such long-range changes would take place.

The ecological benefits that would derive from a localized community-based approach to regional issues could also empower the people, Snyder argues, but he is aware that not everyone shares an equal interest in or enthusiasm for self-governing responsibilities. In cultivating a sense of place it will be the people in that region who will be "implementing and carrying through legislation as mandated. But we shouldn't forget that no legislation is any better than the ultimate will of the people at the grassroots level to have it happen. . . . there are many people whom we can not expect to have regard for the land . . ." (140).
Related to the discussion in chapter four on the importance of community in his sense of place, Snyder considers the spiritual benefits of bioregionalism to be directly linked to its strengthening effect upon the community.

...by being in place, we get the largest sense of community. We learn that community is of spiritual benefit and of health for everyone, that ongoing working relationships and shared concerns...all evolve into the shared practice of a set of values, visions and quests. (141)

Just as Snyder's parents were part of a back-to-the-land movement in the 1930s, Snyder participated in a similar re-inhabitory return to the land which occurred in the Pacific Northwest in the 1960s and early 1970s. A strong sense of community self-governance and a respect for "the old ways" of primitive and native cultures, myths, and ways of living with the land suggest the basis upon which Snyder's bioregional perspectives have been developed.

In his poetry and essays Snyder evokes values associated with the archaic and primitive, respecting a relationship between humans and environment that he fears has become increasingly threatened and forgotten during the intensification of civilization since the Paleolithic, especially during the last two thousand years and culminating in the present century. But whereas his poems expose the modern exploitation of the natural landscape and native cultures, and also provide examples of a harmonious
responsiveness to the natural world. Their strength rests in the presentation of a way of being rather than in prescribing courses of action, methods of community-building, or guidelines for restoring the old ways in a contemporary setting. As poems, they do not set out to instruct people in ways to cultivate bioregional communities. Owing to the differences between the poems and essays, the ontological, moral, and spiritual nature of the "teachings" in the poems tend not to elicit the same kind of questions about implementation that are generated by Snyder's essays.

In assessing Snyder's ecological vision it is therefore important to go beyond the poetry simply because it is not the genre Snyder has used for expressing ideas about implementing and restoring "the old ways," values, and community practices within the context of the modern world. When pressed to be specific about the ways that bioregionalism might be implemented in the large-scale decentralization of modern power structures, Snyder is faced with the daunting task of emphasizing some ways of being and critiquing others while resisting a prescriptive "how-to" approach to issues that are complex and open-ended. When he does state specifics, it sometimes raises as many questions as it resolves about the viability of national or global bioregionalism. I would argue that, in part, Snyder's
dilemma is that the same ontological elements which serve as strengths within his poetry, providing ways of being for an individual in his or her direct relationship to experience, are regarded as limitations in his essays; the moral didacticism of the poetry with its emphasis on a way of being becomes insufficient in the prose essays to those for whom a course of action may be expected or even demanded.

It is paradoxical that Snyder's bioregional perspectives are most vulnerable to criticism when they are restricted to the promotion and critique of ways of living, being, and seeing—the same features which, in his poetry, provide the greatest insights and epiphanic connections between people and place. Moreover, when Snyder resists giving specific details, the appearance of vagueness casts further doubt on the viability of wide-scale bioregionalism; when he does offer specifics, as in the following example, the doubts are not necessarily ameliorated.

In an interview on the subject of bioregional ethics, when asked what he thought would be the optimal size for a community, Snyder said it would depend on "the nature of the region and the economic support base," but, in general, he felt, "in terms of community dynamics, I'd say about two hundred people can keep track of each other. More than that and you should probably have two meetings. One for every two hundred people. And occasionally federalize those into
'a Thing' as the Icelandic people used to call it" (142).

While the implementation of such small communities may be possible in specific and isolated circumstances, how does the bioregional perspective address larger existing population centers? Snyder was asked, "What about the Bay Area as a unit? There are over four and a half million people living in the surrounding communities," to which he responded, "I think it's clearly too many people, that is, if we want a healthy, sustaining environment" (142). While it would be unfair to suggest that Snyder has not given greater consideration to this issue, his response points to a dilemma in the overall bioregional perspective. The connection between population dynamics and the viability of large-scale bioregional federations is a problem that must be more effectively addressed if bioregionalism is to become more than a sporadic occurrence involving a few isolated communities. Asked whether "the nation being so large and complex" was part of "the inevitable spur toward regionalisms," Snyder's response suggests that any thought of a federation of regional communities is at best a consideration for a distant future:

I'm not saying that the continent as a whole, or even the planet as a whole, cannot be, in some sense, grasped and understood, and indeed it should be, but for the time, especially in North America, we are extremely deficient in regional knowledge--what's going on within a given region at any given time of year. Rather than being limiting, that gives you a lot of insight into
understanding the whole thing, the larger system. (27)

Snyder's remarks underscore his earlier comment (in chapter four) that re-inhabitation refers to "the tiny number of persons" within industrialized societies who turn back to the land (TOW 65).

In describing regional-based communities, John Elder suggests that Snyder "sees each community and each region as forming its own center" ("Imagining" 38).

The true culture of place is both an ecologically harmonious one and one which is inherently egalitarian. If every place has its culture, all places have equal status within the larger ecosystem of ecosystems. (38)

Elder proposes an ideal in which the egalitarianism within a localized community would transfer outwardly into a network throughout society. In Elder's view, "a naturalized, localized culture, emanating from diverse communities, would attain the ecological intricacy of broadening, concentric transfer" (38). Such a vision of the future presupposes a population distribution radically reduced from current figures.

There is little doubt that one of Snyder's most controversial proposals in his bioregional perspective is that "the goal would be half of the present [1974] population, or less" (TI 92). More recently, he has indicated that the planet would best support a total population of 500 million human beings, approximately ten
percent of present numbers (PW 177). One critic dismisses the idea with the simple characterization that "the influential poet Gary Snyder ... would like to see a 90 percent reduction in human populations to allow a restoration of pristine environments ..." (Guha "Radical" 73). This is the sort of unfortunate _reductio ad absurdum_ that is a direct consequence of Snyder's description of specific conditions under which bioregionalism could be optimized on a planetary scale.

The short-term credibility of Snyder's bioregional perspective does not seem to gain support from such pronouncements as Snyder's population proposals except perhaps in promoting further debate about what kind of relationship humans want to have with the environment in the future. As Snyder has stated, "Bioregionalism is the entry of place into the dialectic of history" (PW 41). In that sense, the _practical_ use of his proposals is not that bioregionalism will take hold on a scale larger than the local, but that it will keep the debate going by foregrounding the links between ethical and ontological considerations on the one hand and difficult decision-making policy choices on the other. Jim Dodge has said, "The chances of bioregionalism succeeding ... are beside the point. If one person, or a few, or a community of people, live more fulfilling lives from bioregional practice, then
it's successful" (43). This may be a noble sentiment expressing a great patience for long-term gradual change, but it is not the most effective promotion of bioregionalism's viability as a widespread phenomenon. Indeed, it inadvertently raises questions about the seriousness with which bioregionalism is to be regarded, particularly at a time when the Worldwatch Institute estimates that in 1993 the annual addition to the world population will exceed 92 million (Brown, Flavin and Postel xvi).

As early as 1968 Snyder's approach to modern problems was the subject of criticism and complaints. Thomas Parkinson records that one complaint he heard from students was that "Snyder does not face the problems of modern life" (Parkinson "Poetry" 631). According to Parkinson, students from large urban areas tended to charge that "Snyder's poetry doesn't answer to the tensions of modern life and depends on a life no longer accessible or even desirable for men" (631). Parkinson disagrees with such a characterization, and although he is here addressing Snyder's poetry rather than prose, his defense of Snyder is relevant to the present discussion:

... the argument that a poet must speak to the problems of the bulk of the people seems to me to support rather than undermine Snyder's work. Properly understood, Snyder's poetry does speak to
basic current problems, but it does not simply 
embody them. (631)

As I have similarly argued, in his poetry Snyder 
provides a way of being that is antithetical to the 
angst-ridden concerns sometimes associated with modern 
cosmopolitan life. He provides the moral and ontological 
basis for a way of seeing the world as an integration of 
interconnected forces. For Parkinson's students, the 
emphasis upon a way of being may not seem to address 
directly the problems of modern life, raising the question 
of whether the poet's moral or spiritual way of seeing, in 
itself, sufficiently addresses the complex concerns of the 
modern world or satisfies those for whom vision and 
pragmatic considerations are distinctly unrelated. While 
Parkinson joins Snyder's poetry and prose as an 
undifferentiated moral presentation, I have tended to see 
them functioning in slightly different ways. Nevertheless, 
here is Parkinson's compelling description of the 
contribution offered by Snyder's vision and its necessity as 
a vital element of any future change:

He is calling upon the total resources of man's 
moral and religious being. There is no point in 
decrying this as primitivism; it is merely good 
sense, for the ability to hold history and 
wilderness in the mind at once may be the only way 
to make valid measures of human conduct. A larger 
and more humble vision of man and cosmos is our 
only hope, and the major work of any serious 
person. In that work, Snyder's verse and prose 
compose a set of new cultural possibilities that 
only ignorance and unbalance can ignore. (632)
It is in his ability to project a moral conscience in his work that Snyder is most influential as a poet and ecologist, by continually returning our attention to the issues of what it is to be humans living in a place. On the other hand, in the twenty-five years since Parkinson's prescient observation of "the new cultural possibilities" offered by Snyder's moral vision "that only ignorance and unbalance can ignore," there has been a new round of complaints directed at Snyder, challenging Parkinson's praise of Snyder's "humble vision." These complaints are not only impossible to dismiss, they have become part of the continuing dialectic that Snyder has invited. In particular, Charles Altieri offers an argument that is useful in the discussion of Snyder's role in calling for social change.

Whereas Parkinson points to the necessity of a visionary like Snyder in promoting cultural change, Altieri makes a distinction between the roles of "seer" and "poet-prophet" as a means of assessing the dilemma Snyder faces in effecting actual social change. As Altieri describes it, unlike the seer, "the prophet is less a discoverer of values than the mediator who speaks for a moral and religious tradition which he tries to show has some historical claim on a people" ("Reconciling" 768). In his role as poet-prophet, Snyder "finds his source of
authority in 'a larger identity' that can be discovered through the study of human cultures," but, in particular, "he seeks from anthropology collective ways of acting within and celebrating nature" (769).

Further, according to Altieri, the prophet "finds concrete social structures which embody what he preaches," and in Snyder's case, he depends on "'primitive' customs very foreign to the area of contemporary moral and political discourse which he wants to influence" (769). Here, Altieri expresses a complaint similar to that of Parkinson's students who felt that Snyder's moral discourse was inaccessible to their own modern experience. "All prophecy," writes Altieri, "depends on invoking moral principles that are at once within the society," in terms of its traditions and morals, "and without it (because the society in fact pays allegiance to something else)" (769). Snyder, he suggests, uses images which "remain very close to the margin of what the society considers to have claims upon it" (769).

Altieri concludes that "it is possible that the gulf is too broad to be bridged by any poet since the very images he must use to portray his alternative remain at worst foreign and 'impractical,' and at best exotic and escapist" (769). Consequently, he believes differently than Parkinson when he argues that while the seer "can simply present images for
those capable of understanding them, the prophet must somehow generalize and interpret his images so that they affect the imagination, if not the intelligence, of a sufficient number of people to make social change possible" (769). In the end, until Snyder can speak for society there will remain "difficulties in the kind of programs and agencies he envisions as the means for producing social change" (769).

Altieri's discussion is useful insofar as the distinctions he makes between seer and prophet, providing one way of describing the difficulty Snyder faces in transforming cultural values, including those associated with his ecological vision. But whereas Parkinson is effusive in expressing his praise of Snyder's moral vision of "man and cosmos," Altieri, in denying to Snyder the role of "prophet," fails to acknowledge the moral or ontological way of being as a significant part of Snyder's total vision.

To the contrary, Altieri either disregards or dismisses the importance of Buddhist philosophy and ontology in his consideration of Snyder's views relating people and place in his vision of totality. According to Altieri, Snyder "wants not only to provide poems but to offer a total vision of a new redeemed man at home with himself and celebrating his place in the cosmos, yet the field of experience in his poems is quite limited and it therefore renders problematic
his claims to totality" ("Enlarging" 150). The assumption Altieri appears to make is that a fuller range of individual human experiences would provide a greater claim to totality: "One requires a more complex sense of human nature, of social reality, and of one's own self-conscious awareness of the gaps between desire and realization, faith and works, before accepting his authority as one offering more than moments of metaphysical insight" (150). Here Altieri openly superimposes Western philosophical and psychological values and criteria upon Snyder's work in determining the degree to which a vision has claims to totality. From the standpoint of Snyder's work, however—and from a Buddhist perspective—Altieri's emphasis on individuality, desire, and self-conscious awareness lays no claim to a vision of totality, but rather perpetuates the limited restrictions which prevent one from experiencing things as they are. There are more to the "moments of metaphysical insight" than a poet's personal indulgences. By not considering the Buddhist significance of attentiveness to everyday experience, Altieri fails to appreciate that a vision of totality may be expressed in the relationships and interconnections observed in the ordinariness of daily events and experiences. While I would argue that Snyder does have a "total vision" in the Buddhist sense of totality, the difficulty lies in its application and
implementation in the context of the modern world. From the standpoint of worldwide interconnectedness this total vision is already recognized in telecommunications, finance, and global environmental issues.

For his part, Snyder is aware of the criticism that his work invokes "essentially outmoded values or situations that are not relevant or desirable," indicating that "it's complicated to try to defend that," but "the answer lies in a critique of contemporary society and the clarification of lots of misunderstandings people have about what 'primitive' constitutes . . ." (TRW 111).

In recent years Snyder's appeal to the public moral conscience has taken on an eloquence and increasing sense of urgency which has served to increase his influence rather than diminish it. In the following passage from The Practice of the Wild (1990) Snyder directs his address to that part of our humanity which recognizes its connectedness to other life forms and entire species:

It looks like the remainder of the forests will be gone but for tiny patches by the year 2000. A clearcut or even a mile-wide strip-mine pit will heal in geological time. The extinction of a species, each one a pilgrim of four billion years of evolution, is an irreversible loss. The ending of the lines of so many creatures with whom we have traveled this far is an occasion of profound sorrow and grief. Death can be accepted and to some degree transformed. But the loss of lineages and all their future young is not something to accept. It must be rigorously and intelligently resisted. (PW 176)
Here is an appeal and call to action which further extends the boundaries of an earlier bioregional movement into a more widespread movement of what is termed foundational or deep ecology, or radical environmentalism. While it is not within the scope of the present study to provide a detailed discussion of the history or significance of foundational ecology (or "deep" ecology as coined by Arne Naess), it is worth noting at least the volatility that has been generated by what Bill McKibben calls the emergence of a "smaller band of environmentalists" who "tend to think that environmental problems are much more deeply rooted in our ways of life, in our thinking, and in our estrangement from nature" (McKibben 29).

Whereas "the mainstream of the environmental movement tends to look pragmatically at the problems we face, and to try to fix them technologically or with the least possible change in the way we live," deep ecology introduces politics, philosophy, and ethics into its consideration of ecological issues (29). The significance of this for the present study is that Gary Snyder has emerged as what proponents have called the "poet laureate" of deep ecology (Oelschlaeger 261; Murphy Understanding 167).

In an effort to clarify the complexity of the movement or to deflect criticisms and charges of deep ecology's simplicity, Snyder writes:
It is proper that the range of the movement should run from wildlife to urban health. But there can be no health for humans and cities that bypasses the rest of nature. A properly radical environmentalist position is in no way anti-human. We grasp the pain of the human condition in its full complexity, and add the awareness of how desperately endangered certain key species and habitats have become. . . . The critical argument now within environmental circles is between those who operate from a human-centered resource management mentality and those whose values reflect an awareness of the integrity of the whole of nature. The latter position, that of Deep Ecology, is politically livelier, more courageous, more convivial, riskier, and more scientific. (PW 181)

Deep ecology is fraught with challenges and problems related to the oversimplification of concepts such as "anthropocentrism" and "ecocentrism." In opposing the former and embracing the latter, foundation ecology "advances from the idea that humankind is an element within natural systems, and therefore obligated to promote life on earth, to an ecocentric critique of Modernism" (Oelschlaeger 301).

One of the chief problems facing the movement as it is currently comprised, according to Max Oelschlaeger, is that "radical environmentalism presently lacks any explicitly defined and widely paradigmatic platform. . . . [It is] more an intellectual movement in process than a paradigm" (304-305). Moreover, "deep ecology is vulnerable to charges that it is an exercise in mysticism and irrationalism" due to its "lack of methodological rigor" (305).
In effect, many of the criticisms of the practicality of bioregionalism apply as well to the deep ecology movement which, on the world stage, does not appear to address what vocal critics like Ramachandra Guha consider to be the underlying social, political, and historical roots of ecological crises. Guha charges that deep ecology, as a peculiarly American phenomenon, fails to recognize the consequences of Western resource consumption patterns on the environmental degradation of developing nations ("Radical" 74–81).

For purposes of this study the importance of presently discussing deep ecology as an element of the larger environmental movement is to underscore the impact on ecological thought that Gary Snyder has had in the last twenty-five years. Since his return to America from Japan in 1968 to take part in a growing ecology movement, he has built upon a set of values (discussed in previous chapters) associated with is Buddhist training, his study of native myth, culture, and oral tradition, and his own wilderness experiences. Not only are his ideas today consistent with his earliest expressed ecological values, but, if one observes the tenets of deep ecology and their philosophical and moral emphasis on ways of living, one finds more than parallels and correspondences between Snyder's bioregional perspectives and deep ecology's central principles. While
certainly a number of other people have been prominent in the formation and promotion of the foundational ecology movement, the extent to which Snyder's ecological vision has been embraced and codified by deep ecology is undeniably great.

But just as his presence has been felt in giving further voice to the need for a continuing moral conscience in environmentalism, so, too, Snyder and foundational ecology are faced with the difficult "practical" considerations of national and global ecological issues. The dynamics of international environmental concerns are complicated by political and economic pressures which may not be sufficiently addressed through a bioregional perspective. And given the philosophical and ontological foundation of Snyder's bioregional ethic, and deep ecology's moral and spiritual emphasis, until the political and practical considerations of policy implementation become part of their ecological perspectives, deep ecology will likely serve primarily as a critique of modernism, reactionary by necessity, and regarded as politically naive by those whose participation in policy decisions extends beyond moral considerations.

For Snyder, whose roles as poet and ecological activist are bound together, the forms expressing who and where he is range from poetry and essays to interviews and readings.
The different forms serve different purposes. As I have attempted to suggest, however, reader and audience expectations for the poet are different than they are for the ecologist, and one does not assess Snyder—as—ecologist by the poetry he writes. And yet, in looking at Snyder’s sense of place as I have in the foregoing pages, how one assesses Snyder as poet necessarily includes his ecological vision while also granting that his poetry is not the same as an ecological manifesto. How to recognize the integration of the ecologist and the poet while evaluating Snyder’s place as a contemporary poet is the subject of my concluding thoughts which follow.

One Big Empty House: Relocating the Poet’s Place

The foregoing discussion briefly highlighted some of the literary and ecological criticisms of Snyder by Altieri and Guha respectively. While their criticisms come from different quarters, they are each representative of a way of thinking that limits its recognition and appreciation of Snyder’s contribution as a poet to an ecological vision of the way people live in relation to their environment. Altieri fails to recognize the ontological importance of Buddhism in Snyder’s way of being (and seeing) when he argues that Snyder’s poetry lacks the range of human experience required for a vision of totality; Guha
emphasizes social history and economics, neglecting the importance of a worldview and vision in addressing ecological issues. In both instances the partial view of Snyder disregards the importance of a way of being—whether it is Snyder's inclusion of the "Bodhisattvic" presence in his poetry as a significant part of his sense of place, or, in Guha's case, the political point of view which underemphasizes the important contribution of the poet's vision and the relevance of a philosophical and ethical dimension in long-term environmental planning.

The point that should not be lost here is the way that specialization and specific interests have determined the framework through which Snyder is often assessed and criticized. As a historical sociologist, Guha, for instance, demands of Snyder and foundational ecology that they conform to the dialectic which emphasizes issues of economics, political redistribution, and social justice. The only time when Snyder's role as poet enters Guha's discussion it is as if to question the legitimacy of a poet's voice in matters of ecology. He is, however, critical of Snyder on ecological (and political) grounds, not as a poet presenting an ecological vision.

The unique position Snyder occupies—as poet, Buddhist, ecologist, and anthropologist—leads to a question of how, from an interdisciplinary perspective, his work might be
assessed, acknowledging the interrelationships of his roles in connection to his sense of place. Snyder, as a poet, has never sought to be "excused" from addressing the hard questions about his ecological vision. He can stand his ground as an ecologist, but it must be stressed that the way of being which is expressed through his roles as poet, Buddhist, student of culture, myth, and oral traditions, provides him with perspectives that are often marginalized by mainstream ecologists.

Snyder's presence in twentieth-century poetry and ecology raises again the perennial question of the poet's role in society. Is it the task of the visionary to hold a mirror to the culture, to articulate a new (or forgotten) view of the world, to become a voice for the human and non-human realms that have no voice—then, as a poet, step aside and leave it to others to either accept and implement such a world or disregard the vision? In Snyder's instance, the roles of visionary and activist are linked; he is working from a standpoint in which a way of being becomes the center from which one acts in (and upon) the world. Snyder's ecological vision is about ways people can be in relation to community and place. This approach is entirely different than first imposing guidelines, structures, and policies, and leaving ways of being to arise as a consequence of imposed conditions without any vision or
ontological foundation around which individuals and communities establish and maintain a sense of connection.

In Turtle Island Snyder's poem "As for Poets" describes "The Earth Poets / Who write small poems"; Air Poets who "Play out the swiftest gales"; Fire Poets, Water Poets and the Space Poets whose poems "Like wild geese / Fly off the edge." But the enlightened poet is the Mind Poet, one for whom Snyder has a special affinity and for whom the world always has a special need.

A Mind Poet
Stays in the house.
The house is empty
And it has no walls.
The poem
Is seen from all sides,
 Everywhere,
At once. (TI 88)

Not only is there the Zen emphasis on Mind, by which the poet "stays in his house" and knows the world, but recalling the discussion of "emptiness" in chapter three, we can understand "the house is empty" as a statement of interdependencies, particularly when considering the etymological identification of "house" with ecology. In his book Earth House Hold, Snyder notes, "Ecology: 'eco' (oikos) meaning 'house' . . . Housekeeping on Earth" (127).

"The house is empty" then becomes a Zen/ecological statement about an understanding of the interconnectedness of all things. In addition, the Mind Poet who stays in his house is also a man of Tao, one who understands, as Snyder
has stated elsewhere, that "Nature is not a place to visit, it is home . . . (PW 7). There is nowhere to go. The Tao te Ching describes the man of Tao, the wise man, the Mind Poet:

The world may be known
Without leaving the house;
The Way may be seen
Apart from the windows
The further you go,
The less you will know.

Accordingly, the Wise Man
Knows without going,
Sees without seeing,
Does without doing. (Blakney 100)

In his most recent book of poems, No Nature, Gary Snyder's final poem offers an echo back to "As for Poets," the concluding poem in Turtle Island. "Ripples on the Surface" first describes the dynamism and renewal of old places:

--Nature not a book, but a performance, a high old culture

Ever-fresh events
scraped out, rubbed out, and used, used, again--
the braided channels of the rivers
hidden under fields of grass-- (NN 381)

Nature and culture go on in an interpenetration of old and new. The poem culminates in a Buddhist-Taoist-Ecological expression of being, an understanding which, above all, may be the poet's most important role--to remind us that his vision is embodied in a way of being and expressed through simple truths about our
connections, which we are always forgetting until he or she sings it out again.

The vast wild
  the house, alone.
The little house in the wild,
  the wild in the house.
Both forgotten.

No nature

Both together, one big empty house. (NN 381)
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