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Searching for Eastern Cultures in the Poetry of  
Gary Snyder

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Prohlašuji, že jsem magisterskou diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla v ní předepsaným způsobem všechnu použitou literaturu.

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# Introduction

The aim of this master's thesis is to analyze the influence of Eastern cultures on the poetry of Gary Snyder in his three volumes of poetry *Riprap*, *Myths&Texts* and *Turtle Island*.

To begin with, Gary Snyder is, together with Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, one of the most influential poets of the group of authors known under the name of the Beat Generation.

In general, it is the theme of nature that prevails in Gary Snyder's poetry. Yet, this theme being constantly evolved by the poet, takes on a new dimension in each of his collections of poetry.

Gary Snyder wrote the poems of *Riprap*, *Myths&Texts* and *Turtle Island* under three major influences. First of them is Zen Buddhism.

Zen Buddhism, one of the schools of Mahayana Buddhism based in Japan, had a great influence on the poetry of Gary Snyder. The poet spent ten years in Japan pursuing his studies of Zen Buddhism from 1956 to 1966.

In Japanese, Zen means meditation. Zen meditation enables a practitioner to overcome his attachment to his ego which he understands as something permanent and independent on other phenomena. By dissolving the concept of an independent ego a practitioner begins to understand the reality as a vast net in which all phenomena are interconnected. As a result of this, his mind no more perceives any gap or opposition between him and other objects of this world as he rests in unity with all phenomena. From one's awareness of the interconnectedness of all phenomena arises his non-egoistic compassion, a wish to liberate all beings from suffering. Their suffering is caused by five negative emotions that are called the Five Poisons in Buddhism. They are ignorance, desire, anger, jealousy and pride. These emotions originate in our ignorant mind which understands itself as a permanent entity existing independently on the other phenomena. If we act under their influence, we lose our inner peace and the consequences of such behavior lead us further to the cycle of rebirth, samsara. Only if we eliminate the notion of our independent ego together with the negative emotions arising from such perception, we attain enlightenment, a state in which our peaceful mind rests in unity with all phenomena.

Nevertheless, meditation does not represent the sole means how to realize the enlightened mind. The school of Zen Buddhism is the one that highlights the so-called sudden enlightenment. Thus, what is typical for Zen is the practice of koans, paradoxical questions whose aim is to eliminate Zen student's intellectual, reasonable thinking and to enable him to awake intuition necessary to understanding the true character of the reality and to realize the

enlightened mind. By concentrating his mind on the decoding of the meaning of a koan, which constitutes his object of meditation, a Zen student can suddenly attain enlightenment.

The aim of every Mahayana Buddhist practitioner is to become a bodhisattva, a being who by the force of his universal compassion gives up his departure into nirvana and instead leads all sentient beings towards enlightenment.

As a Zen practitioner, Gary Snyder experiences the world as a unified interdependent system of which he is an inalienable part. Thus, his mind rests in unity with nature and he becomes “equally part of the trees, the rocks and the animals.”<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the qualities of his mind correspond with those of nature. Thus, as Gary Snyder says: “mountains are your mind.”<sup>2</sup> More precisely, the poet believes that “the nonhuman, nonverbal world, which is nature as nature itself, is the outward equivalent of the world of human nature - inner world - as it is itself, before language, before custom, before culture.”<sup>3</sup> This state of mind corresponds to the mind of primitive people who have respect for all life. Buddhists denote it as the original one.

To attain the original state of mind is, according to Gary Snyder, essential for us. From all of his poems dealing with the theme of ecology it is apparent that Gary Snyder blames, first and foremost, one’s ignorant mind for the destruction of the ecology of the wilderness. The poet is, therefore, convinced that we can protect the nature only if our mind rests in its original state.

However, our original state of mind is, according to Snyder, constantly damaged by civilization. Gary Snyder perceives civilization as something that corrupts and enslaves. More precisely, as “a lack of faith, a human laziness, a willingness to accept the perceptions and decisions of others in place of one's own.”<sup>4</sup> As a result of this, in civilization people are obliged to live and exist only as not entirely “full men.”<sup>5</sup>

To restore their original state of mind, Buddhist practitioners leave the society for the mountains where they practice meditation.

In 1971 Gary Snyder, too, decided to leave the life in the city and moved with his family to Nevada County. Before leaving he told to one of his friends:

“I want to get us out there, so we can begin to learn to break the habits of dependence. It's important for me. I think it will mean more consciousness, more awareness. And nothing has more value for the individual than his consciousness, intensifying and refining it.”<sup>6</sup>

The intensification and refinement of consciousness is the theme which appears very often in Zen Buddhism and its literature.

In his works Dogen (1200-1253), the Japanese Zen master, always reminded Zen students

that whatever job they perform, they should do so with their mind concentrated. For example, when preparing rice for cooking, their mind should not wander thinking about several other ideas while their hands perform the action. Actually, a practitioner should involve his body, speech and mind into the activity. As a result of this, he is able to fully perceive the color and aroma of the rice and the temperature of the water.

As Zen Buddhism is Mahayana school of Buddhism that highlights a sudden enlightenment, the whole set of rituals is typical for it. These rituals remind Zen practitioners that whatever they do, they must do it with their mind fully conscious. Hence, in Zen every action performed with concentrated mind becomes sacred because it can bring us enlightenment.

The culture, traditions and the way of life of Native American tribes represents another influence under which Gary Snyder wrote his poetry. It reflects mainly in the poet's collections *Myths&Texts* and *Turtle Island*.

While in *Myths&Texts* Gary Snyder points out the differences between the way of life, traditions and culture of indigenous tribes and people of Judeo-Christian tradition, in *Turtle Island* it is the traditional way of life of Native Americans which the poet proposes as a model for sustainable way of life on North American continent.

The people of Judeo-Christian tradition do not consider themselves to be natural tribes. Their religion, which is based on the worship of God, dismisses any natural cults. As a result of this, these people lack any close relationship to nature. From this perception of nature arises all the damage these people impose on environment.

On the other hand, the people of indigenous tribes, who usually worship natural cults, live in their particular territories about which they have certain amount of knowledge. This enables them to take care of their places properly without causing any destruction to their environment.

When Native Americans lost their territories with the arrival of Europeans, the American environment underwent serious destruction due to inappropriate care and mining under newly established institutions and companies. As a result of this, many animal and plant species were lost, the whole forests disappeared and the rivers became polluted.

In 1970's Native American communities began to call again the North American continent Turtle Island, which is its original Native American name. The communities became gradually supported by ecologically-oriented Americans who began to settle down and live permanently in particular places.

In 1974 Gary Snyder, who views the Judeo-Christian perception of nature as a serious

flaw, published *Turtle Island* where he supported the ongoing trend and called for the end of environmental destruction in America.

Finally, it is Chinese and Japanese literature that influenced Gary Snyder's poetry especially in his collections of poetry *Riprap* and *Myths&Texts*.

Having studied Chinese and Japanese studies at the University of Berkeley, Gary Snyder began to work as a translator of Chinese poets. His translation of the poetry of Han-shan is well-known. In his own writing Gary Snyder became influenced by form, imagism and syntax of the Chinese poetry.

The influence of Japanese literature upon Gary Snyder's poetry reflects in the fourth poem of Logging in *Myths&Texts* where allusions to *Takasago*, a Noh play, appear.

In general, it is Zen Buddhism which connects the poetry of *Riprap*, *Myths&Texts* and *Turtle Island*. In the poems of *Riprap*, Gary Snyder's first volume of poetry, we can discern primarily the influence of Zen Buddhism and Chinese poetry. In his following volume of poetry, *Myths&Texts*, Zen Buddhism, whose practice enables a man to dwell in unity with all phenomena, serves as a solution to ecological crisis. Finally, in *Turtle Island* Zen Buddhism together with the traditional way of life of Native American tribes serves as a basis for the sustainable way of life proposed by Gary Snyder in this collection of poetry.

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The information concerning Zen Buddhism is taken from the following sources:  
Martine Batchelor, *Zen* (Praha: Aurora, 2001) 9-31, 55-70.  
Lama Anagárika Góvinda, *Základy tibetské mystiky* (Praha: Pragma, 1994) 129-201.



# **“Lay down these words Before your mind like rocks.”<sup>1</sup>**

## **About *Riprap* – Gary Snyder's first collection of poetry**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of *Riprap*, Gary Snyder's first collection of poetry.

*Riprap*, Gary Snyder's first collection of poetry was published for the first time in 1959. For the second time, it was published in 1965 together with Snyder's translation of the poetry of Han-shan, Chinese Zen poet, as *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems*.

*Riprap*, the name of this collection, clearly indicates that its poems were heavily influenced by the jobs in the mountains and natural reservations Snyder performed at the time of its compilation. To be more precise, riprap refers to “picking up and placing granite stones in tight cobble patterns on hard slab”<sup>2</sup> in order to create “a trail for horses in the mountains.”<sup>3</sup> This was one of the jobs Snyder performed as a member of a trail crew in the mountains of Sierra Nevada:

“*Riprap* is really class of poems I wrote under the influence of the geology of the Sierra Nevada and the daily trail crew work.”<sup>4</sup>

One day, when watching one of the veteran trail crew members at work, Snyder asked him about the job he was doing:

“What are you doing?” I asked Roy Marchbanks. – “Riprapping,” he said. “His selection of natural rocks was perfect – the result looked like dressed stone fitting to hair-edge cracks.”<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the word riprap entered into Gary Snyder's literary work.

Not only themes but also other aspects of the poems were influenced by Snyder's jobs in the mountains. While reading the poems of this collection a reader can observe that, as Gary Snyder once said, their rhythms arise from the physical work the poet is doing and life he is living:

“I've just recently come to realize that the rhythms of my poems follow the rhythm of the physical work I'm doing and life I'm leading at any given time – which makes the music in my head which creates the line.”<sup>6</sup>

The concept of creating trails for horses in the mountains clearly reflects in Snyder's choice of simple, short words while writing the poems for this collection:

“Walking, climbing, placing with the hands. I tried writing poems of tough, simple, short

words, with the complexity far beneath the surface texture.”<sup>7</sup>

Nowhere else is the influence of the geology of the Sierra Nevada and Snyder's daily trail crew work more visible than in “Riprap”, a poem whose form is identical to the form of the trail for the horses created by the process of “riprapping”<sup>8</sup>:

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 torment of fire and weight  
Crystal and sediment linked hot  
                    all change, in thoughts,  
As well as things.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, it was not only the concept of riprapping that had an influence on the poetry of Gary Snyder at that time. It was also Chinese poetry which contributed by its influence to the form of the poems in *Riprap*:

“In part the line was influenced by the five-and seven-character line Chinese poems I'd been reading, which work like sharp blows on the mind.”<sup>10</sup>

Having graduated from Chinese and Japanese studies at University of California in Berkeley in 1955, Gary Snyder became translator of the poetry of Han-shan, the Chinese Zen poet.

Being able to read Chinese poetry in its original language, Snyder became influenced by imagism, form and poetic syntax of Chinese poems.

Under the influence of imagism of Chinese poetry Snyder employs “sharp-edged images”<sup>11</sup> in his poems.

The influence of rhythm of the Chinese poetry reflects, like rapping, in Snyder's choice of short, simple words for his poems. Most of the Chinese poems have usually five or seven characters in each of their lines. Each of these characters represents a syllable and it can function as a word, too. This can be illustrated on the example of the Chinese poem “A Night Mooring by Maple Bridge” by Chang Chi. This example can be found in “The Mountains Are Your Mind”: Orientalism in the Poetry of Gary Snyder”, essay by Yao-fu Lin.

Yueh lo wu t'i shuang man t'ien  
(moon falls crow caws frost fills sky)  
Chiang feng yu huo t'uei ch'ou mien  
(river maple fishing lights facing sad slumber)  
Ku Su ch'eng wai Han Shan Ssu  
(ku su city outside cold mountain temple)  
Yeh pan chung sheng tao k'e ch'uan  
(night half bell sound reaches travelling boat)<sup>12</sup>

While I watch the moon go down, a crow caws through the frost;  
Under the shadows of maple-trees a fisherman moves with his torch;  
And I hear, from beyond Su-chou, from the temple on Cold Mountain;  
Ringing for me, hear in my boat, the midnight bell.<sup>13</sup>

As we can observe from the above example, Chinese poems consist of simple, short words which usually belong to the class of verbs, nouns or adjectives. What we could hardly find in them are the functional words like conjunctions.

“Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout”, poem which opens *Riprap*, clearly

illustrates the influence Chinese poetry had on Gary Snyder's poetry:

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.<sup>14</sup>

The influence of the Chinese poetry on the poetry of Gary Snyder can be observed in Snyder's choice of the title of the poem, "Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout", which indicates the specific time and place of the poem. Thus, Snyder follows the method Chinese poets applied in the writing of their poetry.

Mid-August in the title of the poem refers to the season during which "the autumn festival in China took place and about which Chinese poets loved to write about."<sup>15</sup>

The poetry of Gary Snyder, as well as the one of the Chinese poets, grows out of poet's own experience. Thus, the poem "Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout" consists of the "ideas set forth in concrete terms of experience."<sup>16</sup> A reader could hardly find any "intellectual abstractions"<sup>17</sup> in it.

The poetic syntax of the poem "Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout" reflects the influence the Chinese poetry had on the rhythm of Gary Snyder's poetry. It was in this poem where Snyder reduced the number of the functional words and verbs to their minimum which enabled him to employ the simple, short words of the poem as individual stones and thus introduce the concept of riprapping into his poetry.

Instead of both of verbs and functional verbs Gary Snyder employs juxtaposition. This can be observed particularly in the first stanza of the poem.

By reducing both functional words and verbs Snyder creates "paratactic constructions"<sup>18</sup> in each of the first stanza's line juxtaposing two groups of words together. The result effect of these paratactic constructions where each word represents a stone is the "rhythm similar to

hoofs falling on a cobble trail which works like sharp blows on the mind.”<sup>19</sup>

The second stanza clearly shows the influence the Chinese Zen poet Han-shan, together with other Chinese Buddhist poets like Wang Wei, had on Snyder's poetry. To retreat to the mountains in order to concentrate one's mind and practice meditation to realize the enlightened mind represents a part of the life of every Buddhist practitioner.

As Han-shan left the world of civilization for the Cold Mountain,

In my first thirty years of life  
I roamed hundreds and thousands of miles.  
Walked by rivers through deep green grass  
Entered cities of boiling red dust.  
Tried drugs, but couldn't make Immortal;  
Read books and wrote poems on history.  
Today I'm back at Cold Mountain:  
I'll sleep by the creek and purify my ears.<sup>20</sup>

Snyder left his urban life in San Francisco to spend a few months at Sourdough Mountain where he worked as a fire lookout.

Both of the poems of Han-shan and Gary Snyder are permeated by their happiness arising from leaving the civilization for the mountains to practice Buddhist meditation and realize enlightened mind.

It is the nature which together with Buddhist meditation purifies the mind of both of the poets and thus enables them to realize their minds as universal. Hence, “the authentic world of the wilderness”<sup>21</sup> is understood by both of the poets as “superior to the unauthentic world of the cities, the realm of boiling red dust where sham civilization reigns.”<sup>22</sup>

In the last three lines of the second stanza of the poem “Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout” we can see Snyder as an enlightened Zen hermit experiencing happiness from the life in the mountains as well as from his discovery of the true character of the world phenomena.

In his collections of poems Gary Snyder has always referred to the destruction a human civilization imposes upon the nature. Thus, in his first collection of poetry, *Riprap*, we can also find poems dealing with the theme of ecology and the need of protection of the nature.

As we proceed from “Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout”, the opening poem of *Riprap*, to the following ecological poems of this collection, the concept of poetry as “a riprap

on the slick rock of metaphysics”<sup>23</sup> slightly changes its meaning.

In the domain of Snyder's ecological poems a riprap no more refers to the concept of poetry in which each word of the poem represents an individual stone which the poet “lays down before his mind”<sup>24</sup> to create the text of the poem like a riprapper who creates a trail for the horses by placing granite stones in tight cobble patterns on hard slab. Gary Snyder's ecological poetry is “riprap on the slick rock of metaphysics in that its words enable a more sure-footed progress toward awareness of our inescapable interdependence with the natural world.”<sup>25</sup> This can be observed, as we will see later, in the poem “Water”, where the poet having entered the mind of nature runs to the water and meets various animals whom he perceives as his companions.

Thus, Snyder's ecological poems are closely connected with those written under the influence of the poet's practice of Zen Buddhism and study of classical Chinese poetry. By realizing universal mind the poet as well as other Buddhist practitioners enters into the state of universal being. By overcoming his individuality supported by his dualistic mind he unifies with nature and all sentient beings and begins to perceive the world as a system where all the phenomena are interdependent.

However, it is not only a realization of his universal mind that enables Gary Snyder to come close to nature. It is also his ability to enter the mind of nature that allows him to fully understand it in all of its aspects. By unifying with nature and entering its mind, Snyder overcomes his rational mind and realizes qualities of nature and the state of wilderness in his own mind. By entering the mind of the nature, particularly the one of various animals, the poet assumes their living. As a result of this Gary Snyder can exist and feel like “a mare, a deer or even a fish.”<sup>26</sup>

The poem “Water”, which illustrates the point, shows Gary Snyder running towards the creek moving in the wilderness with ease just like a creature of nature:

Pressure of the sun on the rockslide  
Whirled me in a dizzy hop-and-step descent,  
Pool of pebbles buzzed in a Juniper shadow,  
Tiny tongue of a this year rattlesnake flicked,  
I leaped, laughing for little boulder-color coil—  
Pounded by heat raced down the slabs to the creek  
Deep tumbling under arching walls and stuck  
Whole head and shoulders in the water:

Stretched full on cobble—ears roaring  
Eyes open aching from the cold and faced a trout.<sup>27</sup>

In this poem Gary Snyder introduces his reader into a primitive life of a man living in complete harmony with nature according to his principles derived from its detailed knowledge.

In the first three lines of the poem we can observe the spontaneity with which the man reacts to the heat of the burning sun.

The spontaneity of the reactions of this primitive man is joined by unity of his mind with the nature in which he lives. Mountains, rivers, plants and animals, with which he shares the sense of unity, are his companions.

Running and jumping down he not only assumes a motion by which the animals move in nature but he also observes another animals he meets during his journey with such a detail that he is capable to see “the flicking of the tiny tongue of the rattlesnake.”<sup>28</sup>

Having arrived to the creek and dived into the water, the man experiences simple and spontaneous surprise like a Zen practitioner who, after solving a koan and understanding the true character of the world phenomena, attains sudden enlightenment which brings “a literal blow to his mind.”<sup>29</sup>

We can find the theme of simple and spontaneous surprise in another Gary Snyder's poems included in his first collection of poetry, *Riprap*.

In poem “Thin Ice” the surprise comes out of a sudden cracking of the thin ice on the surface of the pool high in the mountains which resulted into poet's fall into the water:

...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<sup>30</sup>

Gary Snyder introduces his reader into the authenticity of the simple and spontaneous surprise analogous to satori, a sudden enlightenment in Zen Buddhism, also in his poem "Above Pate Valley". It is the poet's discovery of a glass-obsidian flake which makes him happy and suddenly surprised at the same time:

Ate a cold fried trout in the  
Trembling shadows. I spied  
A glitter, and found a flake  
Black volcanic glass-obsidian –  
By a flower.<sup>31</sup>

In conclusion of this subsection, as Rudolph L. Nelson mentions in his study "Riprap on the Slick Rock of Metaphysics": Religious Dimensions in the Poetry of Gary Snyder", *Riprap*, Gary Snyder's first collection of poetry, "is not a thematically unified book."<sup>32</sup> In this collection we can, on the one hand, find poems which reflect strong influence of both Zen Buddhism and Chinese classical poetry on Gary Snyder's poetics. On the other hand, *Riprap* contains Gary Snyder's first poems dealing with ecological themes. Nevertheless, a reader will not find any strong thematic division between the poems as most of them deal with both of the themes.

What unifies all of the poems of *Riprap* is the contemplative character of their images of landscapes arising from the influence of Zen Buddhism and Chinese classical poetry on the poet. These landscapes, powerful in their "overwhelming physicality, induce mystical experience"<sup>33</sup> upon the poet's rational mind and cause its transformation into the intuitive one. The poem "Piute Creek" illustrates the point:

One granite ridge  
A tree, would be enough  
Or even a rock, a small creek,



A bark shred in a pool.  
Hill beyond hill, folded and twisted  
Tough trees cranes  
In thin stone fractures  
A huge moon on it all, is too much.  
The mind wanders. A million  
Summers, night air still and the rocks  
Warm. Sky over endless mountains.  
All the junk that goes with being human  
Drops away, hard rock wavers...<sup>34</sup>

Although some of the poems of *Riprap* deal with ecological themes, they do not directly deal with the destruction a human civilization imposes on the wilderness. Thus, *Riprap* differs from *Myths&Texts*, Gary Snyder's second collection of poetry, which in its three parts describes the destruction of the landscapes of *Riprap*.

Nevertheless, also in *Riprap* we can find the poem "Milton By Firelight" in whose third stanza the poet expresses his concern with the destruction of the nature of Sierra Nevada and thus enunciates thematic form of his next collection of poetry, *Myths & Texts*:

In ten thousand years the Sierras  
Will be dry and dead, home of the scorpion.  
Ice-scratched slabs and bent trees.  
No paradise, no fall,  
Only the weathering land  
The wheeling sky,  
Man, with his Satan  
Scouring the chaos of the mind.  
Oh Hell!<sup>35</sup>

The reason why Gary Snyder refers to John Milton in the title of this poem is that Milton wrote an epic poem *Paradise Lost* which in its first book deals with the theme of a man's disobedience and the consequent loss of a Paradise to which he was placed by the God. One of the main characters of this poem is Satan who refused the God's guidance and succeeded in drawing lots of angels on his side. As a result of this, he ended up in Hell with

all of his supporters. In seek of revenge he appeared in the body of a serpent. He was successful in convincing Eve to eat a forbidden fruit. In consequence, Eve together with Adam was driven off the Garden of Eden and thus they lost their Paradise.

## **Logging, Hunting, Burning – Destruction of nature in *Myths& Texts***

The aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of Gary Snyder's second collection of poetry, *Myth&Texts*, which was published in 1960.

To begin with, *Myth&Texts* is the volume of poetry which Gary Snyder divided into three sections: Logging, Hunting and Burning.

In general, *Myths&Texts* deal with the theme of ecological destruction of the wilderness by a modern industrial society. Thus, Logging, a section opening the book, refers to the “destruction of the forest and the mind responsible for it.”<sup>1</sup> In Hunting, the poet “projects the man into the world of animals, as the primitive hunters have done, to enable him to enter the mind of the wilderness.”<sup>2</sup> It is in Burning, the last section of *Myths&Texts*, where Gary Snyder “transforms the texts of the wilderness into the myth of prototypical nature which is what he aspires to create”<sup>3</sup> under the influence of “Chinese Zen painter, Pa-ta Shan-jen”<sup>4</sup>:

Pine sleeps, cedar splits straight

Flowers crack the pavement.

Pa-ta Shan-jen

(A painter who watched Ming fall)

lived in tree:

“The brush

May paint the mountains and streams

Though the territory is lost.”<sup>5</sup>

In Logging, the first section of *Myths&Texts*, Gary Snyder describes, on the basis of his own “experience as a logger”<sup>6</sup> in Oregon and Washington, the process of cutting down the trees using irony in its certain passages.

It is above all the Judeo-Christian tradition in its alliance with capitalism at which this irony is aimed. To be more precise, Gary Snyder aims his critique particularly on Christian worshippers, who dismiss “the pagan worship of nature”<sup>7</sup> and base their belief on a single “invisible God.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, they perceive the nature as a lifeless and separate object unrelated to the human spirit:

“The Christians are unable to believe their own senses, that is to say unable to open their

hearts to the influence of nature, because they live in a culture which alienates itself from the very ground of its own being – the wildness outside...and from that other wildness within.”<sup>9</sup>

In his essay “Riprap on the Slick Rock of Metaphysics”: Religious Dimensions in the Poetry of Gary Snyder” Rudolph L. Nelson adds:

“At the root of the problem where our civilization goes wrong is the mistaken belief that nature is something less than authentic, that nature is not as alive as man is, or as intelligent, that in a sense it is dead, and that animals are of so low an order of intelligence and feeling, we need not take their feeling into account.”<sup>10</sup>

It is this perception of nature that enables people to exploit its resources “in the name of growth and development”<sup>11</sup> without any concerns about its ecological damage.

Gary Snyder believes that “the breakdown of man's relationship with nature is a deep spiritual flaw in our times, especially in America, which used to be clouds of birds, miles of bison, endless forests and grass and clear water.”<sup>12</sup> As a result of this, nowadays, when the United States of America represent one of the leading economies in the world, the ecological balance of its environment is disrupted.

It is above all the destruction of the natural world by the Judeo-Christian civilization dominated by greedy capitalism from which arises the poet's anger which a reader can observe in certain parts of *Logging*, particularly in its last part:

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;  
Cut down to make room for the suburbs  
Bulldozed by Luther and Weyerhaeuser  
Crosscut and chainsaw  
    squareheads and firms

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.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, according to Bert Almon, the author of the essay “Buddhism and Energy in the Recent Poetry of Gary Snyder,” this anger is a compassionate one, same as that used by Zen masters during their teachings. As we can observe when reading *Logging*, Gary Snyder's outrage grows above all out of an exploitation of trees and plants whose importance in ecosystems remains unknown to many people.

To prevent further destruction of the wilderness we need to discover our original state of mind analogous to nature and thus develop ecological conscience in our minds. We must realize that the more we will impose destruction on our environment, the bigger gap will exist between us and nature as we will be gradually destructing our original state of mind analogous to nature. Thus, the mountains will cease to be our mind.

To restore our original state of mind means to re-establish our unity with natural world to the point where we perceive various kinds of animals and plants as equal to us, more precisely as our “co-citizens in a community of life.”<sup>14</sup> In addition to this, our recognition of “sophistication and complexity of life-biomass, information stored in the cells and genes of all living matter,”<sup>15</sup> and the “role plants and animals play in the foodchain”<sup>16</sup> will allow us to come closer to unique living system of nature. The result of this process will enable us to incorporate the nature with its trees, plants and animals into decisions we make in our society through institutions like councils or governments.

If we will not enter into a unity with the nature, it will begin to “revolt against us by submitting us its non-negotiable demands about our stay on the Earth. Nowadays, we are beginning to get non-negotiable demands from the air, the water and the soil.”<sup>17</sup>

It is particularly our anthropomorphic view on the nature which creates our great distance from it.

Nevertheless, there are still people who “traditionally and intelligently keep open lines of

communication with nature and its forces.”<sup>18</sup> Here, we are talking about primitive peoples living in the harmony with nature without causing damage to it. Among them, we can name various indigenous tribes of North and South America, Africa or Arunachal Pradesh in India.

Gary Snyder is a poet who spent a great part of his life by studying culture, traditions and the way of life of Native American tribes living in the Northwest of the United States of America. Being influenced by the perception and attitude of these tribes towards the nature, he sees plants and animals “not as mere symbols for human feelings or concepts, but as autonomous presences”<sup>19</sup> in his poems.

However, it is not the influence of only Zen Buddhism and the way of life of Native American tribes of the Northwest, which projects into Snyder's perception of the nature that can be observed in Logging. It is also a great impact of Japanese culture upon the poet which reflects particularly in the fourth poem of this section of *Myths&Texts*.

According to Katsunori Yamazato, the author of the essay “A Note on Japanese Allusions in Gary Snyder's Poetry”, in the fourth poem of Logging the allusions to a Noh play, *Takasago*, whose author is Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443), can be clearly observed:

Pines, under pines,  
Seami Motokiyo  
The Doer stamps his foot.  
A thousand board-feet  
Bucked, skidded, loaded –  
(Takasago, Ise) float in mill pond;  
A thousand years dancing  
Flies in the saw kerf.<sup>20</sup>

“In the first three lines”<sup>21</sup> of the poem Gary Snyder “alludes to the stage setting and to the author of *Takasago*”<sup>22</sup>, Zeami Motokiyo. In *Takasago*, two pines “symbolizing prosperity and longevity”<sup>23</sup> appear. One of the pines, whose shape is that of the old man, is the home of the spirit of “the Doer, the principal actor”<sup>24</sup> of the play. It is this pine which leads the “conversation with a traveling priest.”<sup>25</sup> At the end of *Takasago* the god of the pine performs a dance which “gives blessing to the land.”<sup>26</sup> “The whole play is construed as a hymn to the sacred pines which are the symbols of prosperity and longevity.”<sup>27</sup>

However, Gary Snyder does not celebrate nature at the end of this poem. Instead, he reacts on its destruction. While in *Takasago* a reader can observe a harmonious interaction between

the gods of the sacred pine trees and travelers, in Gary Snyder's poem we perceive the contrast the poet makes between the Japanese concept of nature influenced by Zen Buddhism and the American one influenced by Judeo-Christian tradition.

In the second section of *Myths&Texts*, Hunting, Gary Snyder explores ways of establishing man's unity with nature. As the title of the section suggests the poet examines the possibilities of hunting, which can help us to come close to nature to understand it completely. According to Gary Snyder hunting represents the activity which establishes a special relationship between man and animals:

“There is a great truth in the relationship established by hunting: like in love or art, you must become one with the other.”<sup>28</sup>

In other words, a hunter must identify the state of his mind with that of animals. Thus, his mind will enter into the state of the wilderness. Gary Snyder believes that hunting is closely associated not only with shamanism but also with yoga and meditation:

“The necessities of identity, intuition, stillness, that go with hunting make it seem as though shamanism, yoga and meditation may have their roots in the requirements of the hunter.”<sup>29</sup>

That is also the reason why the poet opens the section of Hunting with a shaman song.

Yet from the poet's view the identity of a man with animals can be reached by another way. In his poem “This poem is for bear” Gary Snyder introduces a theme of marriage of a girl to a bear:

The others had all gone down  
From the blackberry brambles, but one girl  
spilled her basket, and was picking up her  
Berries in the dark.  
A tall man stood in the shadow, took her arm,  
Led her to his home. He was a bear.  
In a house under the mountain  
She gave birth to slick dark children  
With sharp teeth, and lived in the hollow  
Mountain many years...<sup>30</sup>

In Gary Snyder's poems, as well “as in Native American folklore”<sup>31</sup>, animals assume their roles of “spirits of the wilderness.”<sup>32</sup> In this poem, the bear, in Native American folklore

understood as “a child of the god of the mountains”<sup>33</sup>, adopts the role of a man and enters into marriage with a girl. Their marriage breaks down the difference between them. Thus, they both can be basically perceived as creatures of nature.

The theme of a close relationship between people and animals appears also in the last stanza of Gary Snyder's poem “This poem is for deer” where the poet declares that the beasts have, like people, “Buddha-nature.”<sup>34</sup>

Girls would have in their arms  
A wild gazette or wild wolf-cubs  
And give them their white milk,  
  those who had new-born infants home  
Breasts still full.  
Wearing a spotted fawnskin  
  sleeping under trees  
  bacchantes, drunk  
On wine or truth, what you will,  
Meaning: compassion.  
Agents: man and beast, beasts  
Got the buddha-nature...<sup>35</sup>

In this poem Snyder indicates to a reader that a man's unity with animals enables him to develop a relationship of love between him and them.

The theme of identification of the man with animals can also be found in *Regarding Wave*, a collection of poetry Gary Snyder published in 1969:

Once every year, the Deer catch human beings. They do various things which irresistibly draw men near them; each one selects a certain man. The Deer shoots the man, who is then compelled to skin it and carry its meat home and eat it. Then, the Deer is inside the man. He waits and hides in there, but the man doesn't know it. When enough Deer have occupied enough men, they will strike all at once. The men who don't have Deer in them will also be taken by surprise, and everything will change some. This is called “takeover from inside.”<sup>36</sup>

In this piece of work, Gary Snyder introduces a reader into his concept of a “revolution of



consciousness.”<sup>37</sup>

The Deer, which represents “a personification of the wilderness”<sup>38</sup>, enters into a man to “bring about a change in his consciousness”<sup>39</sup>. In the moment when “the Deer takes over”<sup>40</sup> a man, “the wilderness prevails”<sup>41</sup> in his mind.

Hunting is above all “primary activity of the primitive people.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, according to Gary Snyder, to be a hunter means for a man “to live close to the primitive world with its most archaic values: the fertility of the soil, the magic of animals, the power-vision in solitude, the terrifying initiation and re-birth, the love and ecstasy of the dance, the common work of the tribes.”<sup>43</sup>

The idea of living in a harmony with the world of nature according to the old principles and values still respected by tribes of indigenous people is expressed in Snyder's poem “The Making of the Horn Spoon”:

The head of the mountain-goat is in the corner

for the making of the horn spoon,

The black spoon. When fire strikes it

turn the head

Four days and hair pulls loose

horn twists free.

Hand-adze, straight knife, notch the horn-base;

rub with rough sandstone

Shave down smooth. Split two cedar sticks

when water boils plunge the horn,

Tie mouth between sticks in the spoon shape

rub with dried dogfish skin.

It will be black and smooth,

a spoon.<sup>44</sup>

In this poem Gary Snyder describes the way indigenous people, here Native Americans, make a spoon, tool they use in their everyday life, from a mountain-goat's horn. This clearly indicates that Native Americans, as well as the Buddhists, share their gratitude for every item they receive. Thus, for them the ideal of wasting nothing is natural. On the other hand, people living in a modern industrial throwaway society think quite differently. While people of indigenous tribes make all tools they need from natural resources, in modern society people

make the same tools from special synthetic materials for whose production huge amount of sources is needed. To obtain and transform these sources, modern people establish mines and factories and thus they contribute to a damage of the environment. The more they impose destruction on the nature, the more they feel the distance between them and nature as their mind which corresponds to nature steadily loses its original state. Moreover, it takes a lot of time for these synthetic materials to end their existence in a natural way. As a result of this, the society needs to recycle them effectively.

This poem, however, opens yet another theme of food and eating which is closely related to the activity of hunting. As Bert Almon mentions in his essay “Buddhism and Energy in the Recent Poetry of Gary Snyder”, realizing that obtaining food involves “a loss of life”<sup>45</sup> of the animal, the Buddhists and Native Americans share their “gratitude towards food.”<sup>46</sup> For them, eating, during which, as they believe, the being of an animal enters into their mind, represents a “reverential act.”<sup>47</sup> In addition, the awareness these people share of the complexity of the unified system of the world in which all phenomena is interdependent and where all beings relate closely to each other enables them to appreciate the significance of the land or to acknowledge position of animals in the living system of nature.

What primitive hunters believe is that “humility, gratitude and acts of propitiation expiate the blame for eating meat or taking furs.”<sup>48</sup> In his book *Secret Tibet* Fosco Maraini, the Italian ethnologist specializing in Tibet and Japan, mentions that in Tibet people believe that if a man who eats the meat of the animal has a compassionate heart, then this animal will be introduced into the path of compassion.

On the contrary, people of an industrial society who perceive a great distance between them and nature hardly ever realize the significance of the land or the position of an animal in a food chain as they usually kill animals, whom they do not see “as sentient beings capable of suffering”<sup>49</sup>, for “mere comfort.”<sup>50</sup>

Although hunting, during which a man identifies his mind with that of animals, enables us to enter into the state of unity with nature, it still remains an activity of violence we perform as a result of our succumbing to negative emotions which dominate our undisciplined mind.

In the third section of *Myths&Texts*, Burning, Gary Snyder presents his readers the way which will enable them to make their minds disciplined and prepared to overcome these negative emotions. Only thus, they will be able to realize the wilderness in their minds.

It is above all Buddhist meditation which enables us to make an insight into the destructive character of our negative emotions, in Buddhism known as Five Poisons. If we do not recognize the character of each of our negative emotions, we will not be able to

overcome them and make our mind disciplined.

To have a disciplined mind means for a practitioner to be able to avoid his behavior under a strong influence of a negative emotion like anger. Instead of succumbing to his anger, which, as he knows, destroys both his inner balance and ability of rational behavior, and acting under its influence a practitioner reacts with both tolerance and patience. Patience and tolerance are the most effective tools for overcoming one's anger. A practitioner develops them during various meditation exercises which enable him to establish and build up his inner tranquility, a base from which his patience and tolerance arise.

Burning, the third section of *Myths&Texts*, begins with shaman song which introduces a reader to the process of recognizing a destructive character of negative emotions which is necessary for us to develop our disciplined mind and enter into unity with the wilderness:

Under the shuddering eyelid  
Dreams gnawing the nerve-strings,  
The mind grabs and the shut eye sees:  
Down dimensions floating below sunlight,  
Worlds of the dead, Bardo, mind-worlds  
& horror of sunless cave-ritual  
Meeting conscious monk bums  
Blown on winds of karma from hell  
To endless changing hell,  
Life and death whipped  
On this froth of reality (wind & rain  
Realms human and full of desire) over the cold  
Hanging enormous unknown, below  
Art and History and all mankind living thoughts,  
Occult & witchcraft evils each all true.  
The thin edge of nature rising fragile  
And helpless with its love and sentient stone  
And flesh, above dark drug-death dreams.<sup>51</sup>

In this poem, the poet presents his readers with the Five Poisons, negative emotions existing in a man's subconsciousness. More precisely, the Five Poisons refer to ignorance,

desire, anger, jealousy and pride. It is these five negative emotions which, in case they dominate a man's undisciplined mind, inflict a suffering on us and make us exist in the cycle of samsara. To live in the cycle of samsara means to undergo a process of reincarnation for every being. This explains why Gary Snyder refers to Bardo, in Tibetan Buddhism a forty-nine-day period during which the mind of a living being reincarnates before being born again. The next samsaric existence of a living being depends on the state of its karma and on the dominance of one of the five negative emotions in its mind.

To overcome the negative emotions it is necessary for us to develop positive emotions in our mind with the help of Buddhist meditation.

By developing positive emotions in order to overcome our negative emotions, we allow our inner balance to be further developed. Having attained a serenity of our mind purged of all negative emotions, there is a space for us to enter into the state of unity with nature. Upon unifying our mind with nature and realizing its qualities in it, our rational mind fades away and the intuition is awakened. Our perception of duality between us and nature disappears and we become part of the nature. Now, as our mind and nature correspond, "the mountains are our mind again."<sup>52</sup> Thus, the process of the realization of the wilderness in our mind is at its end. Now, our mind rests in a state of perfect purity which is analogical to a state of enlightenment in Buddhism. Gary Snyder describes this process ending up in a creation of the myth of prototypical nature in the last poem of *Myths&Texts*, "The Myth":

Fire up Thunder Creek and the mountain—

Troy's burning!

The cloud mutters

The Mountains are your mind.

The woods bristle there,

Dogs barking and children shrieking

Rise from below.

Rain falls for centuries.

Soaking the loose rocks in space

Sweet rain, the fire's out

The black snag glistens in the rain

& the last Wisp of smoke floats up

Into spiral whorls of fire

The storms of the Milky Way

Buddha incense in an empty world  
Black pit cold and light-year  
Flame tongue of the dragon  
Licks the sun  
The sun is but a morning star<sup>53</sup>

In conclusion of this subsection, in his collection of poetry *Myths&Texts* Gary Snyder presents his readers the process leading towards attainment of one's enlightened mind.

Thus, in the first section of the collection, *Logging*, the poet introduces us into the problematic situation, particularly in the domain of our protection of nature, caused by our dualistic mind perceiving a distance between our invariable individual existence and the rest of the world.

In *Hunting*, Gary Snyder concentrates on finding a way which would enable us to come closer to nature and understand it completely in all of its aspects. It is the activity of hunting, which establishes close relationship between man and animal, and the life side by side animals, which removes all the differences between men and animals, which allow us to enter into the state of unity with nature.

And finally, in *Burning*, the third section of *Myths&Texts*, Gary Snyder indicates us that the realization of our universal mind is not possible without overcoming our negative emotions which represent the greatest obstacle in development of our positive emotions like compassion, tolerance or patience which dominate one's universal mind. It is the Buddhist meditation which helps us to develop not only the positive values in our mind but also the perception of our unity with nature. Upon unifying with nature we are able to realize the qualities of the wilderness in our mind. Thus, our individual mind fades away by giving a free space to the development of our universal mind dominated the Buddhist compassion which will enable us to recognize the fact that all of the living beings in this world want to get rid of their suffering and attain happiness. And it is this compassion which will enable us to protect the nature in all of its aspects.

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The information concerning Tibetan people is taken from the following source:  
Fosco Maraini, *Skryty' Tibet* (Litomyšl: Paseka, 2005) 106.

## **Manzanita, Magpie's Song, For the Children – Excursion to *Turtle Island***

This chapter aims to present ideas and poems of *Turtle Island*.

To begin with, this collection of poetry was published in 1974. In the following year it brought Gary Snyder the Pulitzer Prize.

The poems of *Turtle Island* are divided into 3 sections: Manzanita, Magpie's Song and For the Children.

As far as the title of the collection is concerned, Turtle Island is the name which Native Americans gave to the North American continent. It has its origin in myths about creation of the world which are part of the culture of Native American tribes on both American West and East Coasts.

It was in 1969 at the meeting of Native American activists in Southern California where Gary Snyder heard this name for the first time. As he writes in essay “The Rediscovery of Turtle Island” of his collection *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds*, it immediately inspired him to start thinking about both cultural and religious traditions of Native Americans together with their customary ways of land cultivation.

Like people in Buddhist countries, Native Americans also pay attention to the principle of interdependence.

In Buddhism this principle, which says that all phenomena are interrelated, goes hand in hand with the law of cause and consequence.

Similarly, in spiritual traditions of Native American tribes we find a teaching about the relationship between human beings and nature.

Generally, we can say that in Gary Snyder's poetry both interdependence and the principle of causality are closely connected with ecology. This fact also remains true for the poetry of *Turtle Island*. More precisely, in case of this collection the principles of Buddhist teaching together with ecology are intended to serve as “a guiding principle in living on Turtle Island.”<sup>1</sup>

In his essay “The Place, the Region, and the Commons” included in the collection *Practice of the Wild* Gary Snyder remarks that besides Native Americans there are millions of people living in North America. On the one hand, they were born on the continent. But on the other hand, these people lack the sense of connection to the land on which they are living.

The same thing cannot be said about Native Americans. They, on the contrary, used to live there for generations in particular areas of which they had thorough knowledge. As a result of

their experience arising from a long time inhabitation of one specific place, Native Americans knew the character of the countryside, its soil, plants and animals. Hence they could develop responsible, non-damaging ways of taking care of the place where they lived, feeling that they are part of the local ecosystem.

When new settlers came, Native American tribes lost their territories. Thus, the settlers gained vast areas. Nevertheless, as they did not know their character, they were hardly able to take care of them. Gary Snyder describes the arrival of new settlers to Turtle Island and their life there in the first years in his poem “What Happened Here Before”:

...

—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.

—150—

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, churches, county jail.

\*

We asked, who the land belonged to.  
and where one pays tax.  
(two gents who never used it twenty years,  
and before them the widow  
of the son of the man  
who got him a patented deed  
on a worked-out mining claim,)  
laid hasty on land that was deer and acorn  
grounds of the Nisenan?

branch of the Maidu?

(they never had a chance to speak, even,  
their name.)

...

*now,*

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?

*We shall see*

*Who knows*

*How to be*

Bluejay screeches from a pine.<sup>2</sup>

In the first four stanzas of the poem Gary Snyder describes the gradual formation of the Earth's surface and evolution of plant and animal species. Then, 40 000 years ago, the aboriginal tribes inhabited the land, established their territories and created their traditions. But 150 years ago a big, radical change occurred with the arrival of the white man. For most of indigenous tribes his coming represented a total nightmare. Without respect for them, their old culture and their ownership of the land, these new settlers invaded their territories and plundered them for gold and other commodities which could earn them money. Finally, the indigenous people were chased out of their lands on which they used to live for generations. Thus, the new settlers had free hands to begin to impose their culture on the gained areas. It is



obvious that this process was marked by many absurdities. Being used to pay taxes in Europe, the settlers quickly levied them on former territories of local Native American tribes as Snyder describes in lines 8-10 of the first stanza in the second part of the poem. But it was not only the case of taxes.

Yet in his introduction to *Turtle Island* Gary Snyder mentions that the states of America were created without paying any attention to natural regions of the land. The poet further discusses this theme in his essay "Coming into the Watershed" in *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds*. He writes that these regions are determined by their typical climate, minerals and flora. On parameters of each of these regions depend people's lifestyle, land cultivation or the way they dress. What is also important to mention, is that the regional borders are not stable. They change. Consequently, it is not possible to determine them by a line in a map for forever. But back to American states. In the same essay Snyder asks what California is. His answer is that it is a state whose borders were hastily delineated on a map by a rule. To sum it up, the states were established by people who had no knowledge about specific characteristics of the land. When talking about California, Gary Snyder explains that it consists of 6 regions. Each of them has its particular features which determined people's way of life. Nowadays the state of California comprises areas which, judged by their characteristic features, are part of different biological units included in neighboring states.

In the same stanza the poet provides us with allusion to a fact which we have already mentioned. That new arrivals did not know how to cultivate their newly gained areas. In the following stanza we learn that the settlers would treat Native Americans without respect. Obviously, they viewed them as inferior beings whose knowledge and opinions were of no importance for them.

In the last part of the poem we find ourselves in our times. Here, Gary Snyder describes his sons sitting by fire drying blueberries and apples they obtained from local nature and preparing meat. The boys try to find out who they are. They know they are not Native Americans. But somehow, as they live in harmony with nature, they cannot completely identify themselves with white American culture.

In the end a bluejay calls that finally we will see which whose way of life on Turtle Island is more proper. Whether the Native American one or that of "the recently arrived white man who flies his machines of destruction, quickly burning up the last of the fossil fuels that have come to sustain his life."<sup>3</sup>

In "The Place, the Region, and the Commons" Gary Snyder writes that to be able to feel that North America is their home, Americans need to reassess their relationship towards the

continent. The first thing for them to do is to realize that its original name is Turtle Island and that its history goes further back than to the arrival of European settlers.

“Mnoho pravdy o dějinách a kultuře Severní Ameriky bylo zamlženo samoučelnými dějinami, které byly napsány ve jménu dobyvatelů, ve jménu současné dominantní společnosti.”<sup>4</sup>

To view the land in a new light it is necessary not only to revere its long history but also to be aware of its natural wealth, which needs to be protected.

“Musíme ctít starobylost této země – její divokost –, učit se od ní, bránit ji a pracovat tak, abychom ji mohli předat budoucím potomkům (všech bytostí) zdravou a s neporušenou rozmanitostí.”<sup>5</sup>

That is why Gary Snyder advocates the life in one place as it helps people recognize characteristics of regions they inhabit. The knowledge of their land makes it easier for them to see themselves as its part and to perceive it as their home as well.

...

“Ale pokud přesto víte, o čem rostliny a počasí vypovídají, pak už jste do místního dění vtaženi a můžete se tam cítit domáčeji.”<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, it encourages them to cultivate the land properly. Gary Snyder explains these facts on the presence of Douglas fir in an area.

“Výskyt tohoto stromu se vztahuje k množství vodních srážek a teplotním výkyvům a určuje typ zemědělství, které tu lze provozovat, a také jaký je potřebný sklon střechy i jaké potřebujete pršipláště.”<sup>7</sup>

In “The Rediscovery of Turtle Island” Gary Snyder writes that in early 1970's the term Turtle Island began to be used again among Native American communities. At that time a growing number of Americans began to think seriously about both protection of nature and support of Native Americans. They would move to particular places where they settled. Their new relationship to the land determined everything they did. In response to this new trend Gary Snyder, as he writes, decided to choose the name Turtle Island as the title of his

collection of poetry.

Gary Snyder, too, moved and settled in one place. It is in Sierra Nevada and the poet called it Kitkitdizze which is the name a local tribe has for typical plant growing in the area. Snyder describes his life in Sierra Nevada from its beginnings up to recent years in “Kitkitdizze: A Node in the Net”, the last essay of *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds*. During the first years the poet was learning how to live in that place. He had to discover for which vegetables and fruit trees there are good conditions. He also needed to find out how to take care of local forests and meadows properly. Last but not least, he made a thorough research of local trees, plants and animals as well.

The character of California dry forests has always been formed by fires which would come to particular area approximately every 25 years. They would burn only underwood which, consequently, remained low. As fires would not destroy high trees, there used to be fire resistant forests in California.

In addition, Native Americans themselves would deliberately set areas on fire in order to increase forests' fire resistance.

Nowadays, Gary Snyder wishes to reassume this traditional Native American procedure. This idea, together with the description of the above-mentioned Native American forestal care, he presents in his poem “Control Burn”:

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,  
never 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.<sup>8</sup>

The reason why Gary Snyder decided to employ Native American methods of forestal cultivation is that local tribes living in close connection with their land had profound knowledge about the area. Hence, they knew how to take care of it properly. When new settlers came, Native Americans were chased off their old territories. These days, Sierra Nevada, as Snyder writes, is a network of government and private properties. Under the administration of governmental institutions California forests were damaged heavily due to inappropriate care. Nevertheless, the poet believes that it is still possible for local people to gradually renew the forests into the state they were in when Native Americans used to take care of them. Allusion to this we find in the last stanza of the poem. In “Kitkitdizze: A Node in the Net”, Snyder presented his plan of forestal renovation. According to him, it will be a slow process with people of several next generations involved. Now, what is the most important to do is to prune underwood consisting of manzanita and kitkitdizze to prevent

fires. If these fires came, they would burn underwood as usually giving thus the original one opportunity to grow. Gary Snyder presents this idea in the second stanza of the poem. On the other hand, the whole range of houses and farms could be burned. Hence, employment of fire methods should come in the next stage with only specific stretches of land cultivated by them at the beginning.

The poem “Front Lines” illustrates the situation which occurs when people see themselves separately from nature. Buddhism describes a mind that sees both itself and other phenomena as independent, fixed and unchangeable entities as the one dominated by ignorance. This negative emotion contributes to the idea of one's independent ego and thus gives rise to other negative emotions like hatred or desire. Furthermore, ignorance leads people to judge the reality incorrectly. As a result of this, they do not pay attention to the fact that all phenomena are interrelated and that all their deeds are followed by consequences. The result of this ignorance is their destructive behavior which sometimes brings irreparable damages towards the environment, for example.

What a reader can observe yet after the first reading of the poem, is the poet's anger. As Bert Almon in his study “Buddhism and Energy in the Recent Poetry of Gary Snyder” remarks it “grows out of the abuse of living creatures that many religions ignore: animals and trees.”<sup>9</sup> In Zen Buddhism, like in all Mahayana Buddhist schools, the aim of practitioners is to become a bodhisattva. It is a person who gives up on his entering into nirvana. Instead, out of his compassion, he continues to live in the world helping all living beings to get rid of suffering and to attain enlightened mind.

As a Zen Buddhist practitioner, Gary Snyder views plants, animals and people as well as all other phenomena as mutually interrelated. This enables him to perceive their suffering as his own. Hence, he tends to act as their protector making efforts to eliminate their hardship. Finally, we can say that in this poem Gary Snyder speaks from the position of a protector of Turtle Island which is being constantly damaged:

The edge of the cancer  
Swells against the hill—we feel  
                    a foul breeze—  
And it sinks back down.  
The deer winter here  
A chainsaw growls in the gorge.

Ten wet days and the log trucks stop,  
The trees breathe.  
Sunday the 4-wheel jeep of the  
Realty Company brings in  
Landseekers, lookers, they say  
To the land,  
Spread your legs.

The jets crack sound overhead, it's OK here;  
Every pulse of the rot at the heart  
In the sick fat veins of Amerika  
Pushes the edge up closer—

A bulldozer grinding and slobbering  
Sideslipping and belching on top of  
The skinned-up bodies of still-live bushes  
In the pay of a man  
From town.

Behind is a forest that goes to the Arctic  
And a desert that still belongs to the Piute  
And here we must draw  
Our line.<sup>10</sup>

In the first stanza of this poem Gary Snyder introduces us into the process of destruction of nature. In his study “Gary Snyder's Descent to Turtle Island” Ed Folsom writes that the edge of the first line can be understood as “the frontier, the meeting point of”<sup>11</sup> the stretch of the land which still remains undamaged and Americans. The position of this frontier, however, constantly changes as Americans who, according to Folsom, represent the cancer in the poem continue to find new places containing resources from which they could make profit. This is also illustrated in the second stanza from line four to seven. Thus, the cancer gradually devours the land. This fact Snyder illustrates in line two of the first stanza where the cancer is about to stretch over a hill. As Native Americans consider hills as “the breasts of the Earth Mother”<sup>12</sup>, the meaning of the whole image is that the land of Turtle Island is seriously ill.

The image of damaged nature appears also in the third stanza where Gary Snyder refers to the edge penetrating into wilderness as a result of people's greediness.

In the first two lines of the second stanza as well as in the whole fourth one the poet deals with the suffering of trees and bushes. These are lumbered and damaged by American people feeling no connection to their land and its nature. Their aim is to earn as much money as possible. They do not care about the damage to the environment.

Having presented readers the image of destroyed land on the background on human indifference and greediness, Gary Snyder calls for the end of suffering of Turtle Island. He appeals to us to definitely stop damaging our environment by resolutely drawing our line on what remains unspoiled: a forest that goes to the Arctic and a desert that still belongs to the Piute.

Now, our duty is to “learn to love the Earth Mother gently, to protect her and to nurse her as she has nursed us.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, to begin to behave responsibly towards the land which is our home and to realize that one day we will hand it over to our children.

If in “Front Lines” Gary Snyder discusses the theme of environmental destruction in his homeland, in “Mother Earth: Her Whales” he extends his vision on ecological situation worldwide. Thus, in the third stanza of the poem we learn about what happens in Brazil:

...

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*?

Gary Snyder writes about Brazil also in his essay “The Politics of Ethnopoetics” in *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds*. He describes there difficult situation of Brazilian indigenous tribes whose numbers drop due to investments which international corporations bring to the country. Gary Snyder explains that the second largest investor in Brazil is Volkswagen. This company contributed financially to the development of farms in the Brazilian jungle. As a result of this, rainforests began to be lumbered and pastures were established. Last but not least, aboriginal tribes began to lose their traditional territories and

places where they lived for generations.

Gary Snyder reacts to the above-mentioned situation also in the poem. In the last two lines of the stanza he wonders whether officials who know nothing or do not care about the way of life and traditions of local indigenous tribes can ever decide for them.

The poet dedicated the fifth stanza of the poem to Japan. He criticizes this country, which was once the important domain of Buddhist faith, for whale hunting:

...

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

In the sixth and seventh stanza Gary Snyder discusses the destruction of nature in China. Like Japan, China opted for the way of development and materialism leaving behind its old Buddhist tradition and alienating itself from the world of nature. The result of such an attitude is that this country has nowadays a heavily damaged environment.

While in the sixth stanza the poet offers us the destruction of China's natural ecosystems from the historical perspective,

Père David's Deer, the Elaphure,  
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—

in the following one he portrays current situation complaining about the disappearance of certain animal species due to the destruction of their natural habitat:

...



Ah China, where are the tigers, the wild boars  
the monkeys,  
like the snows of yesteryear  
Gone in a mist, a flash, and the dry hard ground  
Is parking space for fifty thousand trucks.  
Is man most precious of all things?  
—then let us love him, and his brothers, all those  
Fading living beings—

In the sixth line of the seventh stanza Gary Snyder asks whether a man can be considered the most precious being.

He ponders upon this theme also in his essay “Exhortations for Baby Tigers” which is included in *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds*. Snyder believes that all beings are equal in that they are all unique and that it is the world which gives a sense to each of them. Therefore, it is time for us to abandon the idea of human superiority due to which we tend to perceive natural world as an inventory of things which is always here at our disposal and which we can use freely. On the contrary, we should realize that all phenomena relate to each other in a vast net of relations. The natural world, thus, is here not only for us but also for other beings like animals. Snyder writes that this change in our perception of natural world is essential for the future as it forms a base for our protection of environment.

Gary Snyder, as their compassionate protector, demands the equality of all beings including plants also in the ninth stanza of the poem:

...

*Solidarity*. The People.  
Standing Tree People!  
Flying Bird People!  
Swimming Sea People!  
Four-legged, two legged, people!<sup>14</sup>

In his essay “Poetry and the Primitive” in his collection of essays *Earth House Hold: Technical Notes and Queries to Fellow Dharma Revolutionaries* Snyder mentions that people of primitive cultures perceive animals as people who only move in a different way.

Furthermore, in his essay “Exhortations for Baby Tigers” he says that it is amazing to put oneself in the place of other beings' world. The poet also mentions that myths about marriage of human beings with animals prove our ancestors' fascination of having equal status with them.

Buddhists view all living beings as equal as well as they believe that all of them have the same potential to attain enlightenment.

Gary Snyder deals with the theme of environmental destruction also in his poem “Spel Against Demons”. The poem was published for the first time in 1973 together with “Smokey the Bear Sutra” and “The California Water Plan” in *Fudo Trilogy*.

Writing this poem Snyder was inspired by the Buddhist deity called Achala which is worshipped particularly in the Shingon school of Japanese Buddhism. In Japanese, Achala is called “Fudomyo-o.” In English, its name means the Immovable One. Originally, Achala was a Hindu deity. When the Shingon school was founded by Kobo Daishi in 8th century, it was incorporated into its teachings. Gary Snyder discovered Achala due to his interest in Yamabushi tradition whose followers practice meditation in the mountains. Formerly “a nature-worship religion”<sup>15</sup>, Yamabushi tradition became Buddhist school having begun to study theory taught in the Shingon school. Thus, Achala began to be worshipped also in Yamabushi tradition.

Gary Snyder became a follower of Yamabushi tradition in 1961.

In the poem “Spel Against Demons” we encounter again with the poet's anger arising from his compassion with natural world which is continually destroyed by people. But this time Gary Snyder's poetry changes its shape. Instead of describing and criticizing people's destructive behavior, the poet decided to fight against the environmental destruction directly by modeling his poem on dharani. This “Buddhist literary form”<sup>16</sup> serves for invocation of “a Buddha or Bodhisattva.”<sup>17</sup>

Concretely, in “Spel Against Demons” Gary Snyder invokes wrathful Buddhist deity Achala to exorcise destructive forces from inside human civilization:

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The information concerning the English translation of the name of Achala and the foundation of the Shingon school can be found in the following sources:

<http://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=199>

Martine Batchelor, *Zen* (Praha: Aurora, 2001) 51.

The release of Demonic Energies in the name of  
the People  
must cease

Messing with blood sacrifice in the name of  
Nature  
must cease

The stifling self-indulgence in anger in the name of  
Freedom  
must cease

this is death to clarity  
death to compassion

the man who has the soul of the wolf  
knows the self-restraint  
of the wolf

aimless executions and slaughterings  
are not the work of wolves and eagles

but the work of hysterical sheep

The Demonic must be devoured!  
Self-serving must be  
cut down

Anger must be  
plowed back

Fearlessness, humor, detachment, is power

Knowledge is the secret of Transformation!

Down with demonic killers who mouth revolutionary  
slogans and muddy the flow of change, may they be  
Bound by the Noose, and Instructed by the Diamond  
Sword of ACHALA the Immovable, Lord of Wisdom, Lord  
of Heat, who is squint-eyed and whose face is terrible  
with bare fangs, who wears on his crown a garland of  
severed heads, clad in a tiger skin, he who turns  
Wrath to Purified Accomplishment,

whose powers are of lava,  
of magma, of deep rock strata, of gunpowder,  
and the Sun.

He who saves tortured intelligent demons and filth-eating  
hungry ghosts, his spel is,

NAMAH SAMANTAH VAJRANAM CHANDA

MAHAROSHANA

SPHATAYA HUM TRAKA HAM NAM<sup>18</sup>

These destructive forces are nothing else than the five negative emotions. In Buddhist teachings they appear under the name of Five Poisons. These emotions influence our character and lead us to perform negative deeds. In the fifth stanza Gary Snyder describes a man whose mind is captured by negative emotions. In the following two stanzas the poet points out that it is not animals but men who are capable of excessive amount of negative deeds.

The mission of Achala in the poem is to transform the destructive energies into positive ones. This point is illustrated in the eighth stanza of the poem.

The sword which Achala holds in his right hand cuts off ignorance together with other negative emotions like anger (the eighth stanza, line four), egoism (the eighth stanza, line two) and self-indulgence (the third stanza, line one). All these emotions cover the clarity of our mind and prevent us from seeing all things as relating to each other. Without our awareness of interrelationship of phenomena compassion will never arise in our minds. Gary Snyder speaks about this point in the fourth stanza.

In his left hand Achala holds “the noose”<sup>19</sup> to bind the demons or negative emotions and

transform them into positive energies. The noose, in fact, captures, binds and destroys our ego, the product of our dualistic perception of reality. To overcome the duality of our mind is to acquire wisdom under which the Five Poisons are transformed into positive emotions (the ninth stanza). Thus, we can say that “Achala represents struggle against evil.”<sup>20</sup>

It is especially the evil of “exploitation and wanton destruction”<sup>21</sup> which makes Gary Snyder angry. We encounter with this trend in most of countries no matter whether they are advanced or developing. People just tend to think about “the environment as a mass of raw material to be exploited.”<sup>22</sup> While Buddhism leads its practitioners to express gratitude for everything, the essence of “industrial approach is to devise ways of getting more.”<sup>23</sup> What is more, we can also observe that governments stop paying attention to environmental protection whenever they need to gain more energy. This, in their viewpoint, “justifies further damage to”<sup>24</sup> natural world. Gary Snyder, in my opinion, expresses his indignation over this situation in the first two lines of the tenth stanza. He further suggests that these people are given instruction by Achala.

It is in lines four to eight of the tenth stanza and then in the eleventh and the twelfth stanza where Gary Snyder deals with both physical description of Achala as well as his functions. In Buddhist ritual texts Achala is described as being surrounded by the halo of fire. Generally, in Buddhism fire is associated with purifying of negative deeds, the overcoming of duality and enlightenment.

The last stanza of the poem is dedicated to the mantra serving to invoke Achala during Buddhist ceremonies.

In poem “Tomorrow's Song” we find summary of themes from the domain of ecology and environmental protection with which we encountered in Gary Snyder’s poems until now.

In the first stanza the poet describes negligence with which natural world in America was treated over the last fifty years:

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The information concerning fire is taken from the following source:  
Lama Anagárika Góvinda, *Základy tibetské mystiky* (Praha: Pragma, 1994) 157-58.

The USA slowly lost its mandate  
in the middle and later twentieth century  
it never gave the mountains and rivers,  
    trees and animals  
        a vote.  
all the people turned away from it  
    myths die; even continents are impermanent

According to Gary Snyder it is a particularly “anthropocentric view of the world”<sup>25</sup> due to which most of modern societies “tend to ignore the lives of other beings that coexist with humanity.”<sup>26</sup> If we look at the problem from a Buddhist perspective, we can say that its main source is our unenlightened mind which sees all phenomena as independent on each other. However, what is important to say is that current ecological crisis arises from this attitude towards nature.

In the second stanza the poet writes about the trend which emerged at the beginning of 1970’s in America when Turtle Island began to be used again by Native Americans as well as by ecologically oriented Americans. As it is apparent from some of Snyder’s essays, at that time American society became divided into 2 groups. On the one hand, there are people who rather prefer to make profit than to care about the protection of environment. On the other hand, there are people, including Snyder, who opted for the way of life which affects environment minimally.

The poet describes these people's optimistic vision of future in the third stanza. Gary Snyder's optimism, for example, arises from the fact that, as he writes in his essay “Kitkitdizze: A Node in the Net”, it is still possible for us to save and restore wilderness in North America. In place of fossil fuel which, according to him, is the source of economic growth and consumption, the poet relies upon the power arising from the wisdom of enlightened mind. Moreover, while the reserves of fuel can be exhausted one day, the energy of enlightened mind is, as Buddhists believe, invariable.

Turtle Island returned.  
my friend broke open a dried coyote-scat  
removed a ground squirrel tooth  
pierced it, hung it

from the gold ring  
in his ear.

We look into the future with pleasure  
we need no fossil fuel  
get power within  
grow strong on less.

As Bert Almon writes there is yet another source from which we can draw our energy. It is “the celebration of animals, plants and birds.”<sup>27</sup> And as Gary Snyder reminds us in the last stanza whatever we do and wherever we are we always have to remember that all beings in the world have equal position. Therefore, it is our duty not to harm them or destroy places where they live but to do everything we can to protect them.

...

At work and in our place:

*in the service  
of the wilderness  
of life  
of death  
of the Mother's breasts!*<sup>28</sup>

In Turtle Island we can also find a number of contemplative poems dealing with the theme of interconnectedness of all phenomena. One of them is the poem “Pine Tree Tops” in which Gary Snyder portrays a scene of pine tree tops interpenetrating into the frost air of the moonlit night and then into the sky:

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.<sup>29</sup>

Into this scene the poet incorporated the idea of unity of human beings with animals by placing human tracks, which are subtly indicated by the image of boots creaking on the path, next to the rabbit and the deer ones.

In the poem “The Uses of Light” Gary Snyder gives the concept of interdependence of all phenomena another dimension. Here, the poet depicts the unity of all elements under the light and energy of the sun whose rays shine on the Earth surface equally yet “drawing out various reactions from”<sup>30</sup> stones, plants and animals of the poem.

In his essay “How to Be in This Crisis: Gary Snyder's Cross-Cultural Vision in Turtle Island” Katsunori Yamazato interprets the meaning of the poem yet in another way.

One of the principal scriptures studied by Japanese Buddhists is the Avatamsaka sutra describing the mandala of Vairocana, the Sun Buddha who dwells in the centre of the universe. As his light pervades the space, it connects all the phenomena into a whole in which all the elements interpenetrate each other.

In the last stanza Gary Snyder points out to the ability of human beings to attain enlightenment. He illustrates this point through the metaphor of a high tower standing on a plain. In the following lines of the stanza the poet tells a reader that if he climbs one floor of this tower, he will see a thousand miles more.

The enlightened mind is dominated by two qualities. One of them is wisdom which enables us to see reality in a correct manner. That is to say, as a net in which all elements are interconnected. From this wisdom arises Buddhist compassion. This quality endows us with the ability to perceive other beings as equal to us and thus to protect them from suffering.

By the realization of enlightened mind a Buddhist practitioner transforms his partial view of reality to the universal one. More precisely, instead of viewing reality as composed of independent entities, he perceives it as a whole of interconnected ones. This enables him to see much farther.

It warms my bones  
say the stones



I take it into me and grow  
Say the trees  
Leaves above  
Roots below

A vast vague white  
Draws me out of the night  
Says the moth in his flight—

Some things I smell  
Some things I hear  
And I see things move  
Says the deer—

A high tower  
on a wide plain.  
If you climb up  
One floor  
You'll see a thousand miles more.<sup>31</sup>

Gary Snyder presents his vision of the world as a mandala of interpenetrating phenomena also in the poem “Prayer for the Great Family” which he composed on a model of a Mohawk prayer:

Gratitude to Mother Earth, sailing through night and day—  
and to her soil: rich, rare, and sweet  
*in our minds so be it.*

Gratitude to Plants, the sun-facing light-changing leaf  
and fine root-hairs; standing still through wind  
and rain; their dance is in the flowing spiral grain  
*in our minds so be it.*

Gratitude to Air, bearing the soaring Swift and the silent  
Owl at dawn. Breath of our song  
clear spirit breeze  
*in our minds so be it.*

Gratitude to Wild Beings, our brother and sisters, teaching  
secrets, freedoms, and ways; who share with us their  
milk; self-complete, brave and aware  
*in our minds so be it.*

Gratitude to Water: clouds, lakes, rivers, glaciers;  
holding or releasing; streaming through all  
our bodies salty seas  
*in our minds so be it.*

Gratitude to the Sun: blinding pulsing light through  
trunks of trees, through mists, warming caves where  
bears and snakes sleep—he who wakes us—  
*in our minds so be it.*

Gratitude to the Great Sky  
who holds billions of stars—and goes yet beyond that—  
beyond all powers, and thoughts  
and yet is within us—  
Grandfather Space.  
The Mind is his Wife.  
  
*so be it.*

*after a Mohawk prayer*<sup>32</sup>

In this vast net of relations every element “contributes to sustain each other.”<sup>33</sup> The poet understands himself as a part of this interdependent system. He knows that it would not be

possible for human beings, plants and animals to exist without the light of the sun, air, soil and water of the Earth. Hence, he expresses his gratitude to our planet for sustaining all beings and enabling them to dwell on her surface.

In the poem “By Frazier Creek Falls” Gary Snyder assures us that we do not exist separately from nature. Our survival depends on our behavior towards it. As we mentioned at the beginning of this subsection *Turtle Island* is the collection of poetry in which Gary Snyder gives us advice how to live on our land in a meaningful, sustainable manner. What the poet advises us is to look for inspiration in the way of life of Native American tribes before the arrival of European settlers and to live our lives more simply. After all, as Gary Snyder says in the last stanza of the poem, once we could live on this Earth without clothes or tools.

...

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!<sup>34</sup>

## Gary Snyder today

The aim of this chapter is to discover what opinions Gary Snyder maintains nowadays and whether the poet's views on the life in place and ecology have changed over the last forty years or stayed the same.

To begin with, as far as the life in a place is concerned, Gary Snyder believes that this idea is something unusual in American society, where people move so often from one place to another. Consequently, some people do not even know how to answer properly the question where they are from. They were born in one place, then studied in another and now they live completely somewhere else. As a result of this, people just have a vague idea where they are really from.

Nevertheless, according to Gary Snyder, to settle down in a place does not mean that it is necessary for us to live there forever without ever thinking about leaving it sometime. The poet perceives the life in a place as a kind of relationship which gradually evolves and deepens. What Gary Snyder suggests is that we should be more attentive to our place. More precisely, what the poet means is that we should begin to meet our neighbors, make long-time friends, to be involved in local issues and, last but not least, that we acquire knowledge about the local ecosystem, which is our big neighbor. Gary Snyder believes that life in a place brings yet another big advantage. According to the poet, people care about local issues. Therefore, they will always come to vote for the head of the county. And when they come to polls, they will also vote for the president. Thus, the voter participation at national election will increase.

However, Gary Snyder believes that life in a place is an option. No one can make people to live in a particular place.

The idea of place and its importance has been, as Gary Snyder says, part of his self-education. When the poet thinks about a place, he is interested in six criteria. The first of them is the rainfall which is reflected in the character of the local vegetation. The second one is the vegetation zone of the place. The third is its altitude, which will influence our choice of crops we will grow there. The fourth criterion is the lay of the land. The fifth one includes local creeks and rivers and the impact they have in the area. The last criterion is the original vegetation of the place, which can tell us a lot about how the landscape will behave on its own account. Moreover, if we have knowledge about the original vegetation of an area, we can evaluate whether the changes people imposed on the local environment in previous centuries or decades were destructive or not. Last but not least, if we are talking about a place, it is also

useful to know how indigenous people used to live there. That is to say, what they ate, what they used to make a fire, bags or baskets etc.

Finally, Gary Snyder believes that it would be very useful to include a subject dealing with the theme of local environment on the basis of the terrain exploration of an area into school curriculums. The poet himself, besides teaching at the University of California in Davis, occasionally leads exploratory field trips for school children in the Sierra Nevadas.

Gary Snyder still lives in the Sierra Nevadas in Kitkitdizze, a place where he moved in the early 1970s. In his poem "Control Burn" included in *Turtle Island* he describes his decision to take care about the forests surrounding his home like local indigenous tribes used to do before the arrival of white settlers. The Sierra Nevadas are a mountain range with dry forests. At the time when Native American tribes lived there, low-level fires would come every 25 or 30 years, burning the underbrush. As a result of this, the level of manzanita underwood used to remain low. Nowadays, Gary Snyder, together with his neighbors, prunes the underwood and trims the trees in order to prevent a big fire. When the settlers came and chased Native Americans out of their territories, they began to treat the local forests in their own manner. This means that, among other things like mining and logging, they would suppress low-level fires. Consequently, the underbrush became dense and thick and the danger of big fires increased. That is why these days local people prune manzanita themselves to prevent big destructive fires that would burn the whole forests.

As to the state of the local environment, Gary Snyder says that before the mid-70s, the lumber industry would cut down the local forests without any restraint. However, in the mid-70s the situation changed as more people became gradually aware of the importance of environmental protection. Consequently, the industry had to reduce the volume of cut down trees. Some animal species, like bald eagles, wild turkeys and bears began to be seen again in the area, too.

Finally, as Gary Snyder says, it is not the protection of local wilderness but its restoration, together with sustainable use of restored forests and the protection of the habitat of animals like coyotes, foxes, deer, bears and pumas that he aspires for in his place.

To live in the Sierra Nevadas is good, according to Gary Snyder. However, what he would advise to potential newcomers is that they move there provided they have experience with the life in the country and if they know how they will earn money in the area. Actually, it is too far to travel to the city where they would find a well-paid job. He adds that he rather aims to help people from cities and their suburbs to learn how to live properly in their current places than to direct them to inhabit places on the edge of civilization. As far as the life in the cities is

concerned, Gary Snyder proposes to establish more cycling paths, to allocate more urban land for family gardens and to build new houses rather within the plan of a city to prevent further urban sprawl. Last but not least, he believes that it is necessary to explain to immigrants from Asia or Mexico that the United States of America is not only a big economic power but also a land of unique natural wealth.

Ecology and life in a place are closely connected with sustainability. For Gary Snyder sustainability means to rely on a long-term source of energy without causing damage to the biodiversity of an area or territory. Thus, sustainable forest management does not depend on any outside energy source which can one day become unavailable. Hence, artificially irrigated forest plantation is not sustainable, as the water source can dry up one day. Furthermore, we can consider sustainable forest management successful provided that no species that live there get lost when we make use of the forest timber, for example.

In the world today we encounter with two models of the economy. The first of them is the global economy. This model is based on global free markets, technological progress and the assumptions that fossil fuels will remain available even if the world population continues to grow and that there will be always enough food for everyone. Gary Snyder considers this model rather utopian. Moreover, he says that only some people will be able to profit from this model.

The second model is the one of the sustainable economy. Gary Snyder says that it is more demanding to work within this model as it requires us to put restrictions on growth, consumption and making profit. The result of the employment of this model is a properly cultivated ecological world with sustainable forestry, limited population growth, respect for indigenous cultures and, generally, a slower pace of life. And still, according to the poet, we would live in a well-educated, cultured society.

Finally, Gary Snyder believes that besides biodiversity it is also necessary for us to protect the cultural diversity. These days we have endangered small ethnic groups with their unique languages, knowledge and skills, folk tales and songs.

In conclusion, the view of Gary Snyder on life in a place and ecology has not significantly changed over the last forty years. They rather have stayed the same.

Gary Snyder's poetry, too, did not change much. Although every collection of poetry he has published is unique, generally, we can say that all of his poems deal with the theme of environment and the need of its protection, the allusions to Zen Buddhism, Chinese and Japanese Buddhist culture and Native American traditions. Last but not least, in a number of his poems Gary Snyder's observations from his journeys with his relatives or friends are

reflected.

Gary Snyder's last collection of poetry is called *Danger on Peaks*. In a number of its poems Gary Snyder writes about Mt. St. Helens. The poet remembers his four ascents on this mountain at the time when he was young. For the first time, he climbed Mt. St. Helens in 1945. In one of his poems Gary Snyder describes how he discovered newspaper articles about the explosion of atomic bomb in Japan when he got back to a camp under the mountain. In 2000 Gary Snyder returned to the area of the mountain with his friend to explore what is new there. Another set of poems in this collection is either about or dedicated to Gary Snyder's friends and relatives. In *Danger on Peaks* we can also find poems dealing with the theme of the poet's journeys not only to important Zen Buddhist sanctuaries in Japan but also to various places in America and even in the world. Furthermore, a lot of poems of this collection were inspired by the activities which ordinary life brings to the poet and by his observations of animals. Last but not least, Gary Snyder dedicated one of the poems of this collection to the destruction of the Bamyán Buddhas by Taliban in March 2001 and the following attack on New York in September.

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The information which appeared in this chapter comes from the following sources:

A Conversation with Gary Snyder & Peter Coyote, 12 May 2011

[http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s\\_z/snyder/interviews.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s_z/snyder/interviews.htm)

Juliet Harding, Online Interviews with Gary Snyder, 12 May 2011

[http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s\\_z/snyder/interviews.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s_z/snyder/interviews.htm)

Lew Sitzer, NCTV 11 Interviews-Gary Snyder, 12 May 2011

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7493184569903349861#>

Michael March, „Poetry and Action,” *Guardian* 30 May 2007, 12 May 2011

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/may/30/culture.features>

Tomáš Weiss, „Slavnostně se obleč a zůstaň doma,” *Nebezpečí na vrcholcích*, Gary Snyder (Beroun: Za tratí, 2010) 125-29.

## Summary

In conclusion, the aim of this work was to analyze the influence of Eastern cultures on the poetry of Gary Snyder in his three volumes of poetry *Riprap*, *Myths&Texts* and *Turtle Island*.

In general, it is the theme of nature and its protection which dominates the poetry of Gary Snyder in these three collections of poetry.

Gary Snyder's concept of nature was influenced by his practice of Zen Buddhism and his study of both Chinese and Japanese poetry and the traditional way of life of Native American tribes.

To begin with, as far as the Zen Buddhism is concerned its influence can be observed in the domain of Snyder's ecological poetry. The damage people impose on the nature has its source in the human mind. If our mind does not rest in unity with the natural world and its qualities and instead perceives a distance between nature and our invariable ego, it is highly possible that we will never be able to protect it due to our lack of knowledge of its true character. On the other hand, Gary Snyder as a Zen practitioner transforms through Buddhist meditation his dualistic mind into universal one which enables him not only to rest in unity with the qualities of nature but also to perceive both impermanence and interdependence of its phenomena. Thus, Gary Snyder, with his mind resting in unity with the natural world, understands himself as a part of an interdependent system of nature which enables him to perceive all of its aspects like mountains, rivers, plants and animals as his companions.

To unify ourselves with nature and discover the true character of its phenomena is essential for us to be able to protect nature. Only if we recognize that all the phenomena of natural world are impermanent and create an interdependent system of which we are a part and which is essential for our survival, then it will become very important for us to protect them.

Both of the influences of Zen Buddhism and Chinese poetry can be observed in *Riprap*, Gary Snyder's first collection of poetry.

As far as the impact of Chinese poetry on Gary Snyder's poetry is concerned the poet was inspired by imagism, form and poetic syntax of Chinese poems.

This can be clearly visible in the poem "Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout". First of all, what is typically Chinese in this poem is its title which refers to a specific time and place. Mid-August denotes the season in which Chinese autumn festival takes place. Sourdough Mountain refers to the peak on which Snyder stayed working as a fire lookout and writing his collection of poetry *Myths&Texts*. This indicates that Snyder like Chinese poets



wrote his poetry out of his own experience. Secondly, as Chinese poets write the poetry consisting of short, simple words belonging to the class of verbs, adjectives or nouns, Gary Snyder employs juxtaposition reducing the number of verbs and conjunctions in this poem to minimum. This procedure enables him to introduce simple, short words into the poem. Last but not least it is the Chinese poet Han-shan who inspired Gary Snyder when writing the second stanza of the poem expressing the poet's happiness from concentrating his mind during his meditation retreat in the mountains.

The influence the poet's practice of Zen Buddhism had on his poetry can be observed in the poem "Water". In this poem Gary Snyder unifies with nature and realizes its qualities in his own mind into such intensity that he is capable even to assume the motion and spontaneity of reactions of the animals in the wilderness. Thus, the poet introduces his readers into the life of a primitive man living in a complete unity with nature according to his knowledge of its rhythms and principles. Furthermore, this man having come to the creek and dived into the water experiences sudden surprise like a Zen student experiences sudden enlightenment after solving a koan.

The theme of a spontaneous and sudden surprise is also present in another two Gary Snyder's poems "Thin Ice" and "Above Pate Valley". First of these two poems introduces us into a surprise the poet experienced when he suddenly fell into the water after trying to walk across an insufficiently frozen pool high in the mountains. The second poem describes Snyder's sudden spontaneous happiness after having found a glass-obsidian flake in the mountains.

The poem "Piute Creek" is another poem in *Riprap* Gary Snyder wrote under the influence of both Chinese poetry and the direct experience arising from his practice of Zen Buddhism. It is in this poem where the poet introduces us into a contemplative image of a landscape which triggers a mystical experience upon our rational mind and leads to its transformation into the mind fully intuitive.

In general, *Riprap*, Gary Snyder's first collection of poetry, consists of poems written under various influences and dealing with varied themes. In this book the poems dealing with the theme of the protection of nature exist besides the poems reflecting the influence of Zen Buddhism and Chinese poetry on the author.

Finally, as far as the poems with ecological themes of this collection of poetry are concerned, it is necessary for us to mention the poem "Milton by Firelight" in which Gary Snyder expresses his concern over the destruction of the landscape of Sierra Nevada. This poem enunciates the thematic structure of Snyder's next volume of poetry *Myths&Texts*.

Another Gary Snyder's collection of poetry whose analysis is provided by this work is the one called *Myths&Texts*. Gary Snyder divided this volume into three parts: Logging, Hunting and Burning.

In the poems of Logging describing the destruction of the forests by the people perceiving great distance between them and the nature the poet expresses the necessity for us to enter into unity with nature, discover its true character and realize its qualities in our minds. If we do not fulfill this necessity and continue to perceive natural world as something inauthentic, lifeless and insentient we might further the destruction of nature into such a point when it will be nearly impossible to inhabit our environment due to its huge destruction.

In his poems Gary Snyder points out that it is first and foremost the Judeo-Christian civilization that perceives the natural world in a wrong manner and therefore imposes huge destruction upon it. The main reason why this civilization keeps a great distance between itself and the nature is its belief in one single God while dismissing the close relationship with nature supported by its pagan worship.

As a result of misunderstanding of the true character of nature people of the Judeo-Christian civilization wanting to make a good profit exploit the forests in a huge extent without ever thinking about the importance of the trees in a particular ecosystem.

On the other hand in contrast to people of the Judeo-Christian civilization we can find tribal peoples living in a harmony with the whole of the natural world and its rhythms. Indigenous tribes of North and South America, Asia and Africa belong to the category of these peoples.

Gary Snyder contrasts these two civilizations and their perception of the nature reflecting in their way of living in the fourth poem of Logging. Writing this poem Snyder was inspired by a Japanese Noh play, *Takasago*, composed by Zeami Motokiyo.

Apart of their reference to the author of the play, Zeami Motokiyo, and the Doer, its principal actor, the first three lines of the poem refer to the two pines which in *Takasago* symbolize longevity and prosperity. Furthermore, in contrast to *Takasago*, which was composed as a hymn to celebrate the sacred pines and which present us with the harmony people are living in with nature, in his poem Gary Snyder points out to the destruction of nature. Thus, we obtain the contrast between the attitude Japanese people living according to Buddhist and Shintoistic principles kept towards nature and the one of the Judeo-Christian civilization.

Gary Snyder develops the concept of unifying our mind with nature and realizing its qualities in it in Hunting, the second part of *Myths&Texts*.

First and foremost it is the activity of hunting which leads a man to establish a unity of his mind with the one of an animal. Thus, this man realizes the qualities of wilderness in his own mind.

The poet explores the theme of unity between a man and animals in “This poem is for bear” where he introduces a reader into the theme of a marriage between a girl and a bear. By entering into marriage the differences between both of them fade away. In another poem exploring close relationship of a man and animal, “This poem is for deer”, Snyder declares that animals have, like people, Buddha-nature.

In the poem “Making of the Horn Spoon” the poet introduces a reader into the way of life the indigenous people live in a harmony with the principles and values of the nature. This poem describes the way the indigenous people make a spoon out of the pure natural material, a mountain-goat's horn. This clearly shows us that these people, being both grateful for every item they receive from nature and capable to process it, keep the way of living whose ideal is to waste nothing. On the other hand, people living in developed industrial societies are surrounded by high technology which enables them to make their life more comfortable. These people having partially lost their contact with nature do not share these attitudes towards nature with indigenous people. Most of them are no more capable to work with purely natural materials. Instead, they make things out of synthetic materials that can neither be obtained nor disintegrated in a natural way. Thus, these people contribute to the destruction of the world environment.

In this poem Gary Snyder also examines the theme of food closely related to hunting. Also in this domain the poet finds a contrast between the attitude indigenous people maintain towards food and the one kept by people of industrial society.

On the one hand, tribal people living in a harmony with principles and rhythms of the nature share their gratitude towards food and land. It arises from their awareness that the nature represents an interdependent system in which one thing relates closely to another. For these people to obtain food means to sacrifice the life of an animal which is not only fed by the land but also has its particular position in the interdependent system of nature. For indigenous people the life in unity with nature is so important that they understand eating as a reverential act as they believe that it involves the entering of being of an animal into their mind. Last but not least, primitive hunters believe that if they are humble, grateful and perform acts of propitiation the blame for eating meat and taking furs will be expiated from them.

On the other hand, if we look at people living in a modern industrial society we find out

that they are less capable or completely incapable to appreciate the value of the land or the position of an animal in a particular ecosystem. Instead, due to a lack of unity of their mind with nature they regard animals and plants as lifeless and not sentient. As a result of this, they exploit them both in an insensitive manner.

It is true that hunting enables us to unify our mind with that of animals. But, on the other hand it is an act of violence which we perform under a strong influence of negative emotions known as the Five Poisons upon our undisciplined mind.

Hence, Gary Snyder dedicated the third part of *Myths&Texts*, *Burning*, to a way which will enable us to transform our untrained mind into a disciplined one dominated by positive emotions like compassion, patience and tolerance. Only thus we will avoid behavior under the influence of the Five Poisons and succeed in realizing qualities of wilderness in our mind.

It is a Buddhist meditation through which we analyze the character of each of the Five Poisons. Without our appropriate knowledge of their character we will not be able to overcome these negative emotions. That is the reason why Gary Snyder opens *Burning* with a shaman song which introduces us into a process during which we recognize the Five Poisons' destructive character. More precisely, the negative emotions known in Buddhism as the Five Poisons refer to ignorance, desire, jealousy, pride and anger. First and foremost, it is these negative emotions which in case we allow them to overwhelm our mind and influence our behavior not only destroy our inner tranquility and balance but also draw us back to the cycle of samsara without ever allowing us to attain enlightened mind. That is the reason why Gary Snyder mentions *Bardo*, a forty-nine period during which our mind goes through the process of reincarnation before being born again, in this shaman song. In the cycle of samsara the future life of a being depends on its karma accumulated in all of its previous lives. Therefore, in this life it is highly important for us to behave in a way that will enable us to perform only positive actions and thus to accumulate good karma. By doing this, we can avoid to be reborn in those states of existence which do not allow us to attain enlightenment. All of the karmic actions we perform during our life reflect the state of our mind. If our mind is dominated rather by positive emotions, then most of the things we do have a positive value. In the opposite case we perform mostly negative karmic actions which lead to accumulation of bad karma during our life. Therefore it is so important for us to eliminate the influence of the Five Poisons upon our mind. We should be aware that only suppression of these negative emotions will not lead to a good result. What is necessary for us to do is to develop positive emotions in order to overcome these Five Poisons with the help of various meditation techniques. As a result of this, we realize positive mind dominated by inner balance and tranquility. By

developing wisdom we eliminate the influence of ignorance upon our mind. Having overcome ignorance we cease to perceive our ego as permanent and invariable. As a result of this, our dualistic point of view which constitutes the main cause why we perceive ourselves in a great distance from the outside world fades away. As the rest of the Five Poisons stem from the ignorance their influence upon our mind vanishes with its elimination. This enables us to understand the true character of the world phenomena which are characterized by impermanence and interdependence.

Having attained the universal state of our mind purged of all the five negative emotions the door is open for us to enter into unity with all of the world phenomena including nature. As a result of this, our rational mind is replaced by the intuition. Thus, we attain the state in which, as Gary Snyder says, the mountains are our mind. The process leading to the realization of the qualities of wilderness in our mind is, at its end when our mind rests in a state of perfect purity, considered analogical to the enlightenment in Buddhism.

The poet describes the whole of this process of transformation of one's mind into the universal one resting in unity with nature in the last poem of *Myths&Texts*, "Myth". For him, the process ends up by creation of the myth of prototypical nature.

In conclusion, in contrast to *Riprap* in which we can find poems written under various influences and dealing with varied themes, *Myths&Texts*, Gary Snyder's second collection of poetry, is thematically more unified book. In its three parts, Logging, Hunting and Burning, the reader goes through the stages of a process leading to a realization of the qualities of wilderness in one's mind.

In Logging the poet introduces a reader into the theme of destruction of forests which is caused by our dualistic mind perceiving nature as something distant from us, lifeless and permanent. Therefore, Snyder shows his readers why it is necessary for them to transform their minds and enter into unity with natural world.

In Hunting, the author indicates us that in our minds the qualities of wilderness can be realized through the activity of hunting. More precisely, hunting enables us to unify our minds with that of an animal. Nevertheless, it is still an act of violence we perform under a strong influence of negative emotions existing in our undisciplined mind. With these emotions in our mind its transformation is impossible. Therefore, we must overcome these emotions to be able to attain universal state of our mind in which we unify with nature and its qualities.

Hence, in Burning Gary Snyder reveals his readers a way which will enable them to stop perceiving themselves as an entity standing apart of the interdependent system of nature due to their belief in their stable and invariable ego. Moreover, eliminating the influence of the

five negative emotions upon their minds they realize the universal state of their minds in which they unify with nature. As result of this process, the mountains are their minds.

The principle of staying in unity with nature together with inhabiting one place serves as a basis for ecological and sustainable way of life proposed by Gary Snyder in *Turtle Island*.

*Turtle Island* is the collection of poetry for which Gary Snyder was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1974. It consists of 3 parts: Manzanita, Magpie's Song and For the Children.

Gary Snyder wrote this collection of poetry under various influences. One of them was the traditional way of life of Native American tribes.

In the first place this influence reflects in the poet's choice of the term Turtle Island as the title for this volume of poetry as it was Native American tribes who used to call the North American continent like that.

First and foremost, it is necessary to say that in order to understand the poetry of *Turtle Island* properly, it is essential for a reader to read Gary Snyder's essays in both of his collections *Practice of the Wild* and *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds*. In them, the poet further develops the themes he discusses in the poems.

In a number of his essays Gary Snyder speaks about people who live on the North American continent physically but not spiritually. They do not feel connected to the land they are living on as they do not have any knowledge of it.

On the other hand, Native Americans used to live for generations in their own particular territories in close connection to the land of which they would take care according to its specific features they knew very well.

Gary Snyder is convinced that in order to establish a close relationship to our land, it is necessary for us to settle in one place. It is in one particular place where our relationship towards our land and the surrounding nature can develop, provided we are motivated to study its specific features like plants, the type of soil, animals or climate.

Living in one place about which we have appropriate amount of knowledge encourages us to take care of its environment properly and thus avoid any serious damage to it. Naturally, people do not usually want to destroy the places they are living in.

Unfortunately, Native Americans lost their territories with the arrival of European settlers. Gary Snyder discusses this theme in his poem "What Happened Here Before." Having arrived, the settlers not only chased Native Americans out of their territories, but also began to impose their own culture on the land that was not theirs. What is more, the settlers, on the one hand, gained vast areas but, on the other hand, they did not know how to take care of them properly due to the lack of knowledge of their features. Thus, due to improper care the

environment of many areas was destroyed. This is also the case of the forests in California which were, as Gary Snyder writes in one of his essays, destroyed just because of inappropriate care under the administration of governmental institutions.

In 1970's Gary Snyder moved with his family to Sierra Nevada to a place which he called Kitkitdizze after the name by which local Native American tribes denoted a plant growing in the area. There, he decided to employ the way of forestal care used by local indigenous people in order to renew the forests in the area to the state they were in under their care. The poet writes about his decision in the poem "Control Burn" where he also provides his readers with the description of the methods of forestal care employed by local Native American tribes.

In the poem "Front Lines" Gary Snyder describes the destruction of environment by logging. In this poem another influence under which Gary Snyder wrote the poetry of *Turtle Island* comes into foreground. It is Buddhism.

The absence of close relationship towards one's land is one cause of people's destructive behavior towards nature. The other is our ignorant mind which perceives phenomena as existing independently on each other. Thus, we are unable to see that every deed, positive or negative, has its consequences. Moreover, the ignorance contributes not only to the growth of our ego which sees itself as separated from other phenomena but also serves as a basis for other negative emotions like greediness or hatred.

In the poem "Front Lines" it is particularly greediness which leads a man to destroy the environment while searching for ways to increase his wealth. The indifference with which people treat nature makes Gary Snyder angry. His anger is the one of the protector. As a Zen Buddhist practitioner Snyder sees all phenomena mutually interconnected in a vast net of relations. Nothing exists independently. Out of this perception arises his compassion, a wish to free all beings from suffering, and the ability to perceive other beings' suffering as his own. This makes the poet call for the end of the destruction of environment in the last stanza of the poem and thus to protect both plants and animals from further suffering.

While in "Front Lines" Gary Snyder discusses the destruction of environment in America, in "Mother Earth: Her Whales" he describes the situation in the domain of environmental protection in Brazil, Japan and China. In the last stanza of the poem the poet calls for our perception of plants and animals as equal to us, people.

Another poem in which Gary Snyder deals with environmental destruction is "Spel Against Demons." Originally, it was published in *Fudo Trilogy* in 1973 together with "California Water Plan" and "Smokey the Bear Sutra."

The central protagonist of the poem is Achala, originally a Hindu deity, incorporated into

the teachings of the Shingon school of Japanese Buddhism in 8th century. The poet encountered with the deity due to his interest in Yamabushi tradition, a Japanese Buddhist school whose practitioners study the theory of the Shingon and concentrate their minds in the mountains. In 1961 Snyder himself became a follower of Yamabushi tradition.

As a Buddhist practitioner Gary Snyder believes that it is our ignorant mind, out of which arise other negative emotions, which makes us unable to see the reality correctly and hence is to blame for our harmful deeds.

In order to transform the ignorance together with the other negative emotions dominating our minds into positive ones, Snyder invokes Achala in the poem whose structure he modeled on dharani, a Buddhist literary form serving for the invocation of a deity.

In his right hand Achala holds a sword by which he cuts off the ignorance, the source of other four negative emotions, which makes us see all phenomena existing independently on each other. By a noose he holds in his left hand the deity binds our ego of which we think of as unchangeable and detached from other phenomena. Thus, we are able to transform our dualistic vision of reality into the awareness of interrelatedness and unity of all entities. Last but not least, Achala is surrounded by the halo of fire, in Buddhism an element associated with the purification of negative deeds, the elimination of dualistic perception of reality and enlightenment.

Like in “Front Lines” also in this poem we can observe poet’s anger. Here, it arises from the indifference and irresponsibility with which people exploit and damage nature.

The poem “Tomorrow’s Song” is composed of four stanzas. Each of them discusses its own theme. Thus, in the first stanza Gary Snyder speaks about the indifference the environment in America was treated with in the second half of the 20th century. In the second stanza the poet informs us about the trend which appeared in America in 1970’s. Then, the term Turtle Island began to be used again in Native American communities as well as among ecologically oriented Americans who began to settle down at one place. In the third stanza we encounter with Snyder’s positive vision of future which arises from his conviction that it is still possible for us to save wilderness on the North American continent. Furthermore, as a Buddhist and ecologically oriented person, Gary Snyder writes that he prefers to rely upon the energy of enlightened mind rather than on fossil fuel associated with economic growth and consumption. Finally, in the last stanza the poet reminds us that all living beings have the same position and it is our duty to protect them and the places in wilderness where they’re living.

Besides the poems in which Gary Snyder reacts to the destruction of nature and calls for its



end, in *Turtle Island* we can also find a number of contemplative poems in which the poet portrays the interrelatedness of all phenomena.

One of these poems is “Pine Tree Tops” in which the poet deals with the theme of the unity of human beings with animals on the background of a night scene.

In the poem “The Uses of Light” it is the light and the energy of the sun which unify all phenomena. Katsunori Yamazato interprets the poem in terms of the mandala of Vairocana, the Sun Buddha, who dwells in the center of the universe. His light pervading a space connects all phenomena into a perfect whole.

In the last stanza of the poem Gary Snyder deals with enlightened mind, a source of wisdom and compassion, through the metaphor of a high tower standing on a plain. The poet tells his readers that if they climb one floor of the tower, they will see thousand miles farther. A practitioner who attained the enlightenment is able to perceive the reality as an interconnected whole where nothing exists independently and where every deed has its cause and consequence. Thus, metaphorically, he is able to see farther than a person having his mind untrained.

In the poem “Prayer for the Great Family”, which he composed on the model of a Mohawk prayer, Gary Snyder portrays the world as a great mandala of interrelated phenomena. In this poem Snyder expresses his gratitude to our planet for sustaining all beings and providing them with conditions that enable them to live on its surface.

Finally, in the poem “By Frazier Creek Falls” Gary Snyder reminds us that our lives are closely connected to nature and that everything we do to it has its consequences. Therefore, it is essential for us to take care of our environment in a responsible and sustainable manner and thus to preserve it for future generations. Like Gary Snyder, we can draw the inspiration from the traditional way of life of Native Americans. In the last stanza of the poem the poet suggests his readers that they simplify their way of life. Once, as he writes, we could live without clothes and tools.

## Résumé

Magisterská diplomová práce analyzuje vliv východních kultur na poezii Garyho Snydera v jeho sbírkách *Štětování*, *Mýty a texty* a *Želví ostrov*.

Obecně lze říci, že poezii Garyho Snydera dominuje téma přírody a že se v básních tří výše uvedených sbírek odráží tři zásadní vlivy: zen buddhismus, čínská a japonská literatura a tradice, kultura a způsob života původních obyvatel Ameriky.

O tradice a kulturu původních obyvatel Ameriky projevoval autor zájem již od dětství. Na tuto problematiku se zaměřil také během svých studií na Reed College v Portlandu, kde v letech 1948-1951 studoval antropologii a literaturu.

V roce 1953 započal Gary Snyder studium klasické čínštiny a japonštiny na Kalifornské univerzitě v Berkeley. Po jeho ukončení začal pracovat jako překladatel. Mezi jeho nejznámější překlady patří překlad poezie čínského čchanového básníka Chan-šana.

Se zen buddhismem se básník seznámil v době svých studií v Berkeley. V roce 1956 získal stipendium pro studium zenu v japonském klášteře Šókoku-dži.

V básních první sbírky Garyho Snydera, *Štětování*, která vyšla v roce 1959, najdeme především vliv čínské poezie a zen buddhismu. Ten se odráží jak kontemplativním charakteru básní, tak v jejich větné struktuře. Typickým příkladem je báseň „Na vyhlídce na hoře Sourdough v půli srpna“, jejíž název odkazuje, podobně jak tomu bývá v čínské poezii, na specifický čas a místo. Polovina srpna je čas, kdy se v Číně koná podzimní festival, který sloužil jako oblíbený námět čínských básníků. Sourdough je naopak hora, na jejímž vrcholu Snyder pobýval v roce 1953 jako požární hlídač. Ve větné struktuře této básně najdeme, stejně jako v čínské poezii, značně zredukovaný počet sloves, spojek či předložek. Básník místo nich upřednostnil užití podstatných a přídavných jmen. Vytvořil tak skupiny slov, které spojil pomocí juxta pozice. Stejně jako čínští básníci, i Gary Snyder vychází při psaní své poezie z vlastní zkušenosti. A podobně jako čínští buddhističtí autoři, i on opustil na nějakou dobu život ve společnosti a uchýlil se do hor, aby se tam zdokonalil ve své meditační praxi.

V básních sbírky *Štětování* autor přímo nepojednává o destrukci životního prostředí tak, jak činí v básních své druhé sbírky, *Mýty a texty*. Nicméně, náznak charakteru poezie *Mýtů a textů* můžeme najít v básni „Milton v září ohně“, ve které autor vyjadřuje obavy z budoucího osudu přírodního prostředí v pohoří Sierra Nevada.

Básně sbírky *Mýty a texty*, která vyšla v roce 1960, seřadil Gary Snyder do tří částí, jejichž názvy jsou Mýcení, Lovení a Žďáření. V první části, Mýcení, básník poukazuje na destrukci

životního prostředí, ze které viní židovsko-křesťanskou společnost, jejíž náboženství připouští pouze víru v Boha. Tímto se odlišuje od jiných systémů víry, které uctívají celou řadu přírodních kultů, a jejichž stoupenci tak žijí v těsném sepětí s přírodou, jíž projevují úctu a respekt.

Podle Garyho Snydera má ekologická krize nicméně ještě jednu příčinu. A tou je naše nevědomá mysl, která má tendenci vnímat sama sebe jako na okolním světě naprosto nezávislou entitu. Z této nevědomosti, kterou buddhismus vnímá jako jednu z pěti negativních emocí, povstává hněv, žárlivost, touha a pýcha. Jednání pod vlivem těchto emocí přináší negativní důsledky a brání nám vidět svět jako provázaný systém vztahů, kde nic neexistuje nezávisle a kde každý čin má svou příčinu a následek. V mysli zastřené závojem nevědomosti není místo ani pro opravdové, nesobecké soucítění se všemi živými bytostmi. Abychom byli schopni přistupovat k našemu životnímu prostředí zodpovědně a s citem, musíme změnit postoj své mysli a začít vnímat okolní svět jako jednu velkou síť vztahů, jejíž součástí jsme i my. Jedině to nám umožní zbavit se připoutanosti na myšlenku našeho nezávislého já a začít vnímat stromy, rostliny či zvířata jako sobě rovné.

Důležitost této přeměny mysli zdůrazňuje Gary Snyder i v *Lovení*, druhé části *Mýtů a textů*. Básník zde zkoumá možnosti lovu coby způsobu splynutí naší mysli s přírodou. Gary Snyder vnímá lov jako jednu z činností, během níž naše mysl splyne s myslí zvířete či divočiny. Další možností je, jak nám autor předkládá ve své básni „Tahle báseň je pro medvěda” inspirované příběhem ústní tradice původních obyvatel Ameriky, sňatek lidské bytosti se zvířetem, zde mezi dívkou a medvědem.

Lov nám na jednu stranu umožňuje splynout s myslí zvířete. Na druhou stranu je to však činnost, jíž se oddáváme pod vlivem negativních emocí. Přírodu však můžeme chránit jen tehdy, pokud jsou v naší mysli přítomny pozitivní emoce jako soucítění či trpělivost a pokud naše mysl spočívá v jednotě se všemi jevy. Jak takového stavu mysli dosáhnout nám Gary Snyder radí ve třetí části *Mýtů a textů*, *Žďáření*.

Svou nejznámější sbírku *Želví ostrov* vydal Gary Snyder v roce 1974. V následujícím roce za ni obdržel Pulitzerovu cenu. Podobně jako *Mýty a texty* sestává i tato sbírka ze tří částí. Jsou jimi *Nedvědice*, *Stračí píseň* a *Dětem*.

Při psaní této sbírky se Gary Snyder nechal ovlivnit jak zen buddhismem, tak i tradicemi, kulturou a způsobem života původních obyvatel Ameriky.

*Želví ostrov*, jméno, které dali severoamerickému kontinentu původní Američané, se znovu dostalo do povědomí na počátku 70. let, kdy jej znovu začali užívat jak původní Američané, tak i ekologicky zaměřeni Američané. Vznikl tak trend, kdy se určitá část lidí

přestala stěhovat a trvale se usadila po vzoru způsobu života původních Američanů na jednom místě. To jim umožnilo tato místa důkladně poznat a vytvořit si pevné pouto k jejich půdě a životnímu prostředí. Gary Snyder tento trend následoval a přestěhoval se do Sierry Nevady do Nisenanského okrsku. Usadil se v místě, které pojmenoval Kitkitdizze podle jména, kterým původní obyvatelé této oblasti označovali rostlinu, která je pro tento okrsek typická.

Jedním z nejmóraznějších témat ve sbírce *Želví ostrov* je právě život v místě. Tento způsob života nám umožňuje nejen poznávat místní ekosystém a prohlubovat si k němu svůj vztah, ale také cítit, že někam opravdu patříme.

V básni „Co se tu dělo před“ Gary Snyder popisuje, jak původní Američané ztratili svá území s příchodem Evropanů. Zatímco původní obyvatelé obývali svá určitá místa, která velmi dobře znali a v souladu s těmito znalostmi o ně pečovali, Evropané, kteří se těchto míst násilím zmocnili, měli sotva nějakou představu, jak se o ně mají starat. Následkem toho jsou po celých Spojených státech oblasti, jejichž životní prostředí bylo v 19. století těžce poničeno ať už těžbou nerostných surovin či nadměrným kácením.

Ve svých esejích Gary Snyder píše, že náš vztah k přírodnímu prostředí se rozvíjí tehdy, když žijeme v nějakém určitém místě, které postupně poznáváme. Nicméně, většina Američanů se v důsledku častého stěhování na určitých místech dlouhodobě neusazuje a tudíž se necítí být úzce spjata s jakýmkoliv místním ekosystémem či s místem, které by mohli nazývat svým opravdovým domovem.

Zatímco v básni „Control Burn“ popisuje Gary Snyder způsob, jakým původní Američané pečovali o lesy Sierry Nevady a informuje nás o svém rozhodnutí ve způsobu této péče pokračovat, v básni „Front Lines“ se setkáváme s tématem těžby dřeva, která stále postupuje a bezohledně ničí ekosystém lesa. Tyto dvě básně ilustrují dva zcela rozdílné přístupy lidí k životnímu prostředí. Na jedné straně zde vidíme, jak původní obyvatelé Ameriky mající hluboké znalosti o ekosystému místa, s nímž byli pevně spjata po generace, usilují o zachování zdraví lesů, v nichž zakládají požáry, aby zvýšili ohnivzdornost tamních stromů a zabránili tak při případných větších požárech spálení celého lesa. Na straně druhé zde vystupují lidé, jimž je myšlenka života v místě a sepětí s jeho přírodou cizí. V touze po co nejvyšším zisku ničí nadměrnou těžbou lesy v oblastech, o kterých nemají žádné znalosti. Nejsou tudíž ani schopni domyslet důsledky, které jejich chování v krajině způsobí. Zde se opět dostává ke slovu vliv zen buddhismu. Chování těchto lidí totiž pramení z pocitu jejich vlastní oddělenosti od okolního světa. Z tohoto klamného chápání reality povstává pět negativních emocí, mezi nimiž figuruje právě touha.

Gary Snyder coby buddhistický praktikující vnímá okolní svět naopak jako jednu velkou

sít' vzájemně propojených jevů. Z tohoto pocitu sounáležitosti pramení opravdový, nesobecký soucit, tedy touha, aby se všechny bytosti zbavily utrpení. Gary Snyder tento soucit však nepromítá jen na lidi a zvířata, nýbrž na celou přírodu. Proto u něj bezohledné ničení životního prostředí, zanechávající dalekosáhlé ekologické škody, vyvolává silný odpor. Ve své básni „Zaklínadlo proti démonům“, která svou formou připomíná dháraní, vyzývá hněvivé božstvo Ačalu, aby odstranil překážky, které lidem brání ve správném vnímání reality. Těmito překážkami není nic jiného, než nevědomost a z ní povstávající další čtyři negativní emoce, které nám brání chápat skutečnost jako prázdnou, tedy jako sít' vzájemně propojených jevů. Zatímco provazovou smyčkou, kterou drží v levé ruce, spoutává a ničí představu našeho odděleného, nezávislého já, mečem, který třímá v pravé ruce, odsekává Ačala závoj nevědomosti, který halí naši mysl. Výsledkem tohoto procesu přeměny je mysl, která chápe svět či skutečnost jako jednu velkou mandalu vzájemně propojených jevů tak, jak to Gary Snyder vyjádřil v básni „Modlitba za Velkou Rodinu.“ Jedině s postojem naší mysli jako je tento, který nám umožňuje spočívat v jednotě se všemi jevy a tedy i s přírodou, budeme schopni přistupovat k našemu životnímu prostředí zodpovědně a tak jej zachovat i pro příští generace.

# Notes:

## Introduction

1. Yao-fu Lin, "The Mountains Are Your Mind": Orientalism in the Poetry of Gary Snyder," *Tamkang Review* 1975/1976: 361.
2. Lin 363.
3. Lin 363.
4. Lin 362.
5. Lin 363.
6. Lin 363.

**"Lay down these words**

**Before your mind like rocks."**

**About *Riprap*-Gary Snyder's first collection of poetry**

1. Lin 364.
2. Lin 364.
3. Nelson 212.
4. Lin 364.
5. Lin 364.
6. Lin 364.
7. Lin 364.
8. Lin 364.
9. Lin 364.
10. Lin 364.
11. Lin 366.
12. Lin 366.
13. Witter Bynner, "A Night-Mooring Near Maple Bridge", *Night Mooring at Maple Bridge*, 23 Dec. 2008  
<http://www.olimu.com/readings/NightMooring.htm>
14. Lin 367.
15. Lin 367.
16. Lin 367.
17. Lin 367.
18. Lin 367.
19. Lin 368.
20. Lin 368.
21. Lin 368.
22. Lin 368.

23. Nelson 211.
24. Lin 364.
25. Nelson 213.
26. Lin 369.
27. Lin 369.
28. Lin 369.
29. Lin 370.
30. Lin 370.
31. Lin 370.
32. Lin 371.
33. Lin 362.
34. Lin 362.
35. Gary Snyder, "Milton by Firelight", 8 August 2008  
<http://bogwebs.systeme.dk/fagbank/engelsk/Beatgen/milton.htm>

### **Logging, Hunting, Burning – Destruction of nature in *Myths & Texts***

1. Yao-fu Lin 372.
2. Lin 372.
3. Lin 372.
4. Lin 372.
5. Gary Snyder, "Logging", *Myths and Texts*, *Google Books Result*, 25 December 2008  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=ICe3MOOR4UC&pg=PA16&lpg=PA16&dq=pine+sleeps,+cedar+splits+st+raight&source=web&ots=6yyCm1O6ks&sig=ZZCEtI VGsqX8u1MYxui18Z3dFmA&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPA11,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=ICe3MOOR4UC&pg=PA16&lpg=PA16&dq=pine+sleeps,+cedar+splits+st+raight&source=web&ots=6yyCm1O6ks&sig=ZZCEtI VGsqX8u1MYxui18Z3dFmA&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPA11,M1)
6. Lin 373.
7. Lin 373.
8. Lin 373.
9. Lin 373.
10. Nelson 215.
11. Lin 373.
12. Nelson 214.
13. Lin 373.
14. Bert Almon, "Buddhism and Energy in the Recent Poetry of Gary Snyder," *Mosaic* 1977: 121.
15. Nelson 215.
16. Nelson 215.
17. Nelson 216.
18. Nelson 215.
19. Almon 119.
20. Katsunori Yamazato, "A Note on Japanese Allusions in Gary Snyder's Poetry," *Western American Literature*, 1983: 144.
21. Yamazato 144.

22. Yamazato 144.
23. Yamazato 144.
24. Yamazato 144.
25. Yamazato 144.
26. Yamazato 144.
27. Yamazato 144.
28. Lin 376.
29. Lin 376.
30. Lin 377.
31. Lin 377.
32. Lin 377.
33. Lin 377.
34. Lin 378.
35. Lin 378.
36. Lin 379.
37. Lin 380.
38. Lin 380.
39. Lin 380.
40. Lin 380.
41. Lin 380.
42. Lin 375.
43. Lin 375.
44. Lin 375-376.
45. Almon 122.
46. Almon 122.
47. Almon 122.
48. Almon 122
49. Almon 123.
50. Almon 123.
51. Lin 380.
52. Lin 381.
53. Lin 381-382.

**Manzanita, Magpie's Song, For the Children**  
**– Excursion to *Turtle Island***

1. Katsunori Yamazato, "How to Be in This Crisis: Gary Snyder's Cross-Cultural Vision in Turtle Island," *Critical Essays on Gary Snyder*, ed. Patrick D. Murphy (Boston: Hall, 1990) 234.
2. Gary Snyder, *No Nature: new and selected poems* (New York and San Francisco: Pantheon Books, 1992) 251-253.



3. Ed Folsom, "Gary Snyder's Descent to Turtle Island: Searching for Fossil Love," *Earthly Words: Essays on Contemporary American Nature and Environmental Writers*, ed. John Cooley (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1994) 228.
4. Gary Snyder, *Místo v prostoru* (Praha: Mat'a, 2002) 211.
5. Gary Snyder, *Praxe divočiny* (Praha: Mat'a, 1999) 50.
6. Snyder, *Praxe* 48.
7. Snyder, *Praxe* 48.
8. Snyder, *No Nature* 219.
9. Bert Almon, "Buddhism and Energy in the Recent Poetry of Gary Snyder," *Mosaic* 1977: 121.
10. Snyder, *No Nature* 218.
11. Folsom 225.
12. Folsom 225.
13. Folsom, 226.
14. Snyder, *No Nature* 236-238.
15. Yamazato 236.
16. Almon 120.
17. Almon 120.
18. Snyder, *No Nature* 216-217.
19. Yamazato 237.
20. Almon 120.
21. Almon 124.
22. Almon 124.
23. Almon 124.
24. Almon 124.
25. Yamazato 245.
26. Yamazato 245.
27. Almon 125.
28. Snyder, *No Nature* 250.
29. Snyder, *No Nature* 228.
30. Yamazato 239.
31. Yamazato 238.
32. Snyder, *No Nature* 223-224.
33. Yamazato 244.
34. Snyder, *No Nature* 234.

# **Appendix**

## Biography

The aim of this appendix is to provide biographical data of American poet and essayist Gary Snyder.

Gary Sherman Snyder was born on 8 May 1930 in San Francisco. Two years later his family moved to the state of Washington where they ran a farm. Being brought up in the countryside of Washington, Gary Snyder developed his close relationship to nature soon. Spending much time in the woods and on hiking trips to the mountains, Snyder became informed about the names of the animals, trees and plants. In addition to this he studied about the woodcraft and Native American folk traditions from the books he was borrowing from the public library.

In 1942, the family of Gary Snyder moved to Portland, Oregon. Here, Snyder continued to discover nature by hiking in the mountains. He became a member of Mazamas Mountain Climbers and climbed the most important peaks in the Rocky Mountains and the North Cascades like Mount St. Helens, Mt. Hood, Mt. Baker and Mt. Rainier.

Apart from hiking in the mountains, Snyder also spent much time working in the woods. In 1943-1946 he worked at a camp at Spirit Lake during summer holidays.

At the age of seventeen, Snyder's growing interest in the possibilities of protecting nature from destruction by civilization leads him to his membership in The Wilderness Society. Moreover, he would write reports on the condition of forests in the Olympic Mountains for the United States Congress.

In 1948 Snyder began his studies at Reed College in Portland where he studied anthropology and literature. During his studies Snyder concentrated on the ethnology of Native Americans. He graduated in 1951 presenting his thesis, *The Dimensions of Haida Myth*, which deals with the myths and folk tales of Native Americans living on the North-Western coast. *The Dimensions of Haida Myth* became the basis of Snyder's second collection of poetry, *The Myths & Texts*, a few years later.

During the years of his studies at Reed College Snyder went on working not only in the woods but also on the sea. In 1951, he worked in the Warm Springs Indian Reservation as a timber scaler.

In 1952 Snyder worked for the United States Forest Service as a fire lookout on Crater Mountain in the Baker National Forest. In the same year, he left for San Francisco. At this time Snyder discovers Zen Buddhism.

In 1953 Gary Snyder begins his Chinese and Japanese studies at the University of California in Berkeley. In the same year he met Kenneth Rexroth, the poet and patron of the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance.

Gary Snyder was writing his collection of poetry *Myths&Texts* while staying on the top of Sourdough Mountain working as a fire lookout for the United States Forest Service in the same year.

In 1955 Snyder was translating the poetry of Han Shan, the Chinese monk and Zen poet. In the same year he met Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg and they together with Philip Whalen, Michael McClure and Philip Lamantia read their poetry on the evening of 13 October at the Six Gallery. This event, which saw the first public reading of Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl*, was organized by Kenneth Rexroth.

In the same year, Gary Snyder worked in Sierra Nevada creating paths for horses in the mountains. This work became one of the various sources of inspiration for the poet's first volume of poetry *Riprap*. Nevertheless, it was not only Snyder's poetry but also his life that was influenced by this working experience. As Petr Kopecký says in his dissertation *The California Crucible: Literary Harbingers of Deep Ecology*, on the one hand, nature and silence of the top of the Sourdough Mountain Lookout allowed the poet to devote himself to a concentration and purification of his mind through Buddhist meditation. On the other hand, when performing a work in Sierra Nevada, Gary Snyder succeeded in unification of both his working activity and the concentration of his mind. Thus, the duality existing between the state of his mind and the activity of his body disappeared and the poet could fully experience the act he was performing. This experience was very important for Snyder as he had already been practicing Zen for several previous years. In addition, the discovery of this practice gave Snyder a new direction of his life. As he explains in the first line of his poem "Nooksack Valley" the poet finds himself at the end of a route heading towards the North. In the lines between the twelfth and eighteenth one, Gary Snyder further adds that for him the end of the Northern route represents a point from which he turns back enriched by a new experience of being more close to a land, nature and men. Last but not least, he anticipates his departure to Japan.

In 1956 Gary Snyder was awarded a scholarship from the First Zen Institute of America to study Zen Buddhism in the monastery Shokoku-ji in Kyoto under the guidance of Master Oda Seshi Roshi to whom Snyder dedicated *Earth Household*, his collection of essays, Zen tales and notes from his diary.

Before his departure to Japan, Snyder published his translation of Han Shan's poetry under the title *Cold Mountain Poems* in the magazine *Berkeley Bussei*.

In 1957 Snyder traveled around the world while working on the tanker Sappa Creek as a stoker.

Two years later, in 1959, he returned to Japan to further his studies in the monastery Daitoku-ji. In the same year he published his first collection of poetry, *Riprap*.

The following year saw Snyder's second volume of poetry, *Myths&Texts*, published. At this time, Snyder went to India to study Buddhist temples.

In 1961 poems from his collection of poetry *Mountains and Rivers Without End* began to be published. This collection, which Snyder started to write in 1956, was published in its complete final form only in 1996.

In 1964 Snyder returned to America and began to teach at the Department of English and American Studies at University of California in Berkeley.

In 1965 Snyder attended a conference on poetry in Berkeley, gave several poetry readings at various American colleges and collaborated with Philip Whalen on National Educational Television programme. Finally, he left America to spend a study year in Japan.

Two years later, in 1967, Snyder attended the Human Be-In, event at which the Hippies movement was born. In this year Snyder leaves America for Suwa-nose Island in the East China Sea where Japanese poet Nanao Sakaki, Snyder's friend, founded Banyan Ashram.

Snyder lived in this ecological community for one year participating on its activities, ranging from planting batatas and other crops, cooking the meals from these crops to collecting the wood to make a fire. For Snyder this way of life in a community of people living in accordance with the laws of nature meant the return to the traditional way of life of Native American tribes. It was indigenous people who lived in nature for generations and hence were able to identify with it and get to know its laws, cycles and character by intuition which enabled them to avoid causing damage to it.

In 1968 Gary Snyder, together with his wife Masa Uehara whom he married on Suwa-nose Island, returned to the United States. In this year Snyder published his collection of poetry *The Back Country*.

In 1969 Snyder's collection of essays, *Earth House Hold: Technical Notes and Queries to Fellow Dharma Revolutionaries*, was published.

At the beginning of the 1970's Snyder and his family moved to Sierra Nevada where they purchased a land to build their house named after a local plant, Kitkitdizze. As Petr Kopecký mentions in his dissertation *The California Crucible: Literary Harbingers of Deep Ecology*, in

contrast to the most of the then American society, Gary Snyder favored a life closely connected to a particular place. More precisely, while most of American people were following the trend of extensive moving in order to find a better job, Snyder preferred to live in one place to be able to get to know, appreciate and understand the value of the land of a particular place profoundly. To be constantly on the move instead of being closely connected to one place during their lives people are less able to become a part of the place they currently inhabit. As a result of this, they seize it and insensitively impose their values upon it as they do not have any proper information about the life of its ecosystem. Consequently, whether they depart for another place or continue on living there in their hands the landscape is destroyed by various means including pollution by a waste that cannot be naturally disintegrated.

Gary Snyder built his house Kitkitdizze in an area seriously damaged by mining out of the local wood. In this move the two poet's principles reflect. In the first place, it is the one which Gary Snyder calls "reinhabitation" and which also gave a name to one of his essays contained in both *Old Ways* and *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds*. Anyway, this principle which is put in practice by people who decided to change their life in industrial society dominated by high mobility for the one connected to a particular place. Thus, reinhabitation is a process during which people deliberately learn how to live and become a part of a place in most cases damaged and abandoned in previous eras. Secondly, it is the principle of self-sufficiency which creates an important part of a man's life in a particular place as it helps us to develop our close relationship with the place.

In the following years, in cooperation with the other inhabitants of this area and the local authorities, Snyder was pursuing reclamation of his domestic landscape.

Under the influence of life in a close relationship to Kitkitdizze Gary Snyder developed his theory of bioregionalism. Later, in 1978, he also published his collection of texts on the theme of bioregionalism called *Reinhabiting a Separate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California*. Snyder's concept of bioregionalism is based upon a fact that it is mountain ranges and watersheds which create natural boundaries between bioregions characterized by their specific ecosystems. Nevertheless, the boundaries established between the states in America in most cases do not correspond to the natural ones ignoring bioregions' terrain together with their fauna and flora.

In 1970 Snyder published his ninth volume of poetry *Regarding Wave*.

Two years later Gary Snyder, together with Michael McClure, attended a conference on the environment organized by United Nations in Stockholm where he was nominated by Portola

Institute.

A year later Snyder left for Hokkaido as a representative of Friends of the Earth to study wilderness.

In 1974 Snyder's most famous collection of poetry, *Turtle Island*, was published. In the following year Gary Snyder was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for this volume of poetry.

As Petr Kopecký writes in his dissertation *The California Crucible: Literary Harbingers of Deep Ecology*, *Turtle Island* is the name by which Native Americans denoted their continent. This suggests that in this collection of poetry the author develops his principles of the one's life in a close relationship to one place allowing him to appreciate the value of the land.

From 1974 to 1979 Gary Snyder was a member of the Board of the California Arts Council.

In the late 1970s and in 1980s Snyder's collection of essays *Old Ways*, collection of interviews *The Real Work: Interviews and Talks 1964-1979*, a collection of poetry *Axe and Handles*, the travel book *Passage Through India* and a volume of poetry *Left Out in the Rain* were published.

1990 saw Snyder's collection of essays dealing with the theme of nature and the place of a man in the natural world, *Practice of the Wild*, published.

In 1995, a publication of Gary Snyder's collection of essays *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics and Watersheds* followed.

Two years later, in 1997, Snyder was awarded the Bollingen Prize for poetry.

Nowadays, Gary Snyder works as professor of English at University of California in Davis.

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This information is taken from the following sources:

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## **Anotace:**

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Searching for Eastern Cultures in the Poetry of Gary Snyder

Matthew Sweney

156 699 znaků

1 příloha

21 titulů použité literatury

klíčová slova: americká literatura

americká poezie

Gary Snyder

ekologie

východní náboženství a kultury

Magisterská diplomová práce analyzuje vlivy východních náboženství a kultur na poezii amerického básníka Garyho Snydera v jeho sbírkách *Štětování*, *Mýty a Texty* a *Želví ostrov*.