

At this point in this essay about contacts and influences, I feel called to say something about "The Real Work"; to reiterate my solidarity and acknowledgment to Gary Snyder for being a tireless and peaceful, subtle master; a shaman of language who has known how to evoke the chant of our dreams, in harmony with our Mother Earth's easygoing abundance and to Her, the rocks, plants, animals, humans, and fraternal beings, demons or devas, elements and all directions to sing praise to our evolution.

"Love
No less" (Snyder, *Turtle Island* 68)

Translated by Tona Luisa Osher

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STEPPING OUT TO LOOK IN

There are three aspects of Gary Snyder's work that have always appealed to me. The first is the spiritual, which in Snyder is always a flight back towards, rather than away from, reality. There's dreamtime and an appreciation for the mythic but at the same time an earthiness and grounding in life as it's actually lived.

The second is the communal, expressed in the idea of tribe. Snyder retains the jubilant individualism of the Beats (Kerouac said the word "Beat" refers back to the medieval sense of the "beatific") but combines it with an appreciation for hanging out not only with like-minded others but also with whomever happens to be in the neighborhood (respectively the "network" and the "community" in *The Real Work* 89). The individualism here isn't the gimme-gimme atomistic self-absorption of liberal capitalism, nor is the communalism the buttoned-up uniformity of state socialism.

The third is Snyder's ability to give voice not only to the untamed wilderness outside, but also to the untamed wilderness within, as expressed in "Without," my favorite poem in *Turtle Island*. In that same book Snyder identifies the Muse as "the voice of nature herself" (107). Meister Eckhart once said that we see God with the same eye that God sees us, and I would like to think that nature and the poet are also — at least in special moments — able to speak with the same tongue.

I suspect that the genuine admiration one finds for Snyder's work in Japan is based on the genuine admiration one finds in Snyder's work for Japanese culture. Snyder was able to point out to people in Japan aspects of their own culture which they'd either forgotten about or never heard of in the first place. Right in the middle of Japan's mad rush to "catch up with the West" here comes a Westerner who knew, first of all, that the image Japan has of the West doesn't fit the reality and, second, that the treasures buried in Japan's own past are worth far more than the trinkets it now seeks abroad.

Snyder's work is fascinating for those of us brought up in the West for the opposite reason — it takes us outside our own culture and hence out of the myopia of our own presumed "universalism." There are very few (positive) references in Snyder's writing to the dominant culture of the West. Snyder exposes us instead not only to the riches of East Asia and Buddhism, but also to the diverse traditions which stand outside and at the root of the dominant cultures, East and West. The view here is not 4,000 years of Western history

but 40,000 years of human history, embracing the Ainu as much as the Japanese, the Native American as much as the non-Native transplant.

Stepping outside of ourselves gives us a wider perspective. In *The Real Work* Snyder said he wouldn't advise people to go to Japan *per se*; people should follow their own paths wherever they lead (by their own lanterns no doubt). But he added, "[I]f you have the will and the energy and the opportunity, go live in an alien culture for awhile. It really does, as they say, 'broaden' you" (65-66). Being exposed to another culture relativizes one's own tradition. One begins to see that all cultures place strict limits on the enormous range of potential human experience.

The other cliché, however, is that the more one becomes exposed to another culture the more one begins to appreciate one's own. There is a pervasive feeling in the West, particularly among those I suspect who have never actually lived in an "alien culture," that Western culture is totally defunct and no longer has anything of value to offer. Lynn White, Jr., in his essay "The Historical Roots of Our Environmental Crisis," laid the blame for the Western domination of nature on the Judeo-Christian tradition with its injunction to "have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Other writers, such as Carolyn Merchant in *The Death of Nature*, see the medieval period, in which Christianity was at its zenith, as fostering an organic, "enchanted" attitude towards nature that was only upset by the rise of science and its mechanistic worldview. Either way, the West is to blame.

So we begin our journey to the East in search of insights that emphasize the oneness of humanity and nature rather than the domination of the one over the other. The East, as the polar opposite of the West, seems to have just what we lack — and hence need: intuition rather than rationality, community rather than egocentricism, an aesthetic rather than a merely instrumental regard for nature.

The questions I'd like to ask here are, first, might not our image of the East also be a bit out of sync with reality, and, second, might not we be able to find some of these same insights in our own backyard if we start digging for buried treasure? I'm asking these questions as someone who has lived most of my adult life in Japan and has traveled some of the same roads that Snyder walked before me. Rather than conclude, however, as Snyder did in *Turtle Island*, that "I don't like Western culture" (106), my own pilgrimage has led me back, in spirit if not in body, to a reconsideration of what there might be in the Western tradition that could help us move in similar directions and perhaps eventually reach the same destination.

Carl Jung once wrote that, instead of simply imitating the spiritual techniques of the East,

it would be far more to the point to find out whether there exists in the unconscious an introverted tendency similar to that which has become the guiding spiritual principle of the East. We should then be in a position to build on our own ground with our own methods. If we snatch these things directly from the East, we have merely indulged our Western acquisitiveness, confirming yet again that "everything good is outside," whence it has to be fetched and pumped into our barren souls. (490)

The problem, of course, is that we sometimes can't see what's within until we've stepped outside.

The romanticized view of Asia — the Oriental mystique — so prevalent in the West is captured in Kerouac's description in *The Dharma Bums* of Japhy Ryder (a character loosely based on Snyder) just prior to his departure to Japan. Japhy's going on (and on) about sitting on tatami mats drinking green tea in hidden temples down rocky paths with plum trees outside and snow on the boughs of the pines. Kerouac's comment is more insightful, however: ". . . while guys like us are all excited about being real Orientals and wearing robes, actual Orientals over there are reading surrealism and Charles Darwin and mad about Western business suits" (203).

Even if Snyder has disclaimed any connection between Japhy Ryder and himself, this passage captures something of my own image of Japan prior to coming here, which had been formed by reading Blyth's translations of haiku and seeing the magnificent landscapes of Sesshu in library books. And the difference in perspectives pointed out by Kerouac makes for some pretty ironic encounters, as I myself have found: the Western counterculturalist interested in traditional Japanese arts meeting the Japanese engineer interested in modern Western technology, both sides talking past each other. Westerners, like myself, who come here in search of the "real Japan" are often disappointed. The "real Japan" these days is more about office towers and crowded subways than it is about hidden temples down rocky paths.

This "other side" of Japan rarely appears in Snyder's poems. You get a much better picture of the contemporary Japanese mindset in Nanao Sakaki's tale of the little boy who takes his dead beetle into a hardware store and asks the clerk to change the batteries ("Future Knows," *Break the Mirror* 27). The spiritual poverty of modern Japan shows itself not just in rampant consumerism but also in the happy-go-lucky ignorance of how their recent

affluence has been bought by exploiting resources overseas. The situation in the West is, of course, equally desperate.

The longer one stays in Japan the more one sees that the differences between East and West aren't that great after all. The result is a more balanced view. While the East never had the Inquisition or the Crusades, it's got other skeletons hidden away in its closets and its own history of hierarchy and domination. *Daimyo* lording it over the peasants and *samurai* lopping off their heads are as much a part of Japanese history as Zen devotees blissfully tucked away in mountain temples seeking enlightenment. And there's not much difference between modern capitalists in either Japan and the West who enjoy positions of wealth and privilege, or between politicians who manipulate the "democratic systems" of both countries to their own advantage.

There are foreigners here who get totally bummed out by this exposure to the darker, hidden side of Japanese history and culture and they end up going home disillusioned. Those who stick it out usually come to see that every culture has its mixture of good and evil. Snyder has managed to skim off the cream of Japanese culture, which in fact is a valuable service because it opens us up to entirely new terrain with totally different horizons. But there's a danger here — not so much for Snyder who's undoubtedly familiar with the shadows — but for readers who are blinded by the brilliance of the rising sun. It then becomes all the easier to romanticize the East and caricature the West.

I'd suggest that we need a more critical perspective which is able to make judgements about what is truly valuable and worth keeping in each tradition and what is disposable dross. A Hegelian dialectic can be put into motion in which we throw together two seemingly contradictory perspectives and see what kind of synthesis emerges. My guess is that the result will be an entirely novel *third culture*, which is neither Eastern nor Western, but a melding of the two. Rather than simply admire other cultures or produce cheap imitations of them, we can integrate what we learn into our own cultural framework and thereby redeem rather than simply discard our own tradition.

If this kind of integration is to occur we have to look again at our own tradition. Once we do, all kinds of similarities between East and West start popping up. What I'd like to do in the remainder of this essay is to show how most of what Snyder has to say about spirit, community, and nature can be grounded just as legitimately in the cultural tradition of the West as it can in the cultural tradition of the East and, moreover, that the West has a few unique and valuable points of its own to make.

Let's start with spirit. Conventional wisdom has it that the East is nontheistic, the West theistic. In Eastern thought ultimate reality is expressed in purely negative terms: the Hindu *neti neti*, the Buddhist void, the Zen *mu*. Buddhism warns us not to mistake the finger for the moon — or, in Snyder's delicious metaphor, the menu for the meal (*A Place in Space* 174). But if we look back into the older Christian tradition we find a similar attitude towards God and a similar attitude towards language. Pseudo-Dionysus, for example, had no difficulty speaking of God as an ineffable "nothing in none." As with Buddhism, the "nothing" here isn't a nihilistic barrenness (as the "death-of-God" theologians of the '60s were sometimes taken as saying), but rather the empty space in which creative things can happen (see also Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*). The apophatic theology initiated by Pseudo-Dionysus held that ultimate reality ultimately can't be spoken of. You can't say what it is, only what it is not. The cataphatic corollary of this view is that if you do say anything positive about ultimate reality, the best you can hope for is metaphor, and one must not confuse the metaphor for the reality itself.

The idea that ultimate reality can never be adequately described but nonetheless contemplatively experienced dates back at least as far as the non-Christian, neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus. Plotinus is misunderstood by most modern readers who take his three hypostases — the One, mind, and soul — as a description of the outer world (metaphysics) rather than of inner experience (psychology). Plotinus was instead giving an account of human experience that runs the whole gamut from empiricism (sensory knowledge associated with *psyché*) to rationalism (abstract knowledge associated with *noûs*) to mysticism (contemplative knowledge associated with the One). Unformed matter — a fourth category which accounts for the processes of decomposition — is indeed evil for Plotinus, but the living world of nature is infused with *psyché* (Emerson took over this concept from Plotinus and called it Oversoul). In Plotinus's own version of the Gaia hypothesis, which predates Lovelock's by some 1700 years, he speaks of the world as a "living god."

I haven't been able to find a single thinker, either Eastern or Western, who brings together the intuitive, the intellectual, and the sensual in quite the same way. Usually what we get is a one-sided emphasis on one of the three or perhaps two in combination. When Snyder says, for example, "[T]here is a mind-body dualism if I am sweeping the floor and thinking about Hegel. But if I am sweeping the floor and thinking about sweeping the floor, I am all one" (*The Real Work* 7), he can be easily interpreted as privileging intuition over intellect. Such an interpretation fits in perfectly well with the general lack of patience one finds in Japanese culture for rational subtleties. The

potential error here is the notion that thinking about Hegel is somehow inferior to thinking about sweeping the floor. More sophisticated Japanese philosophers, such as Kitaro Nishida, have held that abstract thought is also "pure experience." We can just as validly write, "There is a mind-body dualism if I am reading the *Phenomenology* and thinking about sweeping the floor. But if I am reading the *Phenomenology* and thinking about reading the *Phenomenology*, I am all one."

The idea that the East is inherently intuitive and the West inherently rational is basically crap, and what we need is a perspective which unites the two. Junjiro Takakusu has shown that the Buddhist tradition developed two main schools of thought, one the school of "negative rationalism" (similar to the apophatic tradition in Western theology) and the other the school of "introspective intuitionism" (similar to contemplative monasticism). The various subschools he identifies — realism, idealism, nihilism, phenomenology, intuitionism, and the rest — all have rough counterparts in the West. While this observation doesn't quite prove the existence of a "perennial philosophy" it does lend support to transpersonal psychology's contention that "underlying the vast array of states of consciousness are a relatively small number of deep structures" (Walsh 127). Historically Eastern cultures have emphasized the intuitive but the rational can be found if one looks for it; the reverse can be said of the West. A strong argument can be made, moreover, that in recent times the West in fact has become more intuitive than the East and the East more rational (at least in the instrumental sense) than the West.

The medieval Christian mystics were thoroughly at home with the Neoplatonic tradition in theology and had no trouble identifying God with Plotinus's One. What's interesting is that Plotinus can be interpreted in two ways. The hierarchical interpretation places God at the top (the One), humanity in the middle (a mixture of *noûs* and *psyché*), and nature at the bottom (matter). But throughout his writings Plotinus used the image of concentric circles to represent the relationship between the hypostases. Here the One is at the center of everything that exists — at the center of both nature and self — and the way to know the divine is not by looking beyond the stars but by looking within.

Both the Eastern and Western contemplative traditions stand in marked contrast to the more mainstream devotional approach to religion. Devotional religion sees the individual as powerless; salvation is only possible through the agency of a superior being who stands outside the self. Buddhist devotionalism expresses itself in the idea that the helpless must pray to powerful Boddhisattvas (with hundreds of helping hands) for assistance. Christian devotionalism expresses itself in the Calvinist idea that humans are

little more than slimy worms groveling in the dust before the awesome majesty of their omnipotent creator. Christ is the powerful Boddhisattva we must cling to.

The contemplative, however, experiences the power of the divine within. The Zen practitioner doesn't pray to the Boddhisattva but vows to become one. The Christian contemplative doesn't follow Christ but strives to become Christ. Devotional spirituality is the religion of disempowerment; it fits in perfectly well with the hierarchical notion that the weak should bow to the strong. Contemplative spirituality is the religion of empowerment; it's politically dangerous precisely because it bows down before no one, not even God. That's the basic reason why the medieval authorities burnt mystics at the stake.

The situation was a bit different in Byzantine Christianity where the doctrine of *theosis*, or deification, had long been accepted as orthodox. Athanasius, who helped formulate the Nicene Creed, had written "God became human so that humans might become God." Here's the idea that the divine is incarnate *in our own bodies*. The medieval Byzantine theologian Gregory Palamas held that while the divine essence is unknowable, God can be known through his energies. The Hesychasts, a group of Orthodox mystics who flourished in the fourteenth century, sought to realize the "inner light" within themselves, which they identified with the divine energy. They developed meditation techniques remarkably similar to those found in Buddhism, which included both silent contemplation and the use of the "Jesus Prayer," which functioned more or less like the *namu amida butsu* mantra of the Pure Land sect of Buddhism.

The contemplative traditions of both Asia and the West stress that people are usually in a better position to help others if they have their own act together. The idea that meditation is a purely individual affair, a mystical flight out of the world, a quietistic quest for personal salvation, is also garbage. The whole point is not to bring the spiritual wanderer out of the desert into the promised land but only to its edge. In Buddhist mythology as the Boddhisattva approaches the Nirvanic shore he looks back and, seeing the suffering masses on the opposite side, vows not to enter Nirvana himself until they have all gone in before him.

The archetypal theme of a "return" can be found in both the Eastern and the Western traditions. After purifying himself in the river and going out into the wilderness to confront his inner demons Jesus "returned in the power of the Spirit" to share his visions of a new world with others. Christ's experience provided the model for the desert saints of the fourth and fifth centuries who went off into the wilderness in search of their true selves.

They were motivated, much like the Taoists in China, by a desire to flee the corruption of civilization. After Constantine had made Christianity the official religion of the empire the ecclesiastical authorities began to consolidate their power and religion began to harden into a set of fixed dogmas intended to unify the people and eliminate dissent. So the monks separated themselves not only from society but also from the established church; in the desert there are no priests to administer the sacraments. The hermits ended up playing their own version of desert solitaire.

These mystics did not, as is commonly supposed, regard the world itself as evil and something to be escaped from — that was a Gnostic, not a Christian, idea. The attitude of the mystics towards nature was incarnational; the world is an icon, or manifestation, of the divine. Sure, there's suffering, but the goal is not pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by. Rather it's what the Orthodox writer Nicholas Arseniev calls the "transfiguration of the world," a redeemed earth where the lion lies down with the lamb and a little child leads them. The desert saints were acutely sensitive to the beauties of the wilderness and filled with compassion towards all living things (and had an amazing ability — if the accounts are at all true — to make friends with the animals). Some of them were pretty crazy to be sure, even crazier than Han Shan (see Snyder's translations in *Riprap, and Cold Mountain Poems*). Simeon, for example, camped out on the top of a pillar for 36 years.

The most famous of the desert saints was probably Anthony, an archetypal figure who was the first of a long line of lay elders (*geron* in Greek, *starets* in Russian, literally "old man") of which Dostoyevsky's Father Zossima is a literary example. The essential idea behind Orthodox monasticism is, in the words of Bishop Kallistos Ware, "a withdrawal in order to return." Ware writes,

A monk must first withdraw, and in silence must learn the truth about himself and God. Then, after this long and rigorous preparation in solitude, having gained the gifts of discernment which are required of an elder, he can open the door of his cell and admit the world from which formerly he fled. (48)

Boddhisattva-saints who have really gotten their acts together don't set themselves up as robed gurus or TV evangelists to fleece the lost sheep. Their real mission is to help others realize the buddha-nature/divine-essence already inside them. And so they return. In the Oxherding pictures of Zen the enlightened saint reenters the marketplace carrying a wine gourd and looking just like everyone else. Once you know who you really are you

don't have to show off your piety to others. There's a Buddhist pilgrimage in Shikoku, probably the only one of its kind in the world, that ends at the same place it starts. Enlightenment means journeying full circle, going out and coming back again.

We're already well into the issue of how to relate self back to community. The kind of spirituality we've been talking about combines both the contemplative and the active, looking inside ourselves and outward to others, seeing the Christ-Buddha in our own bosoms and Christ-Buddha in the bosoms of the hungry, the thirsty, the wandering, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. Historically, of course, the West was unable to sustain and further develop its contemplative tradition, just as Buddhism was unable to develop a strong sense of social justice. In "Buddhism and the Coming Revolution" Snyder acknowledges that "Institutional Buddhism has been conspicuously ready to accept or ignore the inequalities and tyrannies of whatever political system it found itself under" (*Earth House Hold* 90).

There's no good reason, however, why present-day Buddhism, with its doctrine of compassion, shouldn't become more socially active or Christianity, with its doctrine of *theosis*, more contemplative; in fact this seems to be happening. As Snyder goes on to write in the above essay, "The mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self-void. We need both" (92). Having both would also help us overcome the needless split in environmental circles between those who concentrate on social justice and dismiss the spiritual, and those who concentrate on the spiritual and refuse to engage in any kind of serious political critique.

There's also been a mistaken tendency to see the West as democratic and egalitarian and the East as hierarchical and conformist. In fact, there are democratic and egalitarian tendencies in the East just as there are hierarchical and conformist tendencies in the West. Two strands have always coexisted in Asian thought: the Confucian concern with maintaining rank and social order and the Taoist-Zen concern for personal liberation. In the West too the hierarchical has always sat side-by-side with the egalitarian.

Radical biblical scholar John Crossan has suggested that what made Jesus so revolutionary — and eventually led to his execution at the hands of the state — was his attempt to break down the barriers of race, gender, and class. I myself tend to see the early churches as proto-affinity groups practicing a form of social anarchism in which people sought to realize their spiritual potential as individuals and to share their material goods in common. Their mission was neither to take over nor reform the existing government, but to create something completely different: a kingdom of God that was *in*, but not

of, the world. In short, they were building a new society in the shell of the old.

This anarchist strain in Christianity continued throughout the medieval and Reformation periods in various heretical sects, comprised mostly of the working class (peasants and artisans) who often formed themselves into alternative communities, such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit (mentioned by Snyder in "Passage to More than India"), the Beghards and the Beguines, the Waldensees, and so on. George Woodcock sees the strain continuing in the chiliastic Anabaptists and the mystical Quakers (George Fox taught that everyone has an "inner light" and that there is "that of God in every man"). The Diggers, a group dedicated to ending hierarchical rule and establishing communal property, were led by Gerrard Winstanley who saw reason as the "kingdom of God within man." The same theme was taken up by Tolstoy in his book *The Kingdom of God Is within You*. A more recent examination of the relationship between anarchism and Western religious thought is Jacques Ellul's *Anarchy and Christianity*. The connections Ellul draws are every bit as interesting as the ones Snyder hints at between Buddhist "comradery" and IWW syndicalism.

The ideal community is one in which individuals are able to realize themselves to the fullest. In Aristotle's opinion you can't have a flourishing community without flourishing individuals nor flourishing individuals without a flourishing community. The United States, with its frontier culture, has always put a lot of emphasis on the individual side of this equation but hasn't been so good at seeing the individual in the context of wider social and natural communities. Japan, with its history of village agriculture, has been the opposite. It has stressed relationships with others and with nature but never developed a very adequate conception of the self.

Japanese have always been suspicious of Western-style individualism because they see it as little more than egoistic self-indulgence. Prior to its encounter with the West the Japanese didn't even have a word for individualism and the word they use now, *kojinshugi*, still connotes selfishness. Westerners for their part have always been suspicious of Japanese-style cooperation because they see it as little more than enforced conformity.

Certainly Western-style individualism sometimes does degenerate into self-indulgence, just as Japanese-style cooperation sometimes degenerates into blind conformity. But what would happen if we combined the best of each — individualism in the Emersonian sense of self-reliance with cooperation in the Japanese sense of genuine empathy for others? I think we'd come up with a personality type similar to Gandhi's. Put the worst together — self-

indulgence and blind conformity — and we come up with your average workaholic consumer found as much in Japan as in the U.S.

This idea of trying to integrate the best that we find in another culture into our own personalities comes out in the passage in *The Real Work* where Gary is describing Japan's counterculture in the late '60s:

[T]hey have their own level of independence and individual freedom, which is rare in Japan because it's not a society which creates individuals or individualism. And then they've been able, on top of their individualism, their sense of individual personal destiny, to add a discipline of cooperation and living and working together. (11-12)

One can also see this dialectic at work in Japan's modern cooperative movement. Japan's Seikatsu Club Consumer Cooperative, for example, grounds itself as much on traditional Japanese notions of cooperation as it does on the cooperative movement's original Rochdale principles, which stress the democratic ownership and control of cooperative organizations (Evanoff 1993).

The best response to hierarchy and domination, I would argue, would be to combine the Western emphasis on democracy and individual rights with the Japanese emphasis on cooperation and group solidarity. The same idea could be extended to our relationship with nature. Snyder, Christopher Stone, and Tom Regan, were among the first Westerners to mention the idea of extending rights to nature and we could just as easily speak Buddhist-style of a compassion for all beings and Confucian-style of the obligations we have towards them.

This brings us directly to the problem of how to relate community to land. *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* quotes Snyder as saying that the poet faces in two directions: "one is to the world of people and language and society, and the other is to the nonhuman, nonverbal world, which is nature as nature is itself" (1261). The trick, it seems, is to somehow integrate the two. Western thought has been subjected to a barrage of criticisms for its persistent dualisms between mind and body, spirit and matter, human and nature, and so on. It's this dualism, writers such as Val Plumwood say, which enables us to see culture as mastery, nature as mastered.

So we look Eastward for a nondualistic view of the relationship between the human and the natural. The idea is that if we can see humans as "one" with nature, as the Japanese presumably do, all of our problems will be solved. What we actually find, however, is that by refusing to make a distinction between what is natural and what is unnatural we reach the absurd

conclusion that toxic wastes, for example, are as much as part of nature as climax forests. Non-dualism, as much as dualism, can result in the oppression of nature, as witnessed in the stunted growth of *bonsai* trees. Holism, as Tom Regan has written in a different context, can end up as "environmental fascism" (362).

There are positive versions of dualism in the West. Thoreau was a dualist who saw the need to keep the wild separate from the cultured (it's the wild Snyder appeals to in his recent collection of essays, *A Place in Space* — see especially p. 174). Deep ecologists are dualists when they argue that nature should be seen as having intrinsic value apart from human interests. And there are negative versions of dualism in Japan. Snyder tells how shrine areas in Japan are left in a completely natural state while the mountains around them are leveled for housing developments. He writes, "In industrial Japan it's not that 'nothing is sacred,' it's that the *sacred* is sacred and that's *all* that's sacred" (*The Practice of the Wild* 88).

Beyond philosophical debates about nondualism and dualism is the very real problem of how we *inhabit* the land. This involves trying to find some kind of fit between cultures and bioregions (biocultural regions?). Following Ray Dasmann, Snyder tends to think in terms of "ecosystem-based cultures" rather than "biosphere cultures" (*A Place in Space* 186). The former encourages a human-scale economy that places a high value on self-sufficiency and is sensitive to the land. It also emphasizes local control over the decision-making process, both economically and politically. The model here is what Richard Norgaard calls a "patchwork quilt" of both biological and cultural diversity.

The latter, biosphere culture, is the ideology of the "global market," "free trade," NAFTA, GATT, the WTO, and all the rest. Multinational corporations set up shop wherever they have access to plentiful resources, cheap labor, low taxes, and few environmental regulations. They pull up stakes whenever the resources are depleted, labor organizes, taxes are raised, or the law gets too meddlesome. Since by definition multinationals do not belong to any one country, there is no way they can be democratically controlled. And while they promise a future global village of peace and harmony, what they're really creating is a system that pits nation against nation in a competitive drive to see who can produce the most at the lowest possible standards. The result is a global monoculture that bulldozes over both cultural and ecological diversity. Japan is as much caught up in this game as is the U.S., and it's at this level that "cultural differences" between the two tend to blur. When Japanese trading companies argue that the best way to help the "backward" Penan tribespeople of Malaysia "develop" is to

cut down their rain forests they've bought into the same imperialist logic as the West's "white man's burden."

The real fault line, I would argue, is not between East and West but rather between those in both East and West who buy into modernist domination and those in both East and West who attempt to resist. For the latter there are rich traditions that can be drawn on to help them with this task. I realize that my reading of the Western tradition is a bit unconventional, but probably no more so than Snyder's reading of the Eastern tradition. The problem is that the religious traditions of both East and West have become, as David Loy poignantly puts it, "senile" (1), and need to be revitalized. Traditions shouldn't be seen as the dead wisdom of the past which enslaves us, but as living, breathing, and constantly evolving responses to emergent problems. There's still a lot of creative work to be done.

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PLACES AND MYTHOPOESIS: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF GARY SNYDER AND MICHIKO ISHIMURE

The appreciation of Gary Snyder's works in Japan has been remarkably increasing toward the end of this century. The growing reception of Snyder's works among both scholarly and general audiences corresponds to the rise of environmental consciousness in Japan. Snyder has been deeply involved with Japan since the 1950s when he began studying Zen Buddhism in Kyoto. During this time Japanese society has encountered numerous environmental problems as a consequence of capitalistic development. Some Japanese writers have keenly reacted to these phenomena in their works, and share with Snyder the insights into the global environmental crisis that lead them to criticize their countries and capitalism.

Many Japanese readers of Snyder regard Kenji Miyazawa, a modern poet, writer, and Buddhist, whose poems Snyder translated in his book of poetry, *The Back Country*, as Snyder's counterpart. But to clarify the significance of Snyder's works in Japan in relation to the ecological crisis brought about in this century, I want to discuss Michiko Ishimure, a poet and writer who is contemporary with Snyder, in parallel with Snyder's works. Ishimure is a Buddhist of the True Pure Land sect and a writer living in Minamata in Kyushu, the southern part of Japan. She is well-known for her involvement with Minamata disease caused by environmental pollution in the 1960s, and is recently being reevaluated as a nature writer. Though there appears no evidence of any direct influence between Snyder and Ishimure, we can observe interesting similarities in their environmental philosophy. By rooting themselves in their places, they create a mythopoesis which reconstructs the socio-political ideas of their countries in this century, and generates new symbiotic visions of their cultures grounded on their native lands.

Snyder's attempt to express a mythical attribute in his poetry started early in his career as a poet, as can be seen in his collection of poetry, *Myths & Texts*, published in 1960. According to Patrick D. Murphy, Snyder switched his career from the myth critic that he had envisioned for himself when a student of anthropology to a myth handler and creator. He has practiced what Murphy calls "mythopoeia, the adaptive retelling and creating of myths that have guided or are needed to guide a culture" (21). Following the concept of "mythopoeia," this paper employs the word "mythopoesis" to indicate