TO SEE THE WORLD IN ITS THUSNESS:

A READING OF GARY SNYDER'S LATER POETRY

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University of Cape Town

For Michael

... to see the world for now in its thusness
is finally all we want, all we need.

- GARY SNYDER

The Mother whose body is the Universe
Whose breasts are Sun and Moon,
the statue of Prajna
From Java: the quiet smile,
The naked breasts.

- GARY SNYDER

Some time in the last ten years the best brains of the Occident discovered to their amazement that we live in an environment. This discovery has been forced on us by the realisation that we are approaching the limits of something. Stewart Brand said that the photograph of the earth (taken from outer space by a satellite) that shows the whole blue orb with spirals and whorls of cloud, was a great landmark for human consciousness. We see that it has a shape, and it has limits. We are back again, now, in the position of our Mesolithic forebears -- working off the coasts of southern Britain, or the shores of Lake Chad or the swamps of southeast China, learning how to live by the sun and the green at that spot. We once more know that we live in a system that is enclosed in a certain way; that it has its own kinds of limits, and that we are interdependent within it. - GARY SNYDER

Finally we come down to earth, we see things as they are. This does not mean having an inspired mystical vision with archangels, cherubs and sweet music playing. But things seen as they are, in their own qualities. - CHOGYAM TRUNGPA

TO SEE THE WORLD IN ITS THUSNESS: A READING OF GARY SNYDER'S LATER POETRY

MARTIN, Julia. University of Cape Town, 1985.

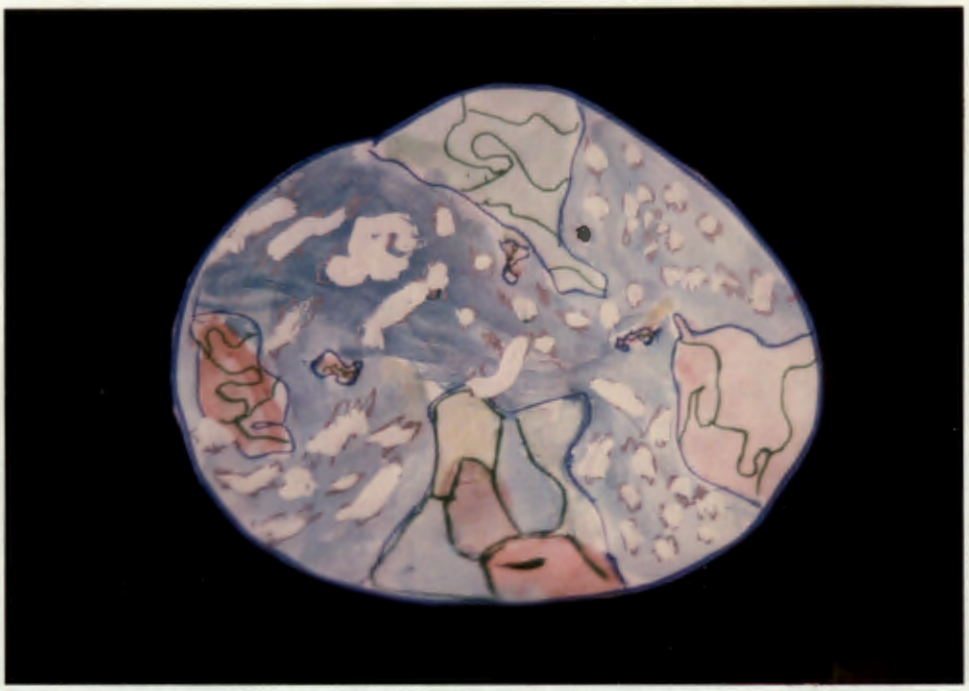
This thesis examines three collections of poetry by Gary Snyder: Regarding Wave, Turtle Island and Axe Handles. It studies these works as an exploration of what I call the sacramental question, namely, "What is it in the nature of reality that can finally sanctify human existence?" I am particularly interested in four aspects of Snyder's treatment of this question: (1) the significance given to epistemological and ideological assumptions; (2) the concept of "woman", and particularly "the Goddess"; (3) the nature of those experiences which are presented in the poetry as "sacramental"; and (4) the poetic forms by which Snyder's approach is articulated.

My analysis comprises five chapters and three appendices. The first chapter outlines the questions which the thesis addresses, placing these in the context of work by other critics, and providing a brief account of Snyder's writings as a whole. The three central chapters study one collection of poetry each, in chronological order, referring where appropriate to Snyder's other writings and to the oriental and other sources by which his approach to the sacramental question is informed. The final chapter summarises my conclusions. This is followed by an appended diagrammatic illustration of the structure of two poems, a chronology, and a glossary of foreign terms.

In the thesis I refer to Anthony Wilden's model of "oppositional relations" in his critique of an epistemology which he calls "biosocial imperialism". In examining Snyder's use of form, I use two models for metaphor: Roman Jakobson's account of metaphor and metonymy, and a model

of metaphor as semantic transfer proposed by Eva Kittay and Adrienne Lehrer.

The title of the thesis points to the conclusions which my work proposes. Snyder's later poetry suggests that our existence may be sanctified in an act of perception where the most everyday object or experience, because seen as it is, "in its thusness", is acknowledged as a sacrament. Such an act of mind implies a recognition of the self as participant in a system of interdependent things, which in turn requires a critical reassessment of Cartesian dualism, and of its ideological manifestations. "Woman as nature" is Snyder's primary image for the source of sacramental transformation, and for alternatives to the ideology of patriarchal-technological culture. More significantly, however, the image of the feminine simultaneously appears, in the form of the goddesses VAK and GAIA, as a metaphor for the biosphere, the "whole earth", and so for a metaperspective on dualistic oppositions. As such, Snyder's Goddess is more than the reverse image of a patriarchal God. With respect to form, the use of syntax, metaphor, metonymy and open forms seems generally appropriate in articulating these concerns. Unlike some other readers I find that Snyder's use of broadly metaphoric structures is an important aspect of the poetry.



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PREFACE

The call for "relevance" in literary studies though often voiced in rather crude terms is not easily ignored. It may seem odd then to write an English Literature thesis in South Africa on the work of a Californian poet instead of studying more readily available local material. I have found however that while Snyder's poetry generally addresses American culture, it proposes some interesting analytic tools for living and working in this country.

I particularly appreciate Snyder's attempt to recast the terms which usually describe both "spiritual" and "political" vision. I argue that, according to Snyder, the search for a way of being which sanctifies human existence -- the sacramental quest -- will be crucially important in safeguarding not only the freedom of persons but also the continued life of the biosphere itself.

The experience of writing the thesis has been somewhat paradoxical in the light of the issues with which it is concerned. Like other thesis-writers I have often felt isolated in my research and wished for some grouping of similarly interested people with whom I could work. This experience was ironic: much of the thesis examines Snyder's emphasis on community and interdependence, and rejection of the notion of a privatised Cartesian individual. But a text prepared for examination in this way (both the kind of discourse required and the conditions under which it is produced) is a clear embodiment of the very belief that meaningful activity largely takes place in the individual's solitary study. I have been struck by the contradictions inherent in this project.

Nevertheless, I am very lucky in having several friends who have given time and thought to my work, and for this I am very grateful. I would particularly like to thank: Kay McCormick for being a patient, helpful and very understanding supervisor; Gary Snyder for his generous, interesting letters, and for permission to quote from this correspondence; my mother and father for their constant support and interest; Jason Cope for painting the world for me; John Evans, Peter and Michael Kantey, Denis Raphaely, Chris Wildman and Chris Winberg, for their help and encouragement; and Lee Bartlett, Edwin Folsom, Ulf Lie, Thomas Lyon and Dan Mcleod, for sending me copies of their work to which I would not otherwise have had access.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the financial assistance provided by the trustees of the National Scholarship and the Human Sciences Research Council. The conclusions which the thesis proposes are not, however to be regarded as in any way a reflection on either of these bodies.

Lastly, I wish to thank my husband Michael Cope for his enormous contribution of humour, faith and good ideas.

NOTE

Each chapter is prefaced by a brief outline of its structure, indicating the main section divisions within the chapter. These are capitalised, underlined, and numbered with Arabic numerals in the text. Sub-headings are numbered with Roman numerals, as indicated in the Table of Contents. References to works by Gary Snyder appear in the body of the text. Titles of these are abbreviated, except where the full title is required for particular emphasis. First references to works by other writers are fully documented in the appropriate footnote. Subsequent references are generally cited in shortened form in the body of the thesis. In the case of more than one work by the same writer, titles are recognisably abbreviated. Footnotes are marked by a note number enclosed in square brackets (e.g. [1]), and listed at the foot of each page. Foreign terms are capitalised (e.g. SHAKTI), when used in my text (or where such terms are italicised in direct quotation from other writers), and listed in the Glossary.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following works are abbreviated:

AH	Axe Handles
EHH	Earth House Hold
GEN	Paul Geneson, "An Interview with Gary Snyder"
HM	He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village: Dimensions of a Haida Myth
M&R	Six Sections from Mountains and Rivers Without End Plus One
M&T	Myths & Texts
POET	"Poet" in Naropa Magazine
RP	A Range of Poems
RR	Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems
RW	Regarding Wave
SFG	Songs for Gaia
SCHUM	Schumacher Lecture, 1983: "Wild Sacred Good Land"
TBC	The Back Country
TI	Turtle Island
TOW	The Old Ways
TRW	The Real Work: Interviews and Talks (1964-1978)

Publication details of the works by Gary Snyder used in the thesis appear in the Bibliography.

Chapter 1

THE SACRAMENTAL QUESTION: Preparing the Ground

(1) BEGINNINGS
(2) POETRY: 1959-1968
(3) POETRY AND PROSE: 1969-1983
(4) THE PRECIOUSNESS OF MICE AND WEEDS
(5) ON FORM
(6) MY QUESTIONS

This chapter includes a brief survey of available critical material, definition of some terminology, and an outline of the main features of what Gary Snyder has written and in what circumstances. The function of this is to place my interests in the context of the work that has already been done, and so to establish what the particular focus of my analysis will be. The material is organised in six main parts, following a loosely biographical framework. It is necessarily a more dense piece of writing than the later chapters, making use of somewhat lengthy footnotes, and preliminary explanation.

This thesis examines Gary Snyder's later poetry as an exploration of what Nathan Scott calls "the sacramental question." My title functions both as an allusion to the "great need" Scott describes, and a pointer to the resolution Snyder proposes.

> One feels, wherever one turns in this strange, late time, that beneath the flamboyance and antinomianism that are everywhere rampant, the prompting passion by which men are coming more and more to be most deeply moved is a great need -- in the absence of God -- to find the world in which we dwell to be, nevertheless, in some sort a truly sacramental economy, where to be "with it" is to be "with" a sacred reality. We are, it would seem, a people whose most imperious desire is to win the assurance that Moses was given on Mt. Sinai, that the place whereon we stand is holy ground (Acts 7:33). For, distant as the philosophia perennis now is, we still want to be able to make (as it is said in the Consecration Prayer of the Anglican eucharistic office) "a sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving." And thus it comes to be that even for those for whom the traditional language of liturgical theology is quite an alien tongue, the sacramental question remains a most pressing issue, the question as to what it is in the nature of reality that can be counted on finally to sanctify human existence. [my emphasis][1]

Snyder's published writings date from the early 1950's, and his most recent collection of poems appeared in 1983. This study will be limited to the more recent collections of poetry: Regarding Wave(1970), Turtle Island(1974), and Axe Handles(1983).[2] These will be discussed with reference, where appropriate, to the prose collections with which they are more or less contemporary: Earth House Hold(1969), The Old Ways: Six Essays(1977), and The Real Work: Interviews and Talks 1964-1979(1980).

Fairly soon in my reading my attention was attracted by certain of

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1. Nathan A. Scott, The Wild Prayer of Longing (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. xiv.

2. This selection is due in part to the restrictions of an M.A. (time and space), but also to the fact that these publications have had overall less critical attention than the earlier writing, and because they represent an important new stage of development in Snyder's work.

Snyder's early comments which (partly because rather cryptic on their own), helped to focus my attention, and provide one or two lenses that I found useful for reading the poetry.

The first is from a journal entry written during time spent in 1953 at Sourdough Mountain Lookout, and now published in EHH:

> In a culture in which the aesthetic experience is denied and atrophied, genuine religious ecstasy rare, intellectual pleasure scorned -- it is only natural that sex should become the only personal epiphany of most people, and the culture's interest in romantic love take on staggering size. (EHH p. 19)

This suggested a view that I found interesting -- namely that the individual's ability to have access to the world as "a sacramental economy" is related to his/her position in the dominant culture, and consequently that exploration of the sacramental question must imply analysis of the assumptions according to which that culture operates. Further, this suggested that the sacramental question may be a political as well as a spiritual one -- that is, it is related to the study of ideology.

The other comments that I found particularly intriguing concern an attitude towards "woman" that is first articulated in Snyder's B.A. thesis (1951). A central interest here is the mythic significance of woman as "the totality of what can be known" [my emphasis] (HM p. 71). Later, in EHH, this is followed by discussion of what he sees as the Great Goddess, and her historical significance as a counter to the thrust of patriarchal culture:

> As the West moved into increasing complexities and hierarchies with civilization, Woman as nature, beauty, and The Other came to be an all-dominating symbol; secretly striving through the last three millennia with the Jehovah or Imperator God-figure, a projection of the gathered power of

> anti-nature social forces. Thus in the Western tradition the Muse and Romantic Love became part of the same energy, and woman as nature the field for experiencing the universe as sacramental. [my emphasis] (EHH p. 124)

This suggested that a rather particular understanding of the "feminine" is intrinsic to Snyder's critique and the alternatives he presents.

Before I begin the discussion of critical and other material which gave further focus to these initial pointers, I would like to note that: firstly, the use of the term "available" criticism in the outline of this chapter is deliberate. I am aware of some gaps in my reading, a consequence of writing a thesis of this kind in South Africa, where it is difficult to get such material. In some cases, the kind co-operation of the writers themselves has given me access to work that I would not otherwise have had. Secondly, while it is clear that a writer's biography is crucial to any reading of his work, and particularly so in this case, I do not intend giving more than the briefest account of Snyder's story. It has been told fairly often elsewhere. My comments on this are summarised in an appended Chronology.[3]

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3. Snyder's own accounts are probably the most interesting, for example, the East West Interview, and "Poetry, Community and Climax" in TRW. Bob Steuding's book, Gary Snyder (Boston: Twayne, 1976) opens with a brief biography (pp. 17-21), as does Bert Almon's book, Gary Snyder (Boise, Idaho: Boise State Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 5-11. These studies are essentially introductory readings, offering a general view of the whole corpus. While useful in this respect, they can obviously not provide the particular focus of other studies, and so I will not refer to them in much detail. Dan McLeod's entry, "Gary Snyder," in The Beats: Literary Bohemians in Post War America, Vol. 16 of Dictionary of Literary Biography, 1983 ed., is analytic as well as descriptive, noting formative childhood experiences, university work, participation in the "Beat Generation" and beyond, in the context of his poetic development -- from RR to RW and TI.

(1) BEGINNINGS

Gary Snyder was born on the 8th May, 1930, in San Francisco. Most of his boyhood -- the years of the Depression -- was spent in Washington where the family lived on a farm near Seattle. In 1942 the Snyders moved to Portland, Oregon, where he attended high school, returning to Washington during the summers to work at a camp on Spirit Lake. The experiences of these years were significant in preparing for his later interests.

(i) Haida Myth

In 1947 Snyder enrolled at Reed College, Portland, where he majored in literature and anthropology. During this time he began practising ZEN meditation (1949), and had poetry published in a campus magazine.[4] In 1951 he submitted a bachelor's thesis, He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village: The Dimensions of a Haida Myth, which was published in 1979. This insightful analysis of the Swan-maiden story which draws on wide-ranging sources, is an intriguing introduction to many of the concerns that were to shape his later work. Snyder acknowledges this in retrospect:

> I mapped out practically all my major interests and I've followed through on them ever since. Most of the things concerning my poetry are handled there one way or another as well as my particular approach to history, psychological problems, nature of the mind, nature of mythology, function and forms of literature, and so forth. All of these were foreshadowed there. (McLeod, "Gary Snyder", p. 490)[5]

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4. Further references to Zen will not be capitalised, although the term appears in the Glossary.

5. McLeod's discussion of this is based on the assumption that: "Any serious study of Snyder's view of the poet's work or the themes in his own work over the last thirty years should begin with his undergraduate thesis" (McLeod, "Gary Snyder," p. 491).

Snyder's interdisciplinary approach in the thesis is itself an indication of what is to come later. Identifying correspondences and interdependencies between apparently disparate areas of thought and experience is perhaps the most characteristic mode throughout his work. It is based on what Snyder calls "the interdependencies of things", the experience of which is crucial to his response to the sacramental question. It is also informed by his expressed participation in what he calls "The Great Subculture which runs underground all through history" (EHH pp. 114-115).

This mode (one response to being a member of post-colonial culture), makes for poetry which usefully highlights (by its deviation from them) some of the assumptions implicit in much Western literature. It may at the same time be quite problematic. In writing this thesis it was necessary first to have some knowledge of the diverse traditions Snyder takes for granted, and to determinine how to assess the apparent incompatibilities, and then to subordinate this to analysis of the poetry itself. Secondly, it has been difficult to study the different issues raised in the poetry separately, precisely because the "sacramental" consciousness that I am examining is one that celebrates "interconnectedness" and reciprocity.

In the Haida myth thesis I consider the most interesting example of Snyder's eclecticism to be in the prominence given to discussion of "woman", "the goddess", and the "Great Mother", and the so-called "matriarchal" cultures which preceded patriarchy. In the course of this discussion, Snyder draws on Jung, Campbell and Graves (among others) to examine these images of the feminine, and thereby to articulate a theory of myth and its function in culture. As McLeod describes it, the theory

maintains "that the poet-shaman draws his songs from the Mother Goddess and through the magic power of image, metaphor, music and myth creates the artistic patterns that express the most deeply held knowledge and values of the community" (McLeod, "Gary Snyder", p. 491). This prepares for what will become important trends in the later work -- namely an assumption of what may be called a "mythic" view of history and the present, and the prominence given to the Goddess, and in particular the Goddess GAIA, within such a view.[6] Levi-Strauss identifies this "mythic" view with the metaphoric pole of discourse, a point of view that I shall return to later. My reason for mentioning it here is to show that as early as 1951, Snyder's interest in mythic correspondences was preparing the way for stylistic patterns that are prominent in the poetry I examine.

(ii) A Counterculture

> angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night.[7]

In a discussion of the Romantic and Post-Romantic "moment", M. H. Abrams ends with a disparaging mention of the Beat Generation: a literary movement that "deals obsessively with novelty of sensation, illuminated Moments, the visual apocalypse."[8] He cites the ending of Jack Kerouac's The Dharma Bums (1958), its "epiphany on a mountain" being a contemporary example of the degeneration of the form: "Kerouac's revelation of a new world, all gratulant, is the traditional interior apocalypse, gone soft"

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6. As in the case of "Zen", further references to Gaia will not be capitalised, although the term appears in the Glossary.

7. Allen Ginsberg, "Howl", from Howl and Other Poems (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1959), p. 9.

8. M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 424.

(Abrams, p. 426). However, the hero of The Dharma Bums, Japhy Rider, is modelled on Gary Snyder, and the epiphany "gone soft" is a direct result of Kerouac's contact with Snyder, and his spiritual practice. While Abrams' implied generalisation from this example seems questionable in the light of my reading of Snyder, it correctly identifies the search for "illumination" as a characteristic focus of both the post-war movements of the fifties, and the so-called "counterculture" of the sixties.[9]

To the extent that it is categorised at all, Snyder's poetry tends to be thought of as an offshoot of the so-called "Beat Generation". Snyder describes the synthesis this movement involved as:

> a gathering together of all the available myths and motifs of freedom in America that had existed heretofore, namely: Whitman, John Muir, Thoreau, and the American bum. We put them together and opened them out again, and it becomes like a literary motif, and then we added some Buddhism to it. (Quoted in McLeod, "Gary Snyder", p. 491)[10]

The name "The Beat Generation" was first used by Kerouac in the title of one of his stories. When asked in 1952 to define it, he emphasised the sense of "beat" as a sort of weariness: "It's a sort of furtiveness ... and a weariness with all the forms, all the conventions of the world."[11] It was only in 1954 that Kerouac had what seemed to him like

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9. There are now many general studies of this subculture, for example: Dick Hebdige, Subculture: The Meaning of Style (1979; rpt. London: Methuen, 1982); Thomas Parkinson, ed., A Casebook on the Beat, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1961); Theodore Roszack, The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and it Youthful Opposition (London: Faber, 1970); Morris Dickstein, Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties (New York: Basic Books, 1977). My comments here are intended to do no more than draw attention to some salient features.

10. See also Snyder's response to an interviewer's question: "So the subculture which had its roots in the sixties is not something you're pessimistic about, even today?" (TRW p. 68).

11. Quoted in Ann Charters, Kerouac: A Biography (San Francisco, 1973; rpt. London: Deutsch, 1974), pp. 162-63.

a divine illumination concerning the significance of the term, and its possible religious interpretation. Later he insisted that he alone understood the term: "It meant 'beatific', trying to be in a state of beatitude, like St Francis, trying to love all life, being utterly sincere and kind and cultivating 'joy of heart'" (Charters, p. 273).

As Abrams suggests, this search for "beatitude", or epiphany, was an identifying feature of this and the following generation. The point that he does not mention is indicated by Snyder's reference to "myths and models of freedom" -- namely that the celebration of vision and imagination was asserted as a deliberate counter to the dominant values of post-war culture, and its alleged prototype "one dimensional man." Recalling Blake's sense of the political meaning of Vision, the varying attempts by this emerging "counterculture" to "cleanse the doors of perception" were often understood (if often rather naively) to have political significance. In this context, then, Eastern philosophy, drug experiences, the sexual revolution seemed to offer, among other things, a way of seeing that was refreshingly antithetical to the values and assumptions both of orthodox religion, and of what came to be called the "technocracy".[12]

Kerouac's portrayal of Japhy Ryder dates from the time he spent with Snyder in 1956, as a lookout in Mill Valley. Unlike Kerouac, Snyder was accustomed to this sort of life, having spent much of the time since his

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12. Raymond Prince calls this generation the "Neotranscendentalists" in "Cocoon Work: An Interpretation of the Concern of Contemporary Youth with the Mystical," in Understanding Mysticism, ed. Richard Woods (New York: Image Books, 1980), pp. 338-54. See also Aldous Huxley, The Doors of Perception, and, Heaven and Hell (1954 & 1956; rpt. London: Chatto & Windus, 1968); Timothy Leary, Flashbacks: An Autobiography (London: Heinemann, 1983); Theodore Roszack, The Making of a Counterculture, and Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Post-industrial Society (New York, 1972; rpt. London: Faber, 1970).

graduation in 1951 working in wilderness areas. In 1955 Snyder had met Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, as well as other Beats. In the same year they organised a poetry reading at the Six Gallery in San Francisco. Reflecting on it twenty-five years later Snyder identifies the now historic reading as "a curious kind of turning point in American poetry" (TRW p. 162).[13] In 1956, soon after the reading, Snyder left to continue his Buddhist studies in Japan. This meant that he was out of the country when what came to be called the San Francisco Renaissance was starting, and the Beat poets were gaining national recognition.[14] Ten years later, a return visit coincided with another historic gathering: the "Hippy" movement's Great Human Be-In held in Golden Gate Park in 1967, at which Ginsberg and Snyder were present.[15] Snyder's place and influence in these cultural movements is complex, and worthy of another study in its own right. McLeod's article in the Dictionary of Literary Biography is probably the most extended discussion of it. It should, however, be noted that this reading, while useful, does not offer the historical/sociological analysis that seems to be called for, and which I am certainly not equipped to make.

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13. "Poetry suddenly seemed useful in 1955 San Francisco. From that day to this, there has never been a week without a reading in the Bay Area -- actually more like three a night, counting all the coffee shops, plus schools, the art museum, the aquarium and the zoo" (TRW pp. 163-4).

14. In spite of this absence, Thomas Parkinson felt justified in saying: "If there has been a San Francisco Renaissance, Snyder is its Renaissance Man." This assertion appeared in "The Poetry of Gary Snyder," Southern Review, 4 (1968), 617.

15. On the two historic readings McLeod comments: "The different tones and styles of these two subcultural surfacings can be characterised by contrasting Jack Kerouac, wine and jazz, to Timothy Leary, LSD and rock. But their much more important continuities are indicated by the central roles Ginsberg and Snyder played in both historical events" (McLeod, "Gary Snyder," p. 497).

(2) POETRY: 1959-1968

> So there I was, still writing T. S. Eliot poems and hauling sixteen-foot chokers through the Ponderosa pine brush to hook onto cats.... (POET p. 33)

At some point after the incongruity of this situation had become clear to him, Snyder "consciously abandoned poetry. It didn't seem to matter whether I wrote or not" (POET p. 33). Recently graduated from college, he allowed himself to become thoroughly involved in the physical work he was doing: "I became a professional back-country all-purpose worker: logging, fighting forest fires, doing trail maintenance and being back country carpenter for the Forest Service by repairing old log cabins and putting lookouts back into shape ..." (POET p. 33). Then (as he described it in a recent lecture), in the summer of 1955, some new poems began to come (POET p. 33).[16] By 1959, this new way of writing prompted the much-quoted comment in which Snyder describes a relation between the rhythms of his poetry and "the rhythm of the physical work I'm doing and the life I'm leading at any given time."[17] This orientation towards work remains central -- most prominent in Riprap, the earliest collection, and Axe Handles, the most recent.

Riprap (1959) was followed by the publication of Myths and Texts in 1960, a translation of Han Shan's Cold Mountain Poems, and sections from

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16. The first of these was "Piute Creek": "I had never seen that kind of poem before, that I could remember. Then it dawned on me: This is my poem! Nobody else's" (POET pp. 33). Other sources, such as Steuding, suggest that he began this much earlier.

17. Donald Allen, ed., The New American Poetry (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 420.

Mountains and Rivers Without End in 1965, and The Back Country in 1968. Although Snyder spent most of this time in Japan, many of the earlier poems date from the times spent working in American wilderness areas. Consequently the interaction of the mind with wild nature is a recurrent concern in the poetry, as is an increasing identification with the notion of the poet as shaman, a mediator for the Unconscious, the non-human, the Goddess. After several visits since his departure for Japan in 1956, he returned in 1968 to settle in the United States with his wife Masa Uehara and their son Kai. Their second son, Gen, was born the following year (see Chronology).[18]

Many critics have studied Snyder's poetry from this early period. One of the first was Thomas Parkinson. His essay, "The Poetry of Gary Snyder" (1968), gives fairly extended attention to RR, M&T, M&R and TBC. The discussion, which now seems rather partial, raises issues that are treated in more detail by critics that follow, many of whom have concentrated on the early work. Books by Steuding and Almon both give prominence to the early work, and while these readings, attentive to Snyder's use of sources, are useful, they tend to overlook some of the features that I wish to emphasize.[19]

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18. All references to RR and M&T will be to the edition of these in Gary Snyder, A Range of Poems.

19. For example, both critics discuss the "Kali" section of TBC, yet neither attends very closely to this appearance of the goddess -- her ambiguity, and significance in relation to the mythic females who have preceded her in the poetry. This is to some extent redressed by Sherman Paul's useful reading of the earlier poetry in "From Lookout to Ashram: The Way of Gary Snyder," in Repossessing and Renewing: Essays in the Green American Tradition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 195-235. Paul discusses the "back country" as Snyder's root metaphor, and the emerging significance of the mythic feminine.

Criticism of the early work has often taken up the issue of influences, stylistic and otherwise. Opinions on this range from attempts to identify in the work a "Romantic" position, to those that explicitly oppose such identification. However, most critics will tend to agree on Snyder's major literary influences -- Pound, Williams, Rexroth -- although, as Parkinson points out, the affinity with these stems largely from "immersion in the same origins" (Parkinson, "The Poetry," p. 618).[20]

Lee Bartlett, for example, calls M&T "romantic", and analyses the work in the framework provided by Campbell's description of the archetypal "monomyth": separation - initiation - return. This exposition of what he calls Snyder's "great theme"[21] seems appropriate in terms of the attention given to Campbell in the Haida thesis, although it ignores the wider implications of an allegiance to romanticism , and does not give much attention to the formal aspects of the work. In his excellent study, Charles Altieri also discusses the poetry with reference to Snyder's development of "Romantic and objectivist strategies", while at the same time making clear his deviation from Romantic assumptions.[22]

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20. Thom Gunn's appreciative short essay on the work poems from RP and TBC, "The Early Snyder," in The Occasions of Poetry: Essays in Criticism and Autobiography (London: Faber, 1982), pp. 36-46, reads these in the context of their indebtedness to, and significant differences from Williams and Pound. Steuding identifies these and others as influences, including Eliot, Lawrence, Thoreau, Campbell, Jung. For Snyder on those who have influenced his writing, see TRW pp. 56-58.

21. Bartlett calls this "the affirmation of the Dionysian over the Appollonian, the call for a transformation of values and a reintegration of man and nature...." in "Gary Snyder's Myths & Texts and the Monomyth," Western American Literature, 17, No. 2 (1982), 148.

22. Charles Altieri, "Process as Plenitude: The Poetry of Gary Snyder and Robert Duncan," in Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry during the 1960's (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 128-150.

As early as 1970, Thomas Lyon identified Snyder as one of several "Western" writers -- John Muir, Robinson Jeffers, and Frank Waters, and others -- all of whom have actually taken their direction from Thoreau, and only apparently from Romantic writings.[23] McLeod contests Snyder's supposed Romanticism by examining his indebtedness to Chinese sources: "Snyder's poetic practice derives more from Chinese poetry of this man-integrated-into-a-natural-scene tradition than from any of the nature poetry of English or continental romanticism" (McLeod, "Gary Snyder," p. 496).[24] The Chinese influence on his style is clearest in RR, but remains in the later work too: monosyllabic diction, elliptical phrasing, the omission of articles and personal pronouns serving to "blur grammatical distinctions between his subjects and objects" (McLeod, "Images of China," p. 370). I shall consider this feature in some detail.[25]

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23. Thomas J. Lyon, "The Ecological Vision of Gary Snyder," Kansas Quarterly, 2 (Spring 1970), 117-124. Lyon makes a similar point in "Gary Snyder, A Western Poet," Western American Literature, 3 (Fall 1968), 206-216, where he says of these poets: "Their starting point is nature: the mythic, direct, non-intellectualised apprehension of the real that is poetic or mystic, being outside the rational categories of epistemology" (p. 212).

24. Wai-Lim Yip makes a similar point in an article that I will return to later. McLeod's reading is prepared for in the more detailed "Some Images of China in the Works of Gary Snyder," Tamkang Review, 10 (1980), 369-384. Here a discussion of Snyder's Confucianism is followed by useful attention to the influence of Chinese landscape painting on his work -- the T'ang and the S'ung in particular. The clearest example of this is of course Snyder's continuing long work, M&R, which McLeod discusses briefly (pp. 379-80).

25. Steuding also discusses the significance for Snyder of Chinese poetry, the haiku form, scroll painting, and the Buddhist philosophy which informed them. In Gary Snyder, Almon outlines the role of Tantric as well as Zen Buddhism, and North American Indian sources in suggesting the view that all of life is sacred. This aspect is specifically discussed in his article "Buddhism and Energy in the Recent Poetry of Gary Snyder," Mosaic, 11, No. 1 (1977), 117-125.

Robert Kern gives the debate the most extended attention. In "Clearing the Ground: Gary Snyder and the Modernist Imperative" he examines RR, acknowledging the influence of Pound, Williams, Rexroth, while at the same time considering in what senses the collection represents a "postmodern" break with their modernism. He argues that the change here concerns Snyder's conceptions of the status of the poem and of language itself, assumptions which he shares in large part with the adherents of open form poetics. Kern identifies the tendency in modernist poetics to think of the poem as:

> a separate autonomous object, a primary, independent reality unto itself [... which implies] a relationship with the external world best seen not as imitation but as opposition and even antagonism, so that the poem becomes a critical, almost utopian structure radiating value and meaning in the midst of chaotic flux.[26]

Snyder's work calls this view into question, since:

> Rather than such an isolated enclosure or point of rest, it is an opening to the world, a path leading outside itself,a linguistic form that is analogous in structure to the physical world and that exists alongside it but without being closed off from it." (Kern, "Modernist Imperative," p. 176)

This reading, developed in a series of essays, is at the base of Kern's analysis of Snyder's formal poetics, in particular his use of "open forms", which I return to later in this chapter.[27]

Kern focuses on the early work -- RR, M&R, TBC -- and finds evidence for Snyder's break with modernism (and thereby its Romantic heritage) in

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26. Robert Kern, "Clearing the Ground: Gary Snyder and the Modernist Imperative," Criticism, 19, No. 2 (1977), 164.

27. The other essays are: "Toward a New Nature Poetry," Centennial Review, 19, No. 3 (1975), 198-216; "Recipes, Catalogues, Open Form Poetics: Gary Snyder's Archetypal Voice," Contemporary Literature, 18, No. 2 (1977), 173-197; and "Silence in Prosody: The Poem as Silent Form," The Ohio Review, No. 26 (1981), pp. 34-52.

what he calls the "new nature poetry" of this period. By contrast with 19th century nature poets who "never really write about nature but merely about themselves in terms of nature" (Kern, "Nature Poetry," p. 201), or modernist figures like Stevens for whom nature is mediated through the fictive imagination, in Snyder Kern identifies an interest in reality "before it becomes transformed by the imagination" (Kern, "Nature Poetry," p. 213). This makes for poetry which proposes "a new understanding of the relationship between man and nature, an ecological consciousness that leads to an ecological ethics" (Kern, "Nature Poetry," p. 216).[28] As I hope to show, the view of the poem as "isolated enclosure" is one important instance of an entire way of seeing that may be said to be intrinsic to the dominant ideology informing Western culture, and which Snyder's work seeks to question.

Kern's readings do not give emphasis to Myths & Texts, probably because it is so different a piece of work from those he describes. In 1968, Parkinson wrote of M&T: "It has received no prizes, but over the years it may well become, for those men who care, a sacred text" (Parkinson, "The Poetry," p. 625). Following this assessment, many have felt that the book is Snyder's greatest achievement, and have examined it accordingly.[29]

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28. I do not intend to go into the issue of origins and influences in this thesis, although I think that examining Snyder's relation to Romanticism is less straight-forward than most writers suggest, and might be an interesting study.

29. It might be suggested that this has to do with the fact that, unlike RR, the work lends itself to the methods of New Criticism. Richard Howard, for example, discusses RR, M&T, M&R, TBC & TI in "To Hold Both History and Wilderness in Mind," in Alone with America: Essays on the Art of Poetry in the United States since 1950 (New York: Atheneum, 1980), pp. 562-577. While alluding to Snyder's debt to Williams (most clear in RR), he considers M&T the better achievement (p. 565). I found that the title of his essay promised something it did not really offer: "To Hold Both History and Wilderness ..." In a later chapter I shall give some attention to the understanding of "History" that Snyder's poetry suggests -- and the relation of this to perceiving the present moment as sacramental.

The title alludes to two distinct modes of knowing that Snyder identifies, whose application Mcleod accurately describes: "The "Texts" of the poem deal directly with the sensual perception of the phenomenal world; the "myths" develop out of these "texts" and provide symbolic descriptions of the mind's nature" (McLeod, "Images of China," p. 375).[30] In the course of this densely allusive work, Snyder identifies the mythic significance of his own participation in the "Logging", "Hunting", and "Burning" of the American wilderness, and the relation of this experience to social issues and sacramental "seeing". In my references to the poems I shall assume Molesworth's reading of this endeavour: "M&T attempts to clarify the problem that RR portrayed but did not resolve, namely how to integrate the heightened consciousness that the study of nature produces into a coherent social existence."[31] He reads the collection in the light of this problem, and of the recognition that the book suggests, that "transformation of perceptual energies at the level of the individual must be met by a transformation on the political level" (Molesworth, Vision, p. 40).

(3) POETRY AND PROSE: 1969-1983

The extensive critical attention to the early Snyder is one of my reasons for concentrating on the later poetry. This later work shows an increasing involvement in the human community, a clearer sense of the political implications of attitudes towards epiphany, and some important

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30. This reading gives useful attention to the source and significance of Chinese allusions in the book.

31. Charles Molesworth, Gary Snyder's Vision: Poetry and the Real Work (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1983), p. 27.

stylistic developments. The general development is succinctly indicated in the title of Sherman Paul's article, "From Lookout to Ashram: The Way of Gary Snyder." This refers to the movement that Paul traces in the poetry: from the lookout's solitary withdrawal from society, to a revolutionary engagement in "communitarianism", ideally represented in the life on Suwa-No-Se island.[32]

Earth House Hold was published in 1969, but includes a diverse collection of writings which range from early journal entries as solitary look-out (1952-3), to book reviews, a translation from Chinese ("Record of the Life of the Ch'an Master Po-Chang Huai-Hai"), accounts of life in Japan and India, discursive essays, and conclude with a description of life in the Banyan Ashram on Suwa-no-se island, and his marriage to Masa Uehara in 1967.[33] The title puns on the Greek root meaning of "ecology": housekeeping on earth. This, and the subtitle, "Technical Notes and Queries to Fellow Dharma Revolutionaries", suggest the remarkable synthesis the book represents, and which is intrinsic to the social/personal/spiritual revolution Snyder proposes. Molesworth gives a fairly detailed reading of EHH, in particular the essays, which he considers the most direct exposition of Snyder's political vision. At the centre of this is the desire to "move on from Marxism to a model that is both transcendent and yet rooted in the physical world" -- namely the

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32. First published in 1970, after the appearance of RW, Paul's comments on RW anticipate briefly some of my interests in the collection.

33. The description of travel in India may now be supplemented by the recently published Passage Through India (San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1983). This account, though fascinating in its own right, is not directly relevant to my concerns in this thesis, and I shall not give it further attention.

model of the "vast interrelated network" (Molesworth, Vision, pp. 64-77).[34] The general standpoint and particular concepts outlined in these essays (such as "interbirth", the Great Subculture, the tribe, the Goddess, and ideas about the family, wilderness and the unconscious) are certainly seminal to any reading of Snyder's later work, and I shall return to them frequently.[35]

Most people who give any sustained attention to the later poetry, concede that with Regarding Wave Snyder begins a significant new stage of development. Altieri contrasts the "full interrelationships" in RW with their lack in the earlier work: "Interbirth is no longer the controlled mutual dependency of specific events; rather it is universal intercourse or 'Communionism'" (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 143). Similarly, McLeod identifies in RW "a new maturity in Snyder's poetic practice":

> Snyder's poetic fusion of Buddhist and tribal world-views with ecological science is a remarkable cross-cultural achievement -- an utterly appropriate postmodernist expression of a post-industrial sensibility. Since the publication of this book the central theme of Snyder's poetry has been the celebration of life on earth and the proper attention that its successful future entails. (McLeod, "Gary Snyder," p. 498)

Others, such as Steuding, Almon, and Paul, examine the directions such a fusion takes: into what Steuding calls Snyder's "fascination with energy", and (briefly) the relation of this to the feminine. Almon prefaces his discussion of "Buddhism and Energy" in RW and TI with some general comments about Zen and VAJRAYANA which I am glad not to have to repeat

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34. Giving prominence to Snyder's notion of the "tribe", he analyses this ("essentially utopian") vision in terms of Mannheim's typology of utopian thinking, drawing attention to its "Chiliastic" as well as socialist features. Bert Almon's discussion of EHH in Gary Snyder is briefer, but draws attention to the main features (pp. 33-5).

35. The essays include "Buddhism and the Coming Revolution", "Passage to More that India", "Why Tribe", "Poetry and the Primitive", and "Dharma Queries".

(Almon, "Buddhism and Energy," p. 121f.). He uses these doctrines to elucidate ideas in the poetry about animals, food, interdependence and energy.[36] From another perspective, Molesworth writes of Snyder's "Buddhist Marxism", pointing to another sort of fusion articulated in RW. In this context, the term "Communionism" is at once the "universal intercourse" Altieri describes, and a daring neologism which "unabashedly declares the religious ground of Snyder's political vision" (Molesworth, Vision, p. 87). This interrelation of spiritual and political is clearly central to Snyder's response to the sacramental question.

My discussion of RW will focus on some issues that do not seem to have been considered fully enough in the available criticism: namely, the relation Snyder establishes between wave and grain, energy and the Goddess VAK, and the importance of this for a potentially revolutionary way of seeing the world, and our relation to it. This entails drawing attention to the significance of some stylistic features that I think have been overlooked -- in particular the use of metaphor.[37] Several critics have commented almost exclusively on the seminal opening poem "Wave". This is understandable, since here, (as in TI and AH) Snyder uses the first poem to introduce concepts and states of mind that will inform the rest of the collection. I also intend examining "Wave" closely, since the poem is, it seems to me, seminal in Snyder's approach to the sacramental in all the poetry that follows. This will, however, be placed in the context of a

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36. See also the less focused discussion in his book, where he makes the connection between energy, the feminine, and VAK. Paul also makes this connection, suggesting briefly that "Not woman as nature but nature as woman is what he sings -- not a particular woman divinised ... but the Goddess herself" (p. 230).

37. Molesworth is one of the few to identify what he calls the "metaphorical approach" in the first two sections of RW, which contrasts strongly with the more metonymic earlier work (Vision, p. 80).

reading of the collection as whole.

Turtle Island, winner of the Pulitzer prize in 1975, sold remarkably well (almost 70 000 copies), and acquired something of a cult status in the mid-seventies. It is Snyder's most didactic, explicitly political collection of poetry, and for this reason has received more negative criticism than the earlier work. Altieri's analysis in "Gary Snyder's Turtle Island: The Problem of Reconciling the Roles of Seer and Prophet" is perhaps the most telling. He identifies two possible roles for the poet who wants poetry in some way to perform epistemological and social functions. Either mode is problematic, for reasons which his study makes clear. While Snyder's great achievement may be in the first mode, that of seer, the problem with such poems is the tendency to "aestheticize" them that they promote in the reader. In Altieri's words:

> I treat them as acts of mind which formulate a particular way of viewing experience, and I ignore any possible consequences his vision might have for guiding my moral and political actions. I return Snyder's work to the aesthetic mode he seeks to transcend.[38]

The second mode is the prophetic, which is problematic in a different way: "The real tragedy is that in order to gain a public effect Snyder is unfaithful to the basic terms of his vision...." This is because the role of prophet seems to require the assumption of a generalising, rhetorical form that is antithetical to Snyder's characteristic stress on attention to particulars and their interrelationships (Altieri, "Seer and Prophet," p. 770). Kern makes a similar point in "Silence in Prosody: The Poem as Silent Form", where he argues that TI represents an unfortunate movement away from Snyder's earlier (and more successful) style, in favour of a

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38. Altieri, "Gary Snyder's Turtle Island: The Problem of Reconciling the Roles of Seer and Prophet," Boundary 2, 4, No. 3 (1976), 768.

tendency to strong closure and generalisation, arising from the collection's didactic impulse, and its clear assumption of an audience ("Silent Form," p. 46f.).

Molesworth's reading of the collection attempts to answer Altieri's criticism. He suggests that much of TI indicates a future model for the lyric poem, which is set against the traditional dicta of the art lyric -- in particular the strict avoidance of intellectual content and didactic intentions.[39] Molesworth analyses several poems, demonstrating (in my view rather effectively) their formal appropriateness in the light of Snyder's concern for group consciousness and social value (Molesworth, Vision, p. 93f.).

While not explicitly entering this debate, McLeod discusses the movement in Snyder's poetry from the examination of the self in the early work to "the celebration of the human family as a vital part of a broad network of relationships linking all forms of life in RW to the eco-political poems and essays in TI which contains his most didactic poetry" (McLeod, "Images of China," p. 372). He accounts for this change in terms of the development in Snyder's perspective from a Taoist, to a more Confucian emphasis. In the light of this emphasis, the poems in TI are wholly appropriate. I will return to this reading in my discussion of AH, where it is as applicable as in TI.

Other critics have not seemed concerned with problems of this kind. Edwin Folsom, for example, examines TI with respect to what he identifies as its emphasis on "descent", drawing attention to the rejection of

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39. Implicit in this, as Molesworth shows, is a rejection of the poetic assumptions from which the earlier model is derived, namely "the postromantic sense of the isolated artist and the autotelic theories of aesthetic experience" (Vision, p. 93).

patriarchal modes that this implies: "She" is Turtle Island, and she has been raped and ravaged by the American "He".[40] The issue of gender or sexual politics seems to me to be central to Snyder's work, and Folsom is one of the few to have given this much attention. I do, however, have some problems with Folsom's analysis which I discuss in Chapter Three.

In addition to pursuing some of the issues raised by Folsom, I will consider to what extent TI develops the concerns of RW. While to some extent conceding Altieri's assessment, my reading of the poetry will seek to confirm Molesworth's view of Snyder's redefinition of the lyric poem.

TI, which concludes with a section of prose, is followed in 1977 by The Old Ways, a collection of six essays and conference papers, and in 1980 by The Real Work: Interviews and Talks, 1964-1979. Both are important in my reading of the poetry.[41]

Snyder's much-quoted comment helps to explain the first title:

> As a poet I hold the most archaic values on earth. They go back to the late Palaeolithic; the fertility of the soil, the magic of animals, the power vision in solitude, the terrifying initiation and rebirth; the love and ecstasy of the dance, the common work of the tribe. (M&T p. viii, quoted in Molesworth, Vision, p. 2)

This orientation is motivated in TOW by the potentially contentious attempt to understand human development in the context of a "40 000 year time scale",[42] and consequently to articulate what he calls an old-new

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40. L. Edwin Folsom, "Gary Snyder's Descent to Turtle Island: Searching for Fossil Love," Western American Literature, 15, No. 2 (1980), 112.

41. McLeod comments on the significance of the high proportion of prose ("plain talk") at this time, in the light of what he identifies as Snyder's Confucianism (McLeod, "Images of China," p. 372).

42. "In the 40 000 year time scale we're all the same people. We're all equally primitive, give or take two or three thousand years here or a hundred years there" (TOW p. 33).

"poetics of the earth" (TOW p. 40): "We must find our way to seeing the mineral cycles, the water cycles, air cycles, nutrient cycles, as sacramental ..." (TOW p. 63). As this suggests, the collection explores some of my main interests in the thesis. Snyder's anthropological studies lead to discussion of the importance for contemporary poetry of the image of the shaman as singer-healer, his relation to the wilderness, the unconscious and the Goddess. Developing on earlier concepts, comments on the Muse, and the Indian goddess VAK, lead in several related directions: to an account of the earth goddess Gaia (the "great biosphere being"), to the idea of "a sense of place" and the notion of the "self" as participant in an interdependent system, as well as to the politics implicit in such an orientation.[43]

TRW, as the detailed Table of Contents shows, covers a range of concerns, from discussion of poetry, Zen, TANTRA, and MAHAYANA Buddhism, to energy politics, technology, work, and "the language of Muses." EHH's emphasis on the "tribe", and TOW's "sense of place" are extended to include a critique of industrial capitalism, which attempts to redefine the terms in which political discussion is generally expected to take place. At the centre of the alternatives Snyder proposes here is an emphasis on the importance of small-scale, decentralised "community" (an interpersonal corollary of the notion of sacramental "interdependence"), and on the possible function of poetry in such a context: "The community and its poetry are not two".[44] In this context, "the real work" (a term

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43. The main essays here are: "The Yogin and the Philosopher", "The Politics of Ethnopoetics", "Re-inhabitation" and "The Incredible Survival of Coyote".

44. This is the concluding sentence of the last complete entry: "Poetry, Community & Climax" (TRW p. 174). This essay, first published in 1979, is a useful synthesis of Snyder's main concerns during this period.

Snyder uses frequently) means

> to make the world as real as it is, and to find ourselves as real as we are within it.... To take on the struggle without the least hope of doing any good. To check the destruction of the interesting and necessary diversity of life on the planet so that the dance can go on a little better for a little longer.... The real work is eating each other I suppose. (TRW pp. 81-82)[45]

Songs for Gaia was published in 1979, a slim collection of "songs" accompanied by woodblock illustrations. Most of these are collected in Axe Handles (1983). I have not been able to find any studies of these works. My interest in studying AH is to examine its controlling metaphors, and their significance with respect to a sacramental seeing of the world.

(4) THE PRECIOUSNESS OF MICE AND WEEDS

> I don't lay claim to any great enlightenment experiences or anything like that, but I have had a very moving, profound perception a few times that everything was alive (the basic perception of animism) and that on one level there is no hierarchy of qualities in life -- that the life of a stone or a weed is as completely beautiful and authentic, wise and valuable as the life of, say, an Einstein. And that Einstein and the weed know this; hence the preciousness of mice and weeds. (TRW, p. 17)

During most of his years in Japan, Snyder studied RINZAI Zen with Oda Sesso Roshi, at the Daitoku-ji monastery in Kyoto. Although this was clearly a significant influence, Snyder's response to the sacramental question was fairly well articulated before he went to Japan, and included insights from other traditions as well. In this section I will outline

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45. These rather cryptic remarks really need the context of the interview with Paul Geneson, included with some alterations in TRW, to be understood. I hope to show how notions such as these relate to the sacramental question, and "seeing the world in its thusness."

some concepts that will be important in his approach to this question, and in my reading of it. For further reference, a short Glossary is appended.

(i) Epiphany, the Sacramental

The word "sacramental" appears fairly often in Snyder's prose, as a concept that is central to his work and practice.[46] The Church traditionally defines a sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace" (Scott, p. 49). Nathan Scott generalises from this to describe what he calls the "sacramental principle." This is the simple proposition that

> certain objects or actions or words or places belonging to the ordinary spheres of life may convey to us a unique illumination of the whole mystery of our existence, because in these actions and realities ... something "numinous" is resident, something holy and gracious. (Scott, p. 49)

This comes close to what Wendell Berry calls a "religious" state of mind, involving "the sense of the presence of mystery or divinity in the world."[47] Altieri's discussion in Enlarging the Temple considers Snyder's poetry together with Robert Duncan's as examples of the postmodern nature lyric, and examines the work as different attempts to render the state of mind Berry describes. He argues that in Snyder's lyrics this involves "developing specific Romantic and objectivist strategies for focussing the full energies of the mind in moments of

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46. For example: the idea of "woman a field for experiencing the universe as sacramental" (EHH p. 124); the Schumacher Lecture "Wild Sacred Good Land"; a letter received from Snyder, 3 January 1984: "as for immanence, my sense of that is the actualisation of the BODHISATTVA's vow that insight be carried into action, that the world be moved in as sacramental." All further reference to correspondence from Snyder will appear in abbreviated form in the body of the text.

47. Wendell Berry, "A Secular Pilgrimage," Hudson Review, 23 (1970), 402.

intense attention to familiar scenes so as to bring out their numinous aspects (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 129).[48]

These "moments of intense attention" are what I call epiphanies. Since its famous appearance in Stephen Hero, the word "epiphany" has been used frequently in literary criticism to denote a variety of experiences, often rather different from the particular sort of "showing forth" that Joyce intended.[49] My interest in the term derives in part from the different ways it may be understood. In Snyder it might denote an experience such as this:

> The phenomenal world experienced at certain pitches is totally living, exciting, mysterious, filling one with a trembling awe, leaving one grateful and humble. The wonder of the mystery returns direct to one's senses and consciousness: inside and outside, the voice breathes, "Ah!" (EHH p. 123)

However, this statement on its own could be misleading, since Snyder's response to "the sacramental question" does not necessarily imply so exceptional an epiphany. On the contrary, it is precisely the popular notion that intense moments must be rare and exotic that much of his work seeks to counter.

In the journal entry about epiphany with which I introduced this chapter, he identifies this misconception in terms of the poverty of civilised culture, while occupied with the attempt to reverse this process for himself. Twenty-five years later his position has not changed fundamentally: "To see the world for now in its thusness is finally all we

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48. Most interesting here is the attention given in this reading to the stylistic implications of Snyder's religious orientation.

49. See M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms (1957; rpt. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971): recalling Joyce, Abrams defines "epiphany" as a "manifestation".

want, all we need...." (GEN p. 92)[50] The concern here, and throughout his work, is with discovering the process whereby the given, often unexceptional, experience is recognised to be what it is, and thereby is seen as numinous. Accordingly, every moment is potentially the "moment of vision", since this vision depends on a disciplined attention to particulars.[51]

This point of view is explicable in terms of his involvement with Buddhism, in particular with Zen, where the practice of "mindfulness" and the emphasis on "attention" that Altieri identified, are central. Implicit in this perspective is the understanding of the comparative ordinariness ("nothing special") of the "miracles" that enlightened perception reveals. A well-known KOAN puts it like this:

> How wondrously strange,
> and how miraculous this:
> I draw water, I carry fuel.[52]

When asked in an interview about the nature of his religious practice, Snyder is evasive, and finally rejects the dichotomy that the question

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50. Although it is not included in the version published in TRW, this comment appears in Snyder's interview with Paul Geneson, as a restatement of an earlier point. According to this, an important part of the work of poetry has to do with "bringing us back to our original, true natures from whatever habit-molds that our perceptions, that our thinking and feeling get formed into. And bringing us back to our original true mind, seeing universe freshly in eternity, yet any moment" (GEN p. 92).

51. His early accounts of attempts to perceive the world as sacramental are interesting, the implication being that this faculty requires cultivation. Writing from his lookout post in the mountains again -- "Strange how unmoved this place leaves one; neither articulate nor worshipful; rather the pressing need to look inward and adjust the mechanism of perception" (EHH p. 4).

52. Compare Snyder's comment that, by contrast with the Hindu perspective, the MAHAYANA Buddhists "think one step beyond that, that is to say, beyond the ultimate void is this.... And because the universe is empty, and infinite and eternal. Because of that, weeds are precious, mice are precious" (TRW p. 21).

implies: "from the enlightened standpoint, all of language is poetry, all of life is practice. At any time when the attention is there fully, then all of the BODHISATTVA's acts are being done" (TRW p. 134). In this context, attention or mindfulness involves an experience of union or identity with whatever is the focus of attention: as Snyder suggested in a letter to me,

> Epiphany is that moment when you become one with something. The swoop of a bird, the sound of the rain, the clack of a broken tile, peach blossoms. And also, another human being. But in Zen language we don't exploit the sexual metaphor, because the kind of oneness I am speaking of here -- that is non-dualistic and depends neither on the human or the non-human -- is far deeper than sexual love, and the metaphor of sexual love as "oneness with the divine" is misleading. (Letter 3/1/84)

(ii) Interbirth

In TOW, Snyder refers to what he calls (with, one imagines, at least a touch of humour) "The AVATAMSAKA ("Flower Wreath") jeweled - net - interpenetration - ecological - systems - emptiness - consciousness" (TOW p. 64). This extraordinary formulation functions as a shorthand for the eclectic synthesis of ecological, Buddhist and other models he proposes.[53] At the same time it is a name for a way of seeing that justifies this kind of eclecticism, and which in his terms makes experience of a sacramental reality possible.

The emphasis on "interdependence" which this synthesis suggests will be fundamental in my reading. In EHH it appears in a meeting of Buddhist and contemporary ecological observations with the world-view of Australian

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53. This is the same eclecticism which informed his thesis. It derives from a sense of tradition which extends back into pre-literate societies, and which includes the geographically and chronologically separate elements of what he calls The Great Subculture, which "runs underground all through history" (EHH p. 115).

aborigines. My particular interest is in the implied connection between this view and the image of the Great Goddess:

> The Australian aborigines live in a world of ongoing recurrence -- comradeship with the landscape and continual exchanges of being and form and position; every person, animals, forces, all are related via a web of reincarnation -- or rather they are "interborn". It may well be that rebirth (or interbirth, for we are actually mutually creating each other and all things while living) is the objective fact of existence which we have not yet brought into conscious knowledge and practice.
>
> It is clear that the empirically observable interconnectedness of nature is but a corner of the vast "jewelled net" which moves from without to within. The spiral ... is a symbol of the Great Goddess. (EHH p. 129)

The "jewelled net" to which this refers is the net of INDRA, described in the AVATAMSAKA sutra, or "jewel ornament sutra."[54] One commentator describes it as follows:

> In the heaven of Indra there is said to be a network of pearls so arranged that if you look at one you see all the others reflected in it. In the same way, each object in the world is not merely itself, but involves every other object, and in fact is every other object."[55]

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54. In a letter, Snyder describes it as "a metaphor for mutual embracing, mutual interpenetrating, and simultaneous maintenance of unique individual existence" (Letter 20/8/84).

55. M. Ferguson, "Karl Pribram's Changing Reality," in Ken Wilber, ed., The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes (Shambhala: Boulder, 1982), p. 25. This is quoted as evidence that ancient mystical tradition had access to an understanding of "holographic" reality. The sutra, and the understanding of "interrelatedness" that it suggests, have been used in recent years to support what Ken Wilber has disparagingly called "pop holistic philosophy" in particular by those wishing to draw parallels between recent developments in scientific epistemology and mystical philosophy (See "Reflections on the New-Age Paradigm: A conversation with Ken Wilber", in Wilber, ed., p. 258). The work done on the so-called "Holographic Paradigm" is a relevant example. This model suggests a metaphor for reality that has developed from the work of Stanford neurosurgeon Karl Pribram, and English physicist David Bohm. According to this model, the brain can be understood as a hologram, interpreting a holographic universe. This is at least superficially similar to a Buddhist view: see for example Snyder's reference in TRW to the Buddha's words about a blade of rice (TRW p. 35).

Altieri identifies the concept of "interbirth" or "Communionism" to which this points, as being Snyder's fundamental religious insight (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 132). Molesworth makes a further point when he examines it as an innovative political term (Molesworth, Vision, pp. 85-87).

(iii) Biosocial Imperialism:

While several critics do refer to the political significance of Snyder's vision,[56] Charles Molesworth in his recent book Gary Snyder's Vision: Poetry and the Real Work. is the first to give it extended attention. This useful study examines the development in Snyder's work (all the books are discussed) of a political vision that is radically at odds with the dominant values of Western society, while addressing itself to that society in terms which it no longer recognises as being political. This means a reading of Snyder as;

> a visionary poet, but one who operates in a context -- historical, political and literary -- that no longer assumes that political vision can be derived from, or cognate with, anything like confidence in traditional metaphysical truth or the ultimate harmonising of established theological concepts. (Molesworth, Vision, p. 6)

I also intend examining the possibility that Snyder's "vision" has political as well as spiritual significance. My sense of this vision is largely in agreement with Molesworth's. In addition, however, I wish to consider some different aspects of the subject.

The "jewelled net" conception of how objects in the world relate to each other recalls a comment with which Snyder introduced a lecture in

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56. For example, Lyon: "the ultimate meanings in Snyder's poetry, deeply revolutionary meanings in the sense of consciousness-changers, putting him in a different place from where he thought he was all these years, can be sensed in the formal poetics alone" (Lyon, "Ecological Vision," p. 120).

1974. The view that it implies will be central to my reading of the poetry:

> From the standpoint of the 70's and 80's it serves us well to examine the way we relate to those objects we consider to be outside ourselves -- non-human, non-intelligent, or whatever." (TOW pp. 9-10)

In the course of the thesis I will suggest that the idea of epiphany as "that moment when you become one with something", and a belief in the possibility of sacramental "interbirth", imply an understanding of the "self" and its relation to things "outside" that is in conflict with many of the concepts on which both Western metaphysics, and our dominant culture are founded. For Snyder, as for Blake, the sacramental question has everything to do with analysis of cultural assumptions of this kind. In essence, his diagnosis of the current social malaise (which has as its symptoms not only the difficulty of access for most people to a "sacramental" reality, but equally, the possible destruction of life on the planet), points to the dualistic epistemology on which it is founded. In my opinion, the "jewelled net" of the AVATAMSAKA sutra, what Snyder has called "a kind of spiritual ecology" (Letter 20/8/84), is a metaphor for what may be called a Systems, or communications-oriented view of experience. According to this, any system involving life or mind, or simulating life or mind, is an open system -- that is, one where the relationship to a supersystem is indispensable to its survival.[57] The model has been most obviously applicable to ecology and biology, the crucial insight here being that the exchange of information and energy between organism and environment is indispensable for the survival of each.

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57. Anthony Wilden, System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange (London: Tavistock, 1972), p. 203. See Wilden's discussion, "The Closed and the Open System," pp. 356-361.

In discussing this aspect of the poetry I will refer to Anthony Wilden's System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange, a study of epistemology and ideology that assumes a cybernetic or systems model.[58] With respect to the question of our relation towards "those objects we take to be outside ourselves", he examines Western industrial culture, which has traditionally depended on

> an "ethic of disposability" for which natural resources, other people's ecosystems, "other" human beings in general, and the disposable beercan have had roughly the same (exchange) value. Having taught that all that it defines as environment is disposable, modern industrial society has only just begun to learn that THE SYSTEM WHICH DISPOSES OF ITS ENVIRONMENT DISPOSES OF ITSELF. (Wilden, p. 207)

In this context, the notion of "someone else's ecosystem" is a metaphor of the epistemological error which lies behind the present biosocial crisis (Wilden, p. 207).

Wilden's discussion of conceptual division of this kind goes back to Descartes, and the society which helped to produce his unambiguous assertion of the existence of clear and distinct ideas, and consequently, clear and distinct people:

> I knew that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is only to think, and which, in order to be, has need of no locus and does not depend on any material thing, in such a way that this self or ego, that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body ... and even if the body ceased to exist, my soul would not cease to be all that it is. (Descartes, Discourse on Method, quoted in Wilden, p. 212)

In this clear statement of an atomistic epistemology, Wilden identifies

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58. My comments here on this complex study are necessarily brief and oversimplified. See Wilden (pp. 202-5), for a clear outline of the "Tentative Axioms" on which his analysis is based. Wilden develops on Gregory Bateson's theories on this. Compare Gregory Bateson's discussion of what he calls "the pattern which connects" in Mind and Nature: A Neccesary Unity (London: Fontana, 1980).

the crucial conceptual error upon which we still depend. The error, which he calls "biosocial imperialism", is based on a notion of reality as an aggregate of individual bodies, ignoring feedback and relationship. Consequently, it has its expression in an industrial society founded erroneously on "THAT PERCEPTION OF THE BIOSOCIAL UNIVERSE WHICH DESCRIBES THE UNIT OF SURVIVAL AS THE INDIVIDUAL (the individual organism, species, family line, system, and so on)" (Wilden, p. 218):

> It is an epistemology of biosocial imperialism. In Bateson's terms, it is an epistemology of linear causation or "force" or "power". For the general systems theorist it involves the imposition of closed-system thinking on those aspects of reality which are open systems; it denies the relationship between energy and information by splitting symbiotic wholes (ecosystems) into supposedly independent "things".
>
> The same epistemological error obtains whatever the ecosystem or the level of ecosystem we are concerned with: biological, psychological, socio-economic.... In its ideological manifestations (for every ideology is dependent on a theory of knowledge and vice-versa), the same error feeds pollution, racism, alienation, exploitation, oppression, and ALL OTHER FORMS OF PATHOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION. (Wilden, p. 210)

According to this, the conceptual line that separates organism from environment has its consequence in a society founded on oppositional (and essentially exploitative) relationships. This is illustrated as follows:

OPPOSITIONAL RELATIONS:

"ORGANISM"	"ENVIRONMENT"
Man	Nature
Self	Other
We	Them
Ego	Superego (or Id)
Man	Woman
Reason	Emotion
Mind	Body
White	Non-white
"Civilised"	"Primitive"
Capital	Labour (Wilden, p. 221)

Wilden's model of "oppositional relations", which is in effect a critique of dualism, will provide a context for my reading. In discussing Snyder's work I shall use the term "dualism" to refer to conceptual frameworks of the kind Wilden describes, in which experience tends to be understood in terms of independent (and mutually exclusive) elements that are in an oppositional relation to each other. An obvious example of this is the dichotomy of body and soul, or secular and sacred, and the concepts of deity with which with such divisions are often linked. In "A Secular Pilgrimage", Wendell Berry writes of this kind of dualism:

> I begin, then, with the assumption that perhaps the great disaster of human history is one that happened to or within religion: that is, the conceptual division between the holy and the world, the exerpting of the Creator from the Creation. (Berry, p. 403)

In Buddhism, in addition to the dualism of body - soul, etc., the attention is drawn to the dualism of self - other, subject - object. Chogyam Trungpa describes the experience of this division as a stage in the development of ego:

> Instead of being one with space, we feel solid space as a separate entity, as tangible. This is the first experience of duality -- space and I, I am dancing in this space, and this space is a solid, separate thing. Duality means 'space and I,' rather than being completely one with the space. This is the birth of 'form,' of 'other.'[59]

Conceptual divisions of this kind are most clearly evident at a linguistic level where the affirmation of one proposition (X) immediately implies the exclusion of its negation (not X).

From a Buddhist perspective, however, the perception of the world that is inherent in this sort of division is illusory, since, according to

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59. Chogyam Trungpa, Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1973), p. 123.

AVATAMSAKA philosophy:

> The One embraces All, and All is merged in the One. The One is All, and All is the One. The One pervades All, and All is in the One. This is so with every object, with every existence.[60]

Consequently, Buddhist writings and practice emphasise the need to transcend, or go beyond dualism. Thus, in place of the logical antithesis of "yes" and "no", Zen as Suzuki describes it seeks "a higher form of affirmation, where no contradicting distinctions obtain between negation and assertion" (Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, p. 67). In this work, the KOAN exercise and meditation practice have an important function.

(5) ABOUT FORM

The problem of verbal description has been a recurrent one for people wanting to speak of an experience of epiphany. In The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, Tom Wolfe's influential book about Ken Kesey's band of Merry Pranksters and their experiments with LSD, the Pranksters' experience is presented in terms of what has been called "experience of the holy": "They all went through an ecstasy, in short."[61] Intrinsic to their attitude towards this, though, was a deliberate caution about naming this experience, which Wolfe calls "The Unspoken Thing": "They made a point of not putting it into words. That in itself was one of the unspoken rules.

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60. Quoted in D. T. Suzuki, An Introduction to Zen Buddhism, 1949; rpt. (London: Rider & Co., 1969), p. 67.

61. Tom Wolfe, The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (1968; rpt. New York: Bantam, 1981), p. 113.

If you label it this, it can't be that ..." (Wolfe, p. 112).[62] This point of view suggests an attitude towards language that is common in the mystic or ecstatic tradition, for which verbal accounts are always problematic, provisional: a very inappropriate if necessary and perhaps inevitable means.[63] The view is particularly important in Zen, with its attempt to go beyond dualism. Here the emphasis is always "no depending on words", since the meaning is said to lie outside the teachings, independent of words and doctrines.

Paradoxically, however, writing poems has always been given an important place in Zen as one of the mystic Ways: KADO, the Way of Poetry.[64] In other traditions too, people continue to write about experiences of sacramental union, transcendence, epiphany. This suggests that while such experiences are generally acknowledged (almost by definition) to surpass linguistic means, and must finally remain unsayable, it often seems necessary to make an attempt at articulation.

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62. In spite of this, an identifying argot inevitably developed amongst this new subculture ("either you're on the bus or you're off the bus"), that was characterised by numerous attempts to speak about the inexpressable. Note: my use of this example is not wholly gratuitous, given that Snyder and Kesey shared similar Californian "counter-cultural" status.

63. The anonymous 14th century author of The Cloud of Unknowing, ed. J. McCann (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), for example, understands the situation as follows (the explanation is appropriately supranaturalistic). Words are formed with the tongue which, being physical, is part of nature, fallen, and so unsuitable for describing spiritual experience. Always conscious of the dangers of a literal reading of mystical imagery, he advises the reader not to misunderstand the spatial reference of prepositions like "up", "down", "in", "out", etc. (The Cloud, p. 69f). In the early sixties Bishop Robinson found it necessary to repeat the point in Honest to God (1963; rpt. London: SCM, 1976). According to the author of The Cloud, words are best used as little as possible: "Take thee but a little word of one syllable, for so it is better than of two; for the shorter the word, the better it accordeth with the work of the Spirit" (The Cloud, p. 56).

64. Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto, trans. and ed., Zen Poems of China and Japan: The Crane's Bill (New York: Grove Press, 1973), p. xlvii.

D. T. Suzuki quotes Asvaghosa on this:

> If we did not appeal to language there is no way to make others acquainted with the Absolute: therefore language is resorted to in order to serve as a wedge in getting out the one already in use; it is like a most poisonous medicine to counteract another. It is a most dangerous weapon, and its user has to be cautioned in every way not to hurt himself.[65]

Snyder shares something of this traditional ambivalence, as several critics have acknowledged.[66] In an interview in TRW he describes his attempts to write "the true poem", which involve "walking that edge between what can be said and that which cannot be said. That's the real razor's edge ..." (TRW p. 21). In 1970, Thomas Lyon (who considers Snyder's best poems to be an expression of what he calls "the ecstatic ecology of wholeness"), identified the dilemma as being:

> how to talk about things, especially wild ones, without harming their integrity with language; how to preserve and communicate suchness without falling into an arch aesthetic distance between subject and object, a romantic decoration that destroys the very wholeness, which is wildness, one loved and wanted to convey somehow. (Lyon, "Ecological Vision," p. 119)

Lyon's fairly brief analysis of the earlier work (up to RW) discusses some of the formal means by which Snyder moves towards solving this problem --

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65. D. T. Suzuki, "The Basis of Buddhist Philosophy," in Understanding Mysticism, ed. R. Woods (New York: Image Books, 1980) p. 136. This attitude results in the frequent use of paradoxical propositions in Zen writing, as an attempt to convey a mode which as Suzuki puts it, "in its very nature transcends linguistics."

66. For example, in "Language Against Itself: The Middle Generation of Contemporary Poets," in American Poetry Since 1960: Some Critical Perspectives, ed. R. B. Shaw (Cheadle, Cheshire: Carcanet, 1973) Alan Williamson places Snyder (whom he calls "a kind of patron saint of ecology"), as one of the most important of a number of contemporary poets whose essential project is to "force language to transcend itself" (p. 55). Others in the same grouping are James Wright, Galwey Kinnell, W. S. Merwin, Robert Bly, as well as less obviously, John Ashberry, Robert Creeley, and Adrienne Rich -- all desiring "a word we can hear meant by the entire man who speaks it ..." (p. 55).

and which make his work fundamentally different from the "cutely impotent romanticism" in which it may appear at first sight to have its origins.[67] Lyon's description comes close to the way that I would phrase the problem for my purposes here: how to write about perceiving the world as sacramental in a language that is not saturated with the ideology of patriarchal-technological culture, that is not conditioned by the opposition of subject and object, or dominated by the Cartesian notion of the "clear and distinct." However this is described, the problems seem to arise from the paradox implicit in using a language that functions on the basis of the logical either-or to articulate a non-dualistic perception.

In spite of what this might suggest, Snyder does of course continue to write poetry, and in fact considers certain kinds of poetry to have a crucial social function in healing division (whether conceptual divisions or otherwise). This point of view (which is particularly evident in the later work) is articulated most thoroughly in "Poetry, Community and Climax" where he discusses the role of "healing songs" in the process of restoring a sense of community and the sacramental:

> "We must go beyond just feeling at one with nature, and feel at one with each other, with ourselves. That's where all natures intersect. Too much to ask for? Only specialists, mystics, either through training or good luck, arrive at that. Yet it's the good luck of poetry that it sometimes presents us with a moment of true nature, of total thusness ....(TRW p. 172)

Given this orientation towards linguistic expression, the forms used become interesting.

In what follows I will outline some critical commentary on Snyder's use

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67. For example, Snyder's "colloquial, object laden language" (Lyon, "Ecological Vision," p. 120), Zen "pointing", the significance of the verse rhythms, etc.

of form in order to clarify my own focus. The main areas of interest here concern the use of open forms, syntax and metaphor.

(i) Open Forms

> For me every poem is unique. One can understand and appreciate the conditions which produce formal poetry as part of man's experiment with civilisation. The game of inventing an abstract structure and then finding things in experience which can be forced into it. A kind of intensity can indeed be produced this way -- but it is the intensity of sweating and straining against self-imposed bonds. Better the perfect, easy discipline of the swallow's dip and swoop, "without east or west".
>
> Each poem grows from an energy-mind-field-dance, and has its own inner grain. To let it grow, to let it speak for itself, is a large part of the work of the poet.[68]

This account of a discipline which relies on the shape of the external world to inform the poetry is Snyder's version of what has generally been called "open form poetics", a theory for poetry formally described by Charles Olson and others in the 1950's. In Snyder's case this is at least in part a response to the sense that formal choices tend to be conditioned by ideology, a view that Parkinson implied in his assessment of RR as "an uneasy wedding of European forms with attitudes that threaten and try desperately to break those forms" (Parkinson, "The Poetry," p. 622).

In the most obvious sense, a structure that is "open" is one that resists closure. This may apply to descriptions of poems, or (apparently separate) natural objects. Kern shows that open forms are intrinsic to the "ecological consciousness" that Snyder's work proposes. He offers a very useful general discussion and exposition of open form poetics, and

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68. Snyder, "Some Yips and Barks in the Dark," in Naked Poetry, ed. Stephen Berg and Robert Mezey (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1969), p. 357.

a detailed reading of the poetic adequacy of Snyder's contributions to this.[69] Essential to the theory in Snyder's case is firstly, what Olson called "getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego", and secondly, the "objectivist" desire to encounter reality immediately, to see things just as they are (Kern, "Modernist," pp. 166-7).

Another significant aspect of the theory is an emphasis on poetry in performance, and a consequent stress on the importance of the breath. Snyder's emphasis on this is also informed by his interest in ethnopoetics. In his view, the "poem" is located in the utterance, for which the written text functions as a scoring: "voice and silence, how it is to be timed" (TRW p. 31. See also EHH p. 117, and p. 123). For this reason, the oral (or aural) features of a poem are significant. Williamson comments on this emphasis on the "breath", and the use of sound:

> In sound, too, Snyder is perhaps the subtlest craftsman of his generation. He derives mainly from the Pound / Williams / Projectivist line, and hence writes the most "open", the least heavily accented free verse; but his most important inheritance from Pound (and from Robert Duncan) is perhaps his use of rhyme, and of syncopated versions of traditional meters, within a free form poem to bring it nearer to incantation and song. (Williamson, "Language Against Itself," p. 62)[70]

In discussing the poetry, I shall consider how the use (or avoidance)

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69. See in particular, "Recipes, Catalogues, Open Form Poetics: Gary Snyder's Archetypal Voice."

70. These general observations, while useful on their own, lead Williamson to conclusions about the "religious" aspects of the poetry that I have difficulty with, and mention later in the thesis. Steuding also discusses Snyder's use of sound (p. 24f.). However this is not placed in the context of his Buddhism. The failure to make this sort of connection arises at least in part from the structure of Steuding's book which deals with "form" in general at the beginning. I find this a problem, and this is why I have organised my analysis in the body of the thesis differently. Steuding also gives little attention to metaphor and syntax which I consider to be central.

of open forms relates to Snyder's response to the sacramental question.

(ii) Syntax and Metaphor

The second area to consider is one raised by Parkinson in 1968, when he drew attention to the significance of syntactic and metrical features of Snyder's poetry, and proposed a corresponding reorientation of critical expectations: "New criticism (old style) placed heavy weight on suggestion and symbolic reference; now as our poetry stresses drama and syntactic movement, vocality, it seems necessary to supplement the notion, and a pernicious one, that poetry functions through symbol mainly" (Parkinson, "The Poetry," p. 624). Since then much criticism has drawn attention to syntactic features, and rightly so, given their appropriateness with respect to Snyder's religious position. For example, Altieri's reading is introduced by the claim that:

> To the degree metaphor is distrusted, pressure is placed on syntax to satisfy a reader's desire for significance and aesthetic pleasure, and to the degree poets reject abstract themes or formal patterns, there is a need to make specific lyric poems and isolated moments of lyric vision cohere in some larger system of internal connections. (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 129)[71]

This comment points to a critical trend that has tended to examine syntax to the exclusion of metaphor, or rather, to emphasize Snyder's "distrust" of metaphor, and the correspondingly "non-metaphoric" nature of his work.

Wai Lim Yip gives probably the fullest treatment of the question in an article that I consider to be a fine introduction to many of the issues that I deal with. Yip argues that Snyder makes little use of metaphor. He compares the aesthetic consciousness of landscape as it is expressed in

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71. Altieri's discussion of language and syntax in particular poems is illuminating. He does not seem to decide the issue of metaphor clearly enough, however.

Chinese and Anglo-American poetry, seeking to dispel the easy equivalences that have been presumed to exist between Romantic nature poetry (eg: Wordsworth), and Chinese Nature poetry: "The Chinese poet's consciousness of landscape as an aesthetic object in and by itself is a perceptual-expressive as well a genre possibility hardly circumscribed by any of the English nature poets."[72] The first section of the essay is a very lucid introduction to Chinese landscape poetry, in which the issue of metaphor is central:

> The view that landsape qua landscape is Nature's Way points to the merging of vehicle and tenor: the tenor is contained in the vehicle, or the vehicle is the tenor, the container is the contained, the thing named is the thing meant. This explains why a large proportion of Chinese poetry is non-metaphorical and non-symbolic. Because of the merge, it does not require human intellect to interfere or mediate. (Yip, p. 218)

By contrast with the Romantic search for an imagination that sees beyond the phenomenal to the noumenal, Yip identifies poets like Snyder, Charles Tomlinson and the later Rexroth as being liberated from such "Aristotelian perceptual constructs", to see more clearly the implications of the Chinese model (Yip, p. 231).

McLeod makes a similar point about the short lyrics, in particular the nature poems, which he compares with Sung landscape painting:

> Seeing clearly is central to Snyder's life and work, and his way of seeing has been splendidly conditioned by Chinese painting and CH'AN meditation. The vision of these poems is unobscured by any sort of elaborate poetic figure. There are no metaphors, the diction is notably simple and monosyllabic, and the images are concrete and clear. (McLeod, "Images of China," p. 380)

This agrees to a large extent with Kern's view of the "metonymic"

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72. Wai-Lim Yip, "Aesthetic Consciousness of Landscape in Chinese and Anglo-American Poetry," Comparative Literature Studies, 15, No. 2 (1978), 211.

features of the early work. He shows that the suppression of the lyrical subject involves a tendency towards metonymy and silence -- "a new kind of closure" (Kern, "Silent Form," p. 41) -- which is very appropriate to Snyder's thematic concerns: his early poems are "inescapably anti-literary -- metonymic and elliptical in style, impatient with language, especially in its literary seductiveness, and always aware of a reality beyond verbal reach" (Kern, "Modernist," p. 170).[73] This reading seems largely accurate, although I would tend to consider even it to be a slight simplification (consider, for example, the essentially metaphoric role of the goddess Diana in M&T). However, my concern is not with this period of work.

The most extreme expression of the view that Snyder avoids metaphor may be seen in this comment by Howard, writing about the appearance in the poetry of experience "without interpretation": "There will be nothing transcendent about such realia, vivid, but never evoked, present because (merely!) perceived: there are no symbols in Snyder's poetry, no metaphors even, nothing ever stands for anything else..." (Howard, p. 576).[74] Written in 1980, this statement illustrates the problems that arise when commentary generalises from the early work.

Superficially appealing as such general assertions may be, I suspect that they must be inadequate. It should be clear that Snyder has good reason for being wary of the dualisms implicit in the kind of metaphoric

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73. By contrast, the later work (TI is used as the main example) is shown to represent a less appropriate movement away from this, with poems that tend towards strong closure and generalisation, arising from the didactic impulse of the collection and its clear assumption of an audience. Compare Altieri's discussion of metonymy in "Objective Image and Act of Mind in Modern Poetry," PMLA, 91, No.1 (1976), 108.

74. Similarly, Julian Gitzen, "Gary Snyder and the Poetry of Compassion," Critical Quarterly, 15 (1976), p. 343.

transfer used by orthodox Christian mystics and others, and of the metaphors and symbols characteristic of so much Romantic and Modern poetry. However, the most cursory reading of the later poetry will reveal both the metonymy and syntax that Kern and others have led us to expect, and in addition, a fairly high proportion of significantly different syntactic forms, as well as what we ordinarily call metaphor.

The question of the role of metaphor is important in the thesis, and I will give it fairly detailed attention. That is, I will examine both syntactic features of the poetry, and the possibility that the use of metaphor is an important aspect of what Snyder is doing. Molesworth is one of the few to give the prominence to metaphor that I consider appropriate. He shows that for Snyder, Buddhism (in particular the position of the AVATAMSAKA sutra) is not only a source of metaphor, but also a source of an attitude towards metaphor. Thus, a consequence of belief in the notion of the jewelled network, mutual interdependence, is that

> no metaphor is possible, since all is contained in all to begin with. More precisely, in such a view metaphor will not have the transgressive or daring quality it has in, say, modernist or surrealist writing. Metaphor will be healing and corrective rather than normative, disruptive or innovative. (Molesworth, Vision, p. 89).[75]

This insight recalls an earlier point made by Altieri about the "lack of tension" in Snyder's poems: By contrast with the modernist's heroic imperative to reconcile opposites (Yeats, Eliot, Pound) --

> For Snyder, on the other hand, the purpose of the poem as dialectic is to reduce tension by affirming the opposites' need for one another. Snyder, then, does not require heroic

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75. A similar point is made in The Holographic Paradigm. Here, Pribram's model suggests that there is no such thing as metaphor, or rather, that all metaphor is true, since "everything is isomorphic" (Wilber, ed., p. 10).

enterprise; reconciliation of the opposites is possible for all because the reconciliation need not be imposed: it exists in fact. (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 137)]

My reading of Snyder's metaphors (and in particular his search for metaphors that are non-dualistic) will tend to support these observations.

I propose to use the term "metaphor" in two slightly different senses. The first denotes, broadly speaking, a semantic transfer, while the second concerns the way in which a discourse is constructed, how the constituent elements are combined, whether on the basis of their similarity or their contiguity.

The particular definition of metaphor as semantic transfer derives from a paper by Eva Kittay and Adrienne Lehrer, "Semantic Fields and the Structure of Metaphor."[76] The authors suggest a model for discussing the relation of metaphor to conceptual schemes which enables "metaphor" to refer to larger semantic units than the single word, as in the case of the extended metaphor. Semantic Field Theory assumes that the meaning of a word (lexeme) is conditioned by the semantic context (field) in which it occurs. In metaphor, lexical items from one semantic field (donor) are transferred to another semantic field (recipient). This transfer imposes a structure on the recipient, as a result of which something is revealed or clarified. Because of this reorientation of perspective, syntagmatic relations are set up in the recipient field which mimic those in the donor.

Kittay and Lehrer's model is useful to me because it may be fairly generally applied -- with reference either to the use of metaphor in

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76. Eva Kittay and Adrienne Lehrer, " Semantic Fields and the Structure of Metaphor," Studies in Language, 5, No. 1 (1981), 31-63.

individual poems, or when I come to look at the possibility of metaphoric transfer across several poems, or an entire collection. My interest in these larger units is supported by Snyder's comment on this in a letter to me:

> As for metaphor, the definition (and use) of metaphor can be vastly shrunk or vastly expanded. Almost all of the poems in Regarding Wave respond to a subtle underlying thematic metaphor. The same for all my other books. Metaphor is not trotted out as a short term device section by section in poems but amounts to subtle controlling imagery that binds whole cycles of poems together. (Letter 20/8/84)

This recalls a comment in an interview where he refers to the structure of the RAGA and TALA in Indian music:

> These give me a model, analogous in some senses to my own work, to a longer range sense of structuring with improvisatory possibilities taking place on a foundation of a certain steadiness that runs through it. So one poem has of itself the periodicity of a line, one structuring, and a number of poems to get a scene together will form a construct which is like one whole melodic thing. The model that underlies that also is the sense of the melodic phrase as dominating the poetic structure. (TRW pp. 45-46)

This raises the reason for my second definition, which refers to the characteristics of a discourse that is "metaphoric" as opposed to "metonymic". The model is Roman Jakobson's, and derives from his identification of two distinct processes, "selection" and "combination", that take place in any speech act.[77] An item is selected from a series of items that are joined in the code by their similarity, and then combined with other items to form a message. Metaphor involves

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77. See in particular these works by Roman Jakobson: "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Linguistic Disturbance," R. Jakobson and M. Halle, Fundamentals of Language (2nd ed. 1956; rpt. The Hague: Mouton, 1971), pp. 55-82; "Linguistics and Poetics," in Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry, Vol. 3 of Selected Writings, ed. Stephen Rudy (1958; rpt. The Hague: Mouton, 1981), pp. 18-51; and "Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry," Lingua, 21 (1968), 597-609. David Lodge's discussion of the subject in The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) is useful.

combination in terms of similarity, while metonymy involves combination in terms of contiguity. Poetry according to Jakobson tends towards the metaphoric pole, while prose tends to be more metonymic.

I intend alluding to this model with reference both to individual poems, and to collections. The "open" structure of many poems would suggest that this is often appropriate. I also intend referring to the use which Levi-Strauss makes of it. Altieri describes this as follows:

> Thus, for Jakobson, the metaphoric function establishes relationships of similitude and brings divergent elements of experience into unified codes or systems of meaning. Levi-Strauss then argues that traditional societies whose organisational patterns are grounded primarily on myths tend to emphasize metaphoric thinking. They try to conceive of historical events and natural objects as instances exhibiting and reinforcing timeless patterns of correspondence.... Metonymic thought, on the other hand, Jakobson describes as based on contiguity rather than similitude. Relationships derive not from structural patterns but from connections or associations perceived in time or space. For Levi-Strauss, metonymic relationships are a paradigm for the modes of organisation dominant in modern societies. (Altieri, "Objective Image," pp. 103-4)

(6) MY QUESTIONS

Several issues have arisen from the observations with which I began this chapter, and which, in the light of the available criticism, could do with further attention.[78] These may be summarised as four main questions which this thesis will attempt to explore.

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78. For example, I have not read a sufficiently thorough treatment of the function of the Goddess: it seems that while several critics make some allusion to the role of the "feminine", discussion of this has not been dealt with in the terms I would suggest.

What connection (if any) is established in the poetry between the sacramental question and the assumptions on which Western technological culture is based?

What significance is given to "woman", and more specifically, "The Goddess" with respect to an experience of the world as sacramental?

What is the nature of this experience as presented in the poetry? Does this imply an "epiphany" of some kind, and if so, what does this mean?

To what extent does form adequately express the ideological position, and/or the state of mind articulated in the poetry?

Implicit in thse are further questions about the sacramental question itself: how important is it in the poetry; and what sort of question is it, spiritual? political? etc. I consider the function of my reading to be descriptive, rather than evaluative. Thus, for example, I will not attempt to assess the extent to which Snyder's poetry may be effective in promoting social change: the issues relating to this, while fascinating, pose questions that are outside the scope of this thesis.

I have chosen to study each of the three collections, Regarding Wave, Turtle Island and Axe Handles on their own, devoting a chapter to each. This is because I find that an important aspect of a poem's meaning depends on its being read in the context of the cycle in which it appears.[79] The three middle chapters will examine the collections in chronological order, and the concluding chapter will summarise my findings in the light of my questions in this chapter, giving an indication of where further work might lead. A fairly detailed outline of the structure of each chapter is given in the Table of Contents.

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79. Note: Songs for Gaia will not be considered on its own, since most of the poems are included in the later Axe Handles.

Chapter 2

OF GRAIN AND WAVE: A Participatory Universe

(1) VAK: Vehicle of the Mystery of Voice
(2) WAVE: Before the Eyes, Pattern Displays Itself
(3) VAJRAYANA: The World, the Flesh
(4) REGARDING WAVE: The Voice is a Wife
(5) LONG HAIR and TARGET PRACTICE: The Way to the Pattern

This chapter examines Regarding Wave: in particular, the presentation of "epiphany" or "becoming one", the consequent outworking of a "sacramental" consciousness, and the significance of the forms by which this consciousness is articulated. In this collection, the concept of VAK or Voice is central, and the discussion of poems that follows is preceded by some suggestions as to what these terms mean. Snyder's unapologetic eclecticism is prominent in RW: there are more important allusions to esoteric tradition than in the later poems, and he draws on more traditions. This feature (itself an assertion of "interconnections") as well as demanding a great deal of paradigm-shifting from the reader, at times involves contradiction or incompatibility. These are discussed in general in my concluding chapter. My reading of the poetry gives most attention to the "Regarding Wave" sections of the book, and in particular to the first and last poems: "Wave" and "Regarding Wave". My treatment of "Wave" is fairly extensive. The poem informs the rest of the collection, raising issues that will be central in my reading of all of Snyder's later poetry. The other poems are considered more briefly, in the context that has been established. This amounts to four main parts, followed by a briefer discussion of the last two sections of the book.

> From the standpoint of the 70's and 80's
> it serves us well to examine the way we relate
> to those objects we take to be outside ourselves
> —non-human, non-intelligent, or whatever.
> [my emphasis] (TOW pp. 9-10)

Regarding Wave is dedicated to Snyder's wife, Masa. Energy derived from their relationship in the Suwa-No-Se island community, and from the birth of their son Kai, is a central focus, and the source of the delight so many of the poems express. This birth is a significant epiphany in a collection that recurrently seeks out sources or beginnings of things. Part of this interest in beginnings is a sense of the significance of linguistic origins, which the title Regarding Wave suggests. On the flyleaf of RW, Snyder comments rather cryptically on this choice of title, which reflects:

> a half-buried series of word origins dating back through the Indo-European language: intersections of energy, woman, song, and "Gone Beyond Wisdom."

This synthesis is repeated in an essay in EHH where he claims that "wife" means "wave" means "vibrator."[1]

In addition to whatever etymological echoes these words may recall, it is clear that "Regarding Wave" is (perhaps more importantly) syntactically ambiguous: "looking at Wave"? "concerning Wave"? "Wave that regards"? In resisting certainty in this way, the title successfully evokes a relation between subject and object, perceiver and "those objects we take to be outside ourselves" which the collection as a whole explores. As I will show in discussion of the poems, syntactic ambiguity of this kind proves to be an important way of suggesting interdependence, and retaining

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1. "Poetry and the Primitive" (EHH p. 125). I will return to this seminal piece of work later.

semantic fluidity.

It has recently become fashionable to draw attention to correspondences between mysticism and the "New Physics". Much commentary on these lines has been content to draw facile conclusions from what are in fact no more than surface similarities. Nevertheless, it is intriguing to note that the ambiguity about the relative status of observer and the world "out there" that this title evokes, so closely parallels the similar findings of quantum physicists engaged in work that might be called regarding wave.[2] The position in each case suggests a crucial reorientation towards "those objects we take to be outside ourselves", and consequent reassessment of the status of the human perceiver. The nature of this reorientation is the starting point in Michael Talbot's Mysticism and the New Physics. He quotes John Wheeler:

> Nothing is more important about the quantum principle than this, that it destroys the concept of the world as "sitting out there", with the observer safely separated from it by a 20 centimetre slab of plate glass. Even to observe so miniscule an object as an electron, he must shatter the glass. He must reach in.... To describe what has happened, one must cross out the old word "observer" and put in its place the new word "participator". In some strange sense the universe is a participatory universe.[3]

In physics this phenomenon applies only at the sub-atomic level. However, it provides a useful metaphor for the main concerns of RW. As the title suggests, the collection is directly concerned with the revolutionary significance of experiencing oneself as a participant in a such a

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2. While Snyder's primary scientific interest is in the life sciences -- biology and ecology — we know from Steuding that on the subject of energy (which is the concern here) he was much influenced by such works as John Holdren and Philip Herrera's Energy, and Energy and Power, a Scientific American anthology (Steuding, p. 132).

3. John A. Wheeler, The Physicist's Conception of Nature, quoted in Michael Talbot, Mysticism and the New Physics (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) p. 21.

universe: "Seeing Being and being seen."

The illusory sense of being a separable, "skin-bound" observer which this approach works to dispel is, in Buddhist terms, one aspect of MAYA. Illusion, or MAYA, has many definitions, and is understood to have many aspects. The one most applicable here is what Sir John Woodroffe describes as "the power whereby the individual consciousness, distinguishing itself from others, considers itself separate from them."[4] This is the Cartesian notion of "clear and distinct", or the liberal "individual" in another guise. Similarly, Lama Govinda sees MAYA in its negative aspect as:

> something that has become, that is frozen and rigid in form and concept, in illusion, because it has been torn from its living connections, and limited in time and space. The individuality and corporeality of the unenlightened human being, trying to maintain and preserve its illusory selfhood, is maya in its negative sense.[5]

The perspective this describes is what Snyder's work represents as being at the centre of the malaise of modern culture -- clearly the opposite of the "waveness" which the poems articulate -- and the main obstruction to a sacramental view. I suggested in my first chapter that Snyder's epiphany requires analysis of culture. This is because the reorientation towards the phenomenal world that it involves is based on epistemological assumptions that are radically different from the prevailing ones of Western capitalism and high-technology society. Wilden uses this prevailing epistemology ("biosocial imperialism") to account for

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4. Sir John Woodroffe, Garland of Letters (4th ed. 1922; rpt. Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1963), p. 101.

5. L. A. Govinda, Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism (1960; rpt. London: Rider & Co., 1975), p. 220. Similarly, Wilden calls MAYA "the illusion of the entrenched selfhood", identifying it with Lacan's conception of the Imaginary, which is essential to the mind - body split in Western culture (Wilden, p. 264).

the present biosocial crisis. The features he identifies are consistent with Snyder's critique of industrial culture, and include: "The imposition of closed-system thinking on those aspects of reality which are open systems ... splitting symbiotic wholes (ecosystems) into supposedly independent 'things'..." (Wilden, p. 210).

By contrast with this, Snyder appreciatively describes in an interview the Plains Indian version of nature and the individual -- a clear alternative to the notion of the "frozen and rigid selfhood". In their view, trees, animals, mountains are in a sense "individualised turbulence patterns, specific turbulence patterns of the energy flow that manifest themselves temporarily as discrete items, playing specific roles and then flowing back in again" (TRW p. 44). First published in limited edition in 1969, and then in expanded edition in 1970, Regarding Wave is largely about "going with" this flow. In this respect, Snyder's oriental or "primitive" world-view coincides significantly with a systems or ecological view of things that Wilden proposes. This summary from Fritjof Capra nicely situates the model in terms of the concerns of RW:

> The systems approach has shown that living organisms are intrinsically dynamic, their visible forms being stable manifestations of underlying processes. Process and stability, however, are compatible only if the processes form rhythmic patterns -- fluctuations, oscillations, vibrations, waves. The new systems biology shows that fluctuations are crucial in the dynamics of self organisation. They are the basis of order in the living world: ordered structures arise from rhythmic patterns.[6]

Through both form and content, the poems suggest alternatives to the Cartesian MAYA, requiring a reassessment of that most fundamental division of "self - other", "subject - object", by demonstrating that while these

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6. Fritjof Capra, The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture (1982; rpt. New York: Bantam, 1983), p. 300.

oppositions are embedded in the language, they are to a large extent a function of perception, and therefore transformable. The experience of "merging" or "becoming one" that this reassessment implies is what I called "epiphany" in the previous chapter.

(1) VAK: Vehicle of the Mystery of Voice

The essay "Poetry and the Primitive" in EHH was written in 1967, and informs and elucidates much of the poetry in RW. In the first section, "Bilateral Symmetry", Snyder discusses the Buddhist Three Mysteries, and the essay is structured according to this division -- Body: Voice: Mind. It deals with the significance of each of these in relation to our response to animals, women, and nature, repectively. Snyder proposes here that poetry is "the vehicle of the mystery of voice", and the Universe "a vast, breathing body" (EHH p. 118). While the Three Mysteries are essentially interdependent, RW involves in particular an exploration of Voice as a key to a sense of the world as sacramental, and of poetry as one of its vehicles. However, the claim that "Poetry is the vehicle of the mystery of voice" is meaningfully ambiguous. Rather as in the case of the words "Regarding Wave", this suggests a deliberate haziness -- in this case about the distinction between "voice" and "Voice" -- that is intrinsic to the way of seeing that RW represents, and the poetic theory it implies.

If the word is read as "voice", then the point is a familiar one, a restatement of Snyder's frequent emphasis that poetry be essentially an oral communication with its origins in song. In this context, a linguistic corollary of interest in open systems is the theory of "open

forms", as Kern's commentary mentioned in Chapter One implies. Snyder's favouring of open form poetics with its stress on the breath, the significance of poetry as "voiced", and the corresponding notion of the poem as a scoring for an essentially oral performance, clearly represents one version of the "mystery of voice".[7] In TRW he describes a poem or song as being (like a living organism), "a knot" in the grain, "an intensification of the flow at a certain point" (TRW p. 44). This metaphor is particularly appropriate to RW, where the "running water music" is simultaneously both the omnipresent music of the phenomenal world, and the singing "flow of linguistic utterance" by which a poet makes this accessible.

As this suggests however, the emphasis on "voice" is significant only to the extent that a poem's music is understood to be a response to, and in fact an expression of, "Voice". In TOW, Snyder alludes to the tradition of Sanscrit poetics, according to which poetry originates in the sound of running water and the wind in the trees: human language, the poet's use of voice, derives from "the sense of the universe as fundamentally sound and song", that is, from an experience of Voice. This Voice is the goddess VAK, who is described as "the universe itself as energy, the energy of which all sub-energies are born" (TOW p. 35). In the earlier mention of VAK, or SARASVATI ("the flowing one") in "The Voice as a Girl", Snyder quotes from Sir John Woodroffe's Garland of Letters, an exploration of various aspects of VAK or SHABDA.[8]

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7. The stress in "ethnopoetics" on oral performance has similar significance.

8. The quotation in EHH is unacknowledged, but turns out to be from Woodroffe, p. 10.

This notion of mystical sound or VAK is based on the experience of many mystics that all things are composed of sound according to their nature. Woodroffe defines this "natural sound" as:

> The sound produced by the generating stress (SHAKTI) or constituting forces of a thing, not as apprehended by this ear or that ... but by what may be called the Supreme or Infinite Ear which apprehends unconditionally a sound, which is sound as it is. (Woodroffe, p. 64)

The concept has a Western corelative in the notion of the creative Logos: VAK, etymologically related to vox, means both "voice" and the word it utters, and the beginning of John's Gospel corresponds closely to that of the Veda from which it is thought to be derived: "In the beginning was BRAHMAN ... with whom was VAK or Word ... and the Word is BRAHMAN" (Quoted in Woodroffe, p. 4). This sense of VAK (or SHAKTI) as the originating energy, is particularly meaningful in RW, with its concern with beginnings. Woodroffe's book deals with Hindu (as opposed to Buddhist) TANTRA, and Snyder picks up on this, making use of the fact that VAK is the wife (or SHAKTI) of BRAHMA, and that the world is created out of the union of the divine pair. As the flyleaf comment on "word origins" suggests, this linking of energy, sound, and the feminine which VAK embodies is precisely what Snyder attempts to accomplish in Regarding Wave. The poetry is presented as the vehicle of a vision of the community of all phenomena, according to which all things are perceived in terms of their participation in VAK -- that is, in energy (what I call "waveness") and sound ("voice"). This is articulated most clearly in the poems "Wave" and "Regarding Wave" respectively, which frame the first (and most important) three sections of the book, Regarding Wave I, II, and III.

(i) The Voice as A Girl

The third section of "Poetry and the Primitive" is headed "The Voice as a Girl", and is concerned with the significance of VAK with respect to the notion of "woman as nature the field for experiencing the universe as sacramental" (EHH p. 124).[9] As Snyder's discussion of the title suggests, RW is a celebration, not only of the interpenetrating energies of all things, but simultaneously of what he terms the Goddess as the embodiment of these. The reason for this emphasis will become clear, given the sense of the personal and political meaning of gender that appears in his work. As early as EHH he identifies what he considers to be the repressive thrust of civilised culture in terms of sexual politics:

> Civilisation has so far implied a patriarchal, patrilineal family. Any other system allows too much creative sexual energy to be released into channels which are unproductive. (EHH p. 106)

When asked in a letter about how he understands the term "patriarchal", Snyder commented that it means for him "a society in which in the power balance the males have a preponderance of say in all kinds of decision making and wielding of authority.... True patriarchy is a function of civilisation and the accumulation of wealth, most likely" (letter 3/1/84). Although I am aware that for some feminist writers that term now seems somewhat limited, I intend to use it, if sparingly, in roughly the sense that Snyder indicates. As Adrienne Rich describes it,

> Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men -- by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour --

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9. Although Sherman Paul suggests that this works the other way around ("nature as woman ...") the difference in emphasis does not seem important enough to discuss here (Paul, p. 230).

> determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.[10]

With reference to religion, "patriarchal" is used in my thesis to indicate a system which models the patriarchal family, generally including (among other things) belief in a male deity, supranaturalistic emphasis on spiritual transcendence of the material, and an elevation of human "culture" over "nature".[11]

Writing as a man in a predominantly patriarchal culture, Snyder is fundamentally concerned with the need to encounter and celebrate the "feminine" energies that this culture tends to deny. This has meant that, since the graduate thesis in 1950, the Goddess has featured prominently in his work, as have the world-views of those cultures in which she was honoured. In an interview in TRW he identifies as a requisite for creativity, the supposedly "unproductive" androgyny this implies: "Men become creative when they are in touch with and willing to grapple with

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10. Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), pp. 57-58. See also Eva Figes, Patriarchal Attitudes (London: Virago, 1980), Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), and Pornography and Silence (London: The Women's Press, 1981); Ivan Illich, Gender (New York: Pantheon, 1982); and Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (1970; rpt. New York: Avon Books, 1971).

11. Writers like Mary Daly in Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), and Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), have drawn attention to these features, and described a "metapatriarchal" journey that seeks to "dis-spell the language of phallocracy, which keeps us under the spell of brokenness" (Daly, Gyn/Ecology, p. 4). This has meant giving prominence to terms like "Goddess", "Ecology", etc. The most comprehensive collection of such writings that I have found is Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion, edited by Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979). See also Carol Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980). In psychology, a comparable movement has prompted the appearance of works such as Nor Hall's The Moon and the Virgin: Reflections on the Archetypal Feminine (London: The Women's Press, 1980), and Sylvia B. Perera's Descent to the Goddess: A Way of Initiation for Women (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981).

the feminine side of their own nature", and the converse applies to women (GEN p. 104).

In RW this attention to the Goddess centers on the correspondence of "Wave" / "wife" in the opening poem. The poems that follow this return again and again to the ancient symbolic association of the feminine with water, the sea, and rhythmic process. In this way, the collection seeks to confirm this connection of the "wife", the maternal sea, with dynamic energy (and consequently with fertility and creation), and the association of VAK or SARASVATI ("the flowing one") with poetry and music in particular, and with rhythmic process in general. Given this, it is appropriate that the central events or experiences in Regarding Wave should be those of love-making, marriage, conception, and birth, and that these should take place in a non-hierarchic community close to the sea. Snyder has claimed not to make much use of sexual union as a metaphor for epiphany. However this is central in RW, informed as the notion of VAK is by Hindu Shaktism. More so than the earlier work, these poems are about people, celebrating human community as part of the wider community, and suggesting the sacramental potential of human relationships. If the encounter with Wilderness in the earlier poems signified, on the intra-psychic level, involvement with Unconscious areas of the self, then making love with the feminine represents another perception of a similar process: "As Vak is wife to Brahma ... so the voice in everyone is a mirror of his deepest self" (EHH p. 125). This is made clear in different ways in the poems "Wave" and "Regarding Wave", where becoming one with "voice", "wave", "wife" points to a Jungian individuation, involving an interaction of mutually energising opposites. Jung identified the symbolic enactment of this process in the embrace of all divine pairs,

of which the union of VAK - BRAHMA is one.[12]

As this suggests, the archetypal "wife" as she emerges in the poetry -- and her association with the earth, sea, nature -- is essentially a psychic image: as in Jung, at every level "Return to the Mother", the "Eternal Feminine" is a regression that amounts to an encounter with the unconscious. Here again, the correspondence of "wife" and "regarding wave" is important: water, the sea, the lake are the commonest symbols for Jung's Collective Unconscious, and the maternal aspect of water coincides with that of the unconscious, since this may be described as the mother or matrix of consciousness. Jung contrasts the way of descent into the depths of water, immanence, with the way of "spiritual" transcendence, the difference in emphasis corresponding to the difference between matriarchal and patriarchal modes.[13]

In RW, however, because the voice - wave - wife is experienced as permeating all phenomena, the epiphany is not only an intra-psychic event, as Jung would suggest, but rather involves "becoming one" with what is generally considered to be outside the self: a participatory universe. Integration of the self implies, according to this, integration into Self, community, union with the "Other" from which one is never really separable: SHIVA is always with SHAKTI.

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12. This discussion is not out of place: Snyder's debt to Jung is significant, as he himself acknowledges in his thesis, the Geneson interview, and in personal correspondence.

13. C. G. Jung, "Archetypes of the Unconscious" in The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, ed. H. Read et al (2nd ed. 1959; rpt. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 10.

(ii) Running Water Music:

In the previous chapter I quoted Snyder's use of Indian music as an analogy for the "longer range sense of structuring" according to which his poems are combined. RW is the clearest example in his work of this sort of construct "which is like one whole melodic thing", and appropriately so, given its thematic concerns. The structure remarkably resembles a piece of music composed of rhythmic and melodic repetitions and variations played around a single note or theme.[14] This prevalence of parallelisms, contrasts and repetitions (phonetic, thematic, syntactic, lexical) makes it in Jakobson's terms a highly metaphoric document -- elements are predominantly combined by virtue of their similarity. In about half of the poems, for example, sea, water, and/or the feminine are given prominence.

I describe the collection as a single document deliberately: while several individual poems are metaphoric in this way, patterning of this kind is more marked across the collection as a whole. This means that a single poem simply cannot function fully as a separable, discrete item, since the "longer range sense of structuring" demands that it be read in relation to the others to which it is connected.[15] This agrees with Snyder's comment on metaphor mentioned in Chapter One, which stresses that in the use of metaphor, the single poem is not the main focus:

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14. Of course this is very much the quality of the sort of music he alludes to: no score, no harmony, climactic progression or resolution of melodic discourse. Instead of this, the music is essentially improvisation around a single note, with great attention given to rhythmic patterns.

15. In addition to this, the poetry is (less importantly), metonymically cohesive in terms of its narrative structure: events and experiences tending to be arranged in terms of a chronological sequence.

> Almost all the poems in RW respond to a subtle underlying thematic metaphor.... Metaphor is not ... a short term device section by section in poems but amounts to subtle controlling imagery that binds whole cycles of poems together. (Letter 20/8/1984)

This clear assertion, and the evidence of the poetry are interesting in the light of what is commonly said about Snyder's distrust of metaphor. In this case, it should be clear what the "subtle controlling imagery" involves, after what has been said about the feminine, water, music, energy and interdependence.

The effect of this metaphoric patterning is a linguistic mimesis of the omnipresent patterned "grain" of the phenomenal world with which the poems are concerned. Similarly, the interdependence (or "interbirth") which study of grain and wave reveals, is reflected in the open system which the poems together comprise. However, instead of being in any sense distinct from or in opposition to Nature (which "mimesis" would usually imply), the mind which makes these linguistic patterns, the voice that sings the songs, is shown to be in an important sense a participant in a Pattern and Voice that includes his mind and his poems, and yet goes beyond them.[16] Language (and most obviously the language of poetry and song) is then, according to this, another expression of Voice: the "Running Water Music" that is RW, is simultaneously the subject of the poet's attention.

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16. "Opposition" is used here as defined by Wilden -- that is, meaning "in an oppositional relation to".

(2) WAVE: Before the Eyes, Pattern Displays Itself

The first poem, "Wave" presents the mind's apprehension of pattern, "waveness", in a form which seeks to convey the quality of this patterning, and the interrelatedness of phenomena it implies, as well as the orientation of the perceiver that this sort of experience requires. Like many of the poems in RW this poem is a celebration, in this case a celebration of the interaction of the patterned texture of the phenomenal world -- "those objects we take to be outside ourselves" -- and that of the mind. As such it embodies assumptions that are fairly unfamiliar to Western thinking. Because of this, language is used unconventionally: syntax is unusual, and while the poem is certainly "metaphoric" in Jakobson's sense (this in itself is significant in the context of what is often said about Snyder), it is difficult to determine whether the semantic transfer taking place is exactly what one would call metaphor (in Kittay and Lehrer's sense). In this section I consider some of the detail of this obviously seminal poem. A simple diagrammatic "scoring" of its metaphoric patterning is included in an Appendix.

The first lines -- close, particular descriptions of natural phenomena -- are a good indication of the quality of attention to the details of experience for which Zen is famous. The first stanza points to objects which, though they might seem unrelated at first, reveal on consideration a similar patterning: in each case the surface shows a wavelike, flowing quality, the grain. Syntactic ambiguity is important here, where the absence of conjugated verbs and the insistent (and characteristic) use of the participial verb ending ("-ing"), contribute to the sense of blurring

of subject - object categories which is intrinsic to the experience of "becoming one" or epiphany. The clam shell, for example, which exhibits a radiating series of grooves and ridges, becomes "grooving clam shell". Is this to be read simply as "grooved"? But this would suggest a finality that is clearly inappropriate (we know that a shell is continually washed and eroded by the sea) and which is not present in the given form. Is it then the wave that is grooving the shell? This seems one explanation, but another is that "shell", because of its placement next to "grooving", participates in some sense in the process. Or rather, is it the shell's waveness that is "grooving"...? I think the point has been sufficiently laboured: as long as the reader is determined on linear causation, lines like these, which are an attempt to avoid assumptions about causation implicit in English syntax, will not make sense.[17] The second line has a similar effect. Is it the pattern that is "streakt through marble", or is this intended to suggest the marbling pattern that rippled water exhibits? The position of the final "flow" is interesting too: it appears to be syntactically related to "lava" as a noun (i.e. "lava flow"), yet its placement on the right, a line to itself, and at the end of the stanza, gives it some of the function of a verb, describing the wave movement of the other things.[18] It also serves to connect this stanza to the next, suggesting a continuity of process between the two.

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17. By comparison, in the Japanese language until recently, not only were subject, predicate and object to some extent indistinguishable, and punctuation non-existent, but "the edges of the words themselves are blurred" -- hence the untranslateability of many haiku. See R. H. Blyth, Haiku, Vol. 1 of Eastern Culture (1949; rpt. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1973), pp. 359-360.

18. Alan Williamson comments usefully on this device (placing a single word alone on a line), frequent in Snyder, and an identifying feature of some contemporary poetry that he describes as "language against itself": "There could be no clearer statement that artifice in poems is finally peripheral; the poetry must, and can, spring from 'the pure clear word, the meant word'" (Williamson, "Language Against Itself," p. 58).

"Wave wife": This completes the preceding "sentence", not only by the placement of the fullstop, but also because it conveys that which is the single informing feature in all the phenomena and suggests a link between this "wave" and the feminine. If the first stanza registered similarity of patterning among different natural phenomena (in the "non-human" world), the second draws attention to the continuity of this with an essentially human landscape ("veins on the back of the hand") and to patterns in human language. Playing with the phonetic expectations set up by the core word in the title, Snyder makes skillful use of the consonants in "wave", one of the clearest effects being to reproduce phonetically the sort of patterning that is the subject of the poem. In addition, the phonetic correspondence between "wave" and "wife" (a result of their shared derivation from the Anglo Saxon "wyf"), implies the semantic correspondence that this collection shows to be essential to Snyder's experience of waveness and of epiphany. The essence of the feminine symbolism of waveness is a rhythmic motion that is finally ungraspable, mysteriously inaccessible -- hence the use of "veiled" and the ambiguous "vague" (French for "wave") on either side of "vibrating". Most of the verbs after this describe the same continuous motion: "pulsing", "rolling", "rippled", which are followed by the climactic "trembling, spreading radiating wyf", suggesting the sense of spreading out from a source, as in the lava flow, or the veins on the hand.

The interplay of "grain" and "wave" is intriguing. Because of their proximity (contiguity?) at the beach, sand and waves tend to be thought of together, while in many ways they could not be more different -- the dry, particulate quality of sand contrasting with the antithetical properties of water. But in this poem Snyder demonstrates how the same thing may be either grain or wave, depending on your perspective. The "grain" of the

first stanza becomes ambiguous later: either the wave pattern in the wood, or the shapes of the dunes themselves, or the particles (grains) of sand, each of which, because of the rippling motion of wind on sand, participates in the wave: "every grain a wave." I suspect there may well be a sense in which, if the wave is identified with the (wet) feminine, the yielding YIN, then the grain suggests the (dry) masculine, the distinct YANG, a single seed. According to this, the paradoxical interrelatedness of the two is an image of the relation between these "opposites" as being one of mutual definition and inseparability. This agrees with the understanding of polar opposition in TAO or MAHAYANA, and is supported by the next poem in RW, where "Seed pods seen inside while high", develops the grain image, and so complements "Wave".

The poet's persona is presented in "Wave" (both semantically and syntactically) as being integrated into, and at times subject to, natural process. Because of the use of the characteristically indefinite "leaning", it cannot be clear who is doing the leaning, or whether this happened in the past or in some continuous present, which seems more likely. This leaning has no particular object, and continues until the sand is blown away. The next section is equally passive -- "sometimes I get stuck in thickets" -- since the use (for once!) of the first person pronoun is undercut by the situation described: the person's directed movement is literally blocked by the dense scrub. Getting "stuck", the recognition that one is subject to the restrictions of one's environment, seems to be a necessary part of "going with the flow": the "stiff thorns of cholla, ocotillo", so apparently antithetical to the fluid forms in the rest of the poem, are also an expression of the wave. The final invocation, towards which the rest of the poem tends, is a call for the speaker to be caught and thrown out of the narrow "I", his imaginary

autonomy, into the "dancing grain" of the phenomenal world. It is clear that the grain is equally, given another perspective, the waveness of things. However, the crucial observation that the final line conveys is that the pattern dances, not only in "things" out there, but in the mind of the poet as well.

The last two lines make explicit the relative status of mind and objects that the poem suggests. The corollary of perceiving the waveness of phenomena is the recognition of their interrelatedness, and a sense of the human observer as being equally a participant in a dynamic environment. But to put it this way around is perhaps misleading, since it is on the crucial experience of the ego's merging with those objects we take to be outside ourselves (that is, epiphany) that the perception of waveness depends. So the poem is not only a record of the state of mind in which the natural world ceases to be a separate environment "out there", and an expression of the desire to be thrown further into such experience. It is in addition an indication of how this kind of experience is possible: because of the waveness, the dynamic energy flow of all things.

Pattern recognition of this kind, and the way of seeing the relation of the mind and things that it implies, is a marked departure from the familiar tradition of Western assumptions about the separability of the organism from its environment, the individual human observer from the external world. In Snyder it is informed not only by recent thought in energy physics and systems biology, but also by Eastern mystical traditions.

The Taoist view of the world, for example, is that of a harmony of interdependent patterns, which cannot exist or be made sense of in

isolation. Events and things (and so the human mind) exist only in terms of their relation to others. So the poem's observation of pattern, "waveness", in natural phenomena has important precedents in Taoism, where the contemplation serves a similar purpose, and poems were written to record the experience. This poem by Hsi Chih, for example:

> Looking up: blue sky's end
> Looking down: green water's brim
> Deep solitude: rimless view
> Before the eyes, Pattern displays itself
> Immense, Transformation!
> A million differences, none out of tune.
> Pipings all variegated:
> What fits me, none strange. [my emphasis][19]

The point of view is very similar to that which looks attentively at the extraordinarily varied, yet harmonious "dancing grain" of objects in the phenomenal world. The underlined section is most interesting here: "Before the eyes, Pattern displays itself." This is almost exactly the orientation of "Wave": pattern (or waveness) exists, reveals itself to the eye, and is not created by the individual observer's mental process, as Romantic poetics would like us to think. At the same time, though, there is a sense in which everything that is taking place is taking place in the mind. The apparent contradiction here arises from a distrust of linear causation or the dualistic either-or. According to Taoist thinking, as Alan Watts puts it, the universe produces our consciousness, as our consciousness evokes the universe.[20] With respect to this relation, Altieri usefully elucidates Snyder's use of the mirror as analogue for the

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19. "Orchid Pavilion", Quoted in Yip, p. 218.

20. Alan Watts, Tao: The Watercourse Way (1975; rpt. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1979), p. 53. His description of this as "a realisation which transcends and closes the debate between materialists and idealists, free-willers and determinists...." sounds simplistic but makes an important point.

creative process: the mirror here is that which "gathers and reflects what it regards without disturbing or altering it" yet which also " creates another dimension, a composed and peaceful surface apart from what it contains." According to this, the particular person who participates in acts of mind is, like mind, "essentially a mediator, not a creator; he gathers, particularises, and even fertilizes energies ultimately beyond and informing his act" (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 147).

This understanding of an ordering community of energies inherent in all phenomena, including the human maker, is consistent with the Taoist attention to "that which is", by itself, without being an active agent. It is the pattern of things, but not the enforced law: "The TAO does nothing, / But nothing is left undone" (Watts, Tao, p. 41). If poems like "Wave" have a precedent in Chinese poetry, this is because pattern recognition of this kind is seen as one way of access to this omnipresent TAO — "The Great TAO flows everywhere" (Watts, Tao, p. 40) -- which is yet essentially elusive and indefinable. Alan Watts describes it like this, revealingly for the reading of the poem:

> Our only way of apprehending it is by watching the processes and patterns of nature, and by the meditative discipline of allowing our minds to become quiet, so as to have vivid awareness of "what is" without verbal comment. (Watts, Tao, p. 55)

Elsewhere he describes the organic order, LI, which the TAO embodies:

> LI is the asymmetrical, nonrepetitive, and unregimented order which we find in the patterns of moving water, the forms of trees and clouds, of frost crystals on the window, or the scattering of pebbles on beach sand. (Watts, Tao, p. 46)

This might as well be a description of "Wave": the clam shell, sand dunes, veins and marble patterning, and seeing the wave/grain pattern of LI in these. The connection Snyder suggests between this and the feminine is also appropriate here, since the TAO is often associated with the

maternal. The perception of waveness amounts in the poem to the mind's encounter with, and participation in what Snyder calls the Goddess, and it is clear that RW as a whole is a celebration of her presence.

This mention of the TAO and the Goddess might tend to suggest that my reading has entered another, metaphysical, "level", which the surface meaning of the poem elucidates metaphorically. But this is not the case: in pointing to the wave pattern in things, the poem directs the reader to the "nothing special" of the thing itself. Zen Buddhism is famous for its non-dualistic attention to the material, so that Zen poems are about things as they are. Thus, wood grain is not a metaphor for waveness, but a participant in it. This distinction, which I deal with at the end of the chapter, should become clearer in the context of the other poems.

What, then, is to be made of the final line, which returns the reader to what looks suspiciously like the Romantic individual consciousness? The conclusion oddly resembles a Wordsworthian device, where the observation of Nature is finally a way of looking into the mind of the poet. And, after all, would this not agree with what Snyder has written elsewhere about "mind" and "the real work" -- "the real work of modern man: to uncover the inner structure and actual boundaries of the mind" (EHH p. 127). However, similarities to Romanticism tend to be misleading, and could produce a study in itself. Altieri argues fairly convincingly that Snyder's view of mind, which coincides with the Zen "mind", is very different from the Romantic one. Central to the Zen Way is the aim of "self consciousness", but a self consciousness that is very different from solipsistic introversion, and has everything to do with the world of phenomena. It involves awakening to the self's participation in the "Real Self". This is analogous to the relation of "wave" and "Wave". Similarly, "mind" is known when it is perceived that "Mind" is formless, permeating

the whole universe:

> Not fixed anywhere, the mind is everywhere ...
> The Original Mind is like water which flows freely ...
> whereas the deluded mind is like ice.[21]

Thus, the perception of waveness may also be described as the recognition of the omnipresence of Original Mind, in which the observer himself participates. Snyder describes this experience as follows in TI:

> Now, we are both in and outside the world at once. The only place this can be is Mind. Ah, what a poem. It is what is, completely, in the past, present, and future simultaneously, seeing being and being seen. (TI p. 114)

In this sense, "pattern recognition", or epiphany, or the sacramental view, is an essential part of the Real Work, suggesting as it does that the "boundaries" of the mind are other than those of an individual consciousness. This 13th century Zen poem describes the experience:

> No longer aware of mind and object,
> I see earth, mountains, rivers at last.
> The Dharmakaya's everywhere
> Worldlings, facing it, can't make it out.[22]

If the energy of the world is dancing, flux, rhythmic patterning, then the poem, the shaman's dance and song, participates in this pattern. The form it takes is therefore not a metaphor for that wave - dance, but another expression of it, a knot in the continuous grain. This is because the poet or shaman as "singer/healer" is, in Snyder's terms, particularly sensitive to the rhythms of nature, and his work is to be receptive to those moments of epiphany or union when he experiences the energy of this "Other" as not separable from himself. This seems to be what he means

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21. From a letter by the Japanese master Takuan, quoted in Stryk and Ikemoto, p. xlix.

22. Daio, quoted in Stryk and Ikemoto, p. 52.

by the relation of the shaman to the Goddess, the muse.[23] She is (at least in some guises), mother nature, MAYA, the phenomenal world, its waveness.

It is clear that the poem displays metaphoric patterning and for good reason (see Appendix). But what evidence is there for reading the entire poem as an extended metaphor, in the Kittay and Lehrer sense? That is, do the images in "Wave" operate as a donor field to illuminate some recipient? The sort of archetypal or symbolic significance that water, woman, the sea can be demonstrated to have had for many cultures must give the concepts a culturally accorded overlay, resonances that must be present in such a poem, particularly given Snyder's explicit acknowledgement of them, for example in "The Voice as a Girl". In addition, the metaphor of water is fairly common in Eastern texts, particularly those dealing with experiences like the ones in this poem: for example in Zen (compare its use in the poem by Daio, quoted earlier), and in Taoism, where it is a favourite metaphor for the Way, the TAO. Compare this from Lao-Tzu:

> The highest good is like water,
> For the good of water is that it nourishes everything
> without striving. It occupies the place which all men
> think bad (ie. the lowest level)....
>
> It is thus that the Tao in the world is like a river
> going down the valley to the ocean. (Watts, Tao, p. 47)

I think it would be impossible not to read this sort of resonance in the poem. However this is fairly minor: more importantly, the poem works, not as a metaphor for the TAO or for Mind, but as an account of the mind's apprehension of these -- which is more subtle.

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23. See EHH pp. 122, 124, 131; HAIDA, p. 93; TOW, pp. 36-9.

How is this process to be described? While the phenomena described in the poem certainly do not point to some metaphysical quality, it should be clear that "Wave" is more than a record of metonymically combined detail. In spite of what was said earlier about Zen and "things", this poem is very different from, say, one by Williams about a red wheelbarrow. The fact that it does make sense to refer to concepts like "TAO", "Goddess", "Mind, etc, and that all of this relates to the desire to move in the world as "sacramental", indicates that there must in some sense be another dimension to the poem. But this dimension, if it can be called that, does not exist in separation from the first, and in order to describe what is happening, we need another model than that of metaphor as it is generally defined. Although Kittay and Lehrer's model is less subject to this than others are, it remains problematic because of the dualism that it implies: two semantic fields. What is required in the case of this poem is a model that can describe the relation between wood grain and "waveness" as one where the first both stands for, or embodies, and participates in the second, in a way analogous to the Buddhist notion of Mind outlined above. One way of describing this relation would be to call it "holographic" -- where the first term (wave, self, mind, voice, etc) is at once a part, and a microcosmic copy of the second (Wave, Self, Mind, Voice, etc.). Further than this, I do not propose clear alternatives, but, however this is described, I suspect that the concept "metaphor" as it is generally understood may be a function of the epistemology the poem implicitly rejects, and that an alternative may be found in the systems view that the poem implies.

(3) VAJRAYANA: The World, the Flesh

In addition to the Zen training (with its Taoist and MAHAYANA origins), Buddhist TANTRA or VAJRAYANA has been an important model for Snyder. This is particularly clear in RW. In EHH he describes it as probably the finest and most modern statement of the traditionally subversive point of view --

> that mankind's mother is Nature and Nature should be tenderly respected; that man's life and destiny is growth and enlightenment in self-disciplined freedom; that the divine has been made flesh and that flesh is divine; that we not only should but do love one another. (EHH p. 105)[24]

This love of "flesh" as sacramental could hardly be more different from the doctrines of patriarchal religion, with their stress on religious asceticism and spiritual transcendence of the material world. In celebrating it as an alternative to such "otherworldly philosophies", Snyder proposes a significant reorientation of thought and practice which he considers to be biologically essential for the survival of humanity. Tantric practice begins in the lowest CHAKRA of the body, is primarily involved in the physical, the material world, and the intercourse of masculine and feminine. As Bert Almon describes it in an essay on RW and TI, "The body is not the running sore for Vajrayana that it is for the southern branch of Buddhism, the Theravada. Mindless craving is condemmed, but the power of the senses is power that the spiritual life can harness" (Almon, "Buddhism and Energy," p. 21). As this suggests, TANTRA is primarily concerned with what is a central theme in RW, namely

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24. See also Snyder's notes on this (TRW p. 176 and p. 179).

transformations of energy. TI will deal more explicitly with the political significance of these energies, opposing them to the exploitative forms of energy which sustain Western technological society.

We are living, according to Eastern tradition, in the KALI-YUGA, "end of days". Like many other schools, both Hindu and Buddhist tantric tradition have it that Tantrism is a spiritual way given for this age, when mass attention is obsessed with the most carnal reality. Instead of condemnation and denial, the tantric response to this is to focus on the fundamental experiences of this carnal condition as the place where enlightenment begins. The cosmos is seen to be contained in the human body, and so the basic elements of the tantric SADHANA are the flesh, the living cosmos, and time.[25] The heart and sexuality become central, and NIRVANA is achieved through disciplined expansion of the senses rather than ascetic avoidance. In accepting this, Snyder insists that the way is not necessarily an easy one, since prescriptive codes are less demanding:

> Discipline of self restraint is an easy one; being clear-cut, negative, and usually based on some clear-cut cultural values. Discipline of following desires, always doing what you want to do, is hardest. It presupposes self-knowledge of motives, a careful balance of free action and a sense of where the cultural taboos lay -- knowing whether a particular desire is instinctive, cultural, personal, a product of thought, contemplation, or the unconscious. (EHH pp. 18-19)

He follows this, appropriately, with a quotation from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, where liberatory Vision begins with "an improvement of sensual enjoyment".

One consequence of the tantric emphasis on the senses, matter, and

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25. Mircea Eliade, Yoga: Immortality and Freedom (New York: Bolingen, 1958), p. 204.

nature is the rediscovery of the Goddess, with whom these are associated. It is said that the woman participating in MAITHUNA, the highly ritualised sexual act, becomes an incarnation of the SHAKTI, the Goddess (of whom VAK or SARASVATI is one expression), while the man becomes the lord SHIVA. Their union is intended to achieve a cosmic transcendence of opposites:

> It is the coincidence of time and eternity, of bhava and nirvana; on the purely "human" plane, it is the reintegration of the primordial androgyne, the conjuction in one's own being of male and female -- in a word, the reconquest of the completeness that precedes all creation. (Eliade, p. 271)

(i) Seed Pods

"Seed Pods" is the next poem after "Wave". Both poems present a powerful perception of correspondences, which is a common feature of mystical "highs", whether "natural" or drug-induced.[26] In this poem, interrelation is conveyed syntactically, the effect being to suggest a merging of perceptions of "tiny seed pods", the lover's thighs and human lovemaking, and the wider landscape, with its valleys, horses, and walls of rock. The experience of each participates in and recalls the others, the poem as a whole recording a recognition of the correspondences between animal, human, plant and intrapsychic "fucking". The attention that is given to seed pod, the masculine "grain" ("if my seed too-- / float into you") can be seen as a counterpart of the universal perception of the feminine waveness in the previous poem: matter is either particle or wave, depending on the point of view. Both grain and wave recur as central images in RW, their interaction representing a creative union at the source of things. This is important because many of the poems seem to be

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26. Timothy Leary quotes a comment made by Oscar Janiger in 1962 on the experiences of LSD subjects. In the majority of cases the first response was the sense that "everything is alive". This was followed by "it comes in waves" (Leary, p. 133).

seeking out beginnings, conception and birth. Vak is the Sanskrit equivalent of the originating Logos, and in this system, the primary energy of things is said to be the mantric BIJAS, appropriately meaning seed syllables.

In this poem, seeing seed pods inside while high involves an epiphany in which the differentiation of the human (and in particular the human perceiver) from "those objects we take to be outside ourselves" becomes insignificant in comparison with the strong sense of likeness which is the poem's subject. The poem is about this interaction, about becoming one, most obviously, "fucking". The point is, though, that seeing the seed pods involves this, perhaps more powerfully than physical lovemaking does. Sacramental interaction of this kind is shown to be very different from what was described in the early journal entry as the culture's impoverished dependence on sexual highs, the only personal epiphany available for most people (EHH p.19):

> Seed pods seen inside while high.
> trip of fingers
> to the farthest limits of the thigh (RW p. 14)

In describing these two actions together at the beginning of the poem, and rhyming "high" and thigh", a correspondence is established between the "high" I call epiphany and the act of love-making, each a sort of merging, a becoming one. The correspondence is suggested in an early note in EHH where Snyder describes true insight as "a love-making hovering between the void and the immense worlds of creation" (EHH p. 22). This is confirmed in the last lines, where "fucking bed", the conclusion of the long central sentence, becomes the rhyming "fucking head":

> seed pod burrs, fuzz, twist-tailed
> nut babies

in my fucking head. (RW p. 14)

The effect is similar to that of the parallel ending of "Wave". As in the previous poem, it becomes clear that this is about the creative process, the way that a poem like this comes to be made: perception of correspondences is made possible by an intrapsychic integration, the "fucking" that is taking place in the poet's head. At the same time, however, part of what is going on in the poet's head is a recognition of the self's participation in the activity in the environment, and one of the fruits of this sort of union is the conception of a poem in which the experience is presented linguistically.

As in "Wave", though not nearly as clearly, the perception of correspondence involves, in "Seed Pods", a metaphoric structure that is mimetic of the perceived relationships with which the poem is concerned. Phonetic repetition is less important, although the core word "fucking" is repeated, and the "f-" used alliteratively ("fingers", "farthest", "Ferghana", "float", "fuzz", and the Hopkinsian "foot-pad fetlock"), serving to convey the omnipresence of the process.

(ii) Songs of Cloud and Water

The songs in the second section of "Regarding Wave" first appeared in a poetry journal under the heading "Eight Songs of Cloud and Water", the title referring to the Zen name for a young monk, UNSUI: "cloud, water". These are songs of the kind that the shaman sings, representing Snyder's project to assume the shaman's work of singing the song of each creature, becoming one with it in order to communicate its life. They sing about Wave, the feminine, a woman's body:

SLEPT
folded in girls
feeling their folds; whorls;

the lips, leafs,
of the curling soft-sliding
serpent-sleep dream. (RW p. 25)

In "Poetry and the Primitive," the spiral is mentioned as the symbol of the Great Goddess, and by implication, the life-creating dance, the essential flow of things, "Waveness" (EHH p. 129). These songs decribe experiences both of a particular woman, and of what he calls in a later poem "seeing the beauty from THERE / shining through her". This is clearest in "Song of the Taste".

The shimmering food-chain, food-web, is the scary,
beautiful condition of the biosphere. (Letter 20/8/84)

This joyous poem achieves an effect similar to "Seed Pods" in its description of the delight in "drawing on life of living", eating the very seeds of things. As in the earlier poem, sensual enjoyment and union with the beloved are not restricted to the mutuality of human lovers. Rather, the beloved is known in the phenomenal world, an epiphany which is not a metaphor for the desired state, but the state itself.

In concluding an interview for The Ohio Review, Snyder remarks, cryptically: "The real work is eating each other, I suppose" (TRW p. 82), a point of view which "Song of the Taste" elucidates. In the transvaluation of Christian communion (and the doctrine of transsubstantiation) which the poem proposes, ordinary eating may be sacramental in that it embodies in the most literal way, an energising union with "objects ... outside ourselves". There is no coy evasion about the source of nourishment, the poem suggesting a loving attention to the living qualities of each organism. It seems that the joy consists to a large extent in the shamanistic sense that eating involves a transfer of the animal's very life and movement. Each thing is described in terms of

this energy: "the living germs", "the sperm of swaying trees", and, most explicitly --

> The muscles of the flanks and thighs of
> soft-voiced cows
> the bounce in the lamb's leap
> the swish in the ox's tail (RW p. 27)

But "drawing on life of living" in this way is possible only because of one's own place in the food chain -- the recognition that one is edible too. In response to an interviewer's protest that he, at least, is not offering himself up for food, Snyder remarks that he'd better, sooner or later:

> If you think of eating and killing plants or animals to eat as an unfortunate quirk in the nature of the universe, then you cut yourself from connecting with the sacramental energy-exchange, evolutionary mutual-sharing aspect of life. And if we talk about evolution of consciousness, we also have to talk about evolution of bodies, which takes place by that sharing of energies, passing it back and forth, which is done by literally eating each other. And that's what communion is. (TRW p. 89)

So the tension created by characteristic repetition of the participial core word "Eating" (which in itself serves to avoid the rigid subject-object relation that would be implied by a formulation like "I eat X") is relieved and satisfied in the last lines, where the implicit reciprocity that is the subject of the poem and the source of its delight is made explicit. Eating each other becomes an expression of mutual love:

> Eating each other's seed
> eating
> ah, each other.
>
> Kissing the lover in the mouth of bread:
> lip to lip. (RW p. 27)

This contrasts strongly with what Snyder has called the "bad metaphysics" of "otherworldly philosophies".[27] The attitudes towards the phenomenal world these philosophies embody are exemplified in the language used by traditional Christian mystics to speak of spiritual epiphany. Here the tendency is to articulate the mystical themes (by definition, "super-sensual") by means of sensual imagery and metaphor. Material for this is frequently derived from the experiences of eating and drinking and sexual union (following the tradition established by the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs).[28] It is possible in this context to speak of "eating and tasting" God, becoming drunk on the spirit, love, sexuality and marriage. But the language derived from these experiences, and in fact the experiences themelves, are understood to be valuable only to the extent that they elucidate metaphorically a transcendent state that is essentially non-linguistic -- what Riehle calls a "spiritualised sensuality" (Riehle, p. 3). This attitude towards the "natural man" can be seen as a linguistic corollary of the tendency of "otherworldly" religions to sanction plunder of the natural (i.e. "material" and therefore secondary) resources of the earth, and its creatures.This will be discussed in the following chapter.

As in many of the previous poems, the final lines are particularly

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27. Compare his comments in the same interview (TRW p. 69), and his written commentary on this poem and "eating each other": "is this a flaw in the universe? A sign of a sullied condition of being? "Nature red in tooth and claw?" some people read it this way, leading to a disgust with self, with humanity, and with life itself. They are on the wrong fork of the path. Otherworldly philosophies end up doing more damage to the planet (and human psyches) than the existential conditions they seek to transcend" (Letter 20/8/84).

28. An account of this may be found in Wolfgang Riehle, The Middle English Mystics (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981). While useful, the work tends towards description rather than analysis, providing a very thorough catalogue of uses of such imagery and metaphor, without much consideration of the implications of the prevalence of this use of metaphor.

important. Here, the bread itself has a mouth. The sacramental meal no longer requires a communion wafer, since ordinary eating has become holy. To speak of the bread as "lover" implies a reciprocal interaction that is very different from that in which "nature" and the language of sensual experience is a passive ground ripe for plunder.

This delighted participation in "the shimmering food-chain" is at the base of the experience of "interbirth", or what is called "True Communionism" in a later poem. It reappears explicitly in "Shark Meat", where the tangling of the shark in the islanders' nets is felt to be an act of joyful reciprocity, evidence of the interdependence of all things in the sacramental food-web in which all are interwoven:

> Miles of water, Black current,
> Thousands of days
> recrossing his own paths
> to tangle our net
> to be part of
> this loom. (RW p. 39)

"Song of the Taste " is followed, appropriately, by "Kyoto Born in Spring Song", where the town itself is reborn in Spring, the fruit of all the intercourse. As the previous poem suggested, the sacramental "eating each other" implies attentive love, and delight in the birth of all organisms -- a consciousness that playfully counters the serious technological rationalism "that made us think machines":

> Beautiful little children
> found in melons,
> in bamboo,
> in a "strangely glowing warbler egg"
> a perfect baby girl-- (RW p. 28)

As before, the poem confounds reader expectations. The "children" are mostly non-human, and when human babies are mentioned, they are given no particular prominence: "And three fat babies / with three human

mothers...." The effect is a characteristic scaling-down of the human and a loving attention to "animals as persons".[29] As before, the sacramental sense involves the non-hierarchic perception that human life is one participant in a vastly diverse and complex system. The biological system is described in Buddhist terms, which establish this Spring burgeoning as evidence of the ominipresent "Voice of the Dharma" (in the poem "Regarding Wave"), and the "dancing grain of things" (in the poem "Wave"): " Great majesty of Dharma turning / Great dance of Vajra power". Mention of "mice and worms", and "weeds", alludes to an important passage in the EHH essay, which I discuss at the end of the chapter.

(iii) Regarding Wave III

In "Regarding Wave III", the omnipresent experience of union, fruitfulness and birth, "Wave", and "Voice", acquires a particular, personal focus: as Steuding puts it, the family itself becomes a powerful energy network (Steuding, p. 135). The first poem exhuberantly invokes the life of the island itself, its streaming energy:

> O All
> Gods tides capes currents
> Flows and spirals of
> pool and powers-- (RW p. 34)

The whorls and spirals of the wave are now particularised in Snyder's own "wyf", Masa, and he asks for a blessing on their marriage at the edge of the active volcano. The poems that follow describe the conception and (the central epiphany in RW) birth of their son, Kai, and the rebirth this involves for them all.

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29. See the directive concerning this in "What You Should Know to Be a Poet" (RW p. 50).

In the poem "It Was When" the speaker wonders about the precise moment of conception. Uncertainty, tentativeness is suggested by the syntactic suspension for four stanzas: "It was when... We harked up the path ... Or jungle ridge ... Or the night in the farmhouse ... or out on the boulders..." (RW pp. 40-41). This is resolved in the fifth stanza with the certainty that somehow conception has taken place -- "That we caught: sprout / took grip in your womb and it held." "Sprout" evokes the first stirrings of the "living germ", and the "tiny seed pods" in the earlier poems: what has taken place recalls the beginnings of all organisms.

The uncertainty about when it happened implies the unstated, unresolvable guesses as to how it happened. The last stanza's metaphorical account is a variation on the recurrent wave theme:

> Waves
> and the
> prevalent easterly
> breeze.
> whispering into you,
> through us,
> the grace. (RW p. 41)

The spacing of these last lines suggests a gradual timing, meditative wonder at their participation in this sacramental process. Significantly, too, it is a process, as the change of tense indicates. Thus, the conception itself is completed (past tense), but the fulfillment of the blessing asked for in "Burning Island" continues. In addition to the ancient understanding of the enlivening qualities of wind, masculine spirit, the source of inspiration (and this is the obvious contrary of the material, feminine "waves"), this recalls the Sanskrit idea of the beginnings of poetry in the interaction of wind and water. The same process is described in the last section of "In the Night Friend", a later poem in RW which explicitly alludes to the Christian creation myth

(Genesis 1:1-2, and John 1:1), and thereby to all sorts of beginnings, recalling what has been said about the Logos, VAK, and the BIJA as the first sound. Here the visible rhythmic pattern, the movement on the waves, derives from the interaction of both water and wind:

> On the face of the waters
> A wind moves
> Making Waves
> ....
> A wind moves
> Like a word
>
> waves (RW p. 64)

"Kai, Today" describes the birth, a "showing forth" in which the mysterious question of origins appears in a peculiarly significant form -- as a paraphrase of a famous Zen KOAN: "Before Masa and I met / What's your from-the-beginning-face?" (RW p. 43). Tradition has it that the question was first asked by the Sixth Patriarch, the form usually being something like this:

> When your mind is not dwelling on the
> dualism of good and evil, what is your
> original face before you were born? [30]

A KOAN is used to open the mind to Original Nature in SATORI. This one may be given to a young novice, usually, as Suzuki describes it, "with the intention to awaken the student's mind to the fact that what he has so far accepted as a commonplace fact, or as a logical impossibility, is not necessarily so" (Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, pp. 104-5). The KOAN, like the MANTRA, is a highly elliptical form, whose implications might be discussed at length. Its appearance here is a significant indicator of the depth of resonance this birth evokes.

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30. Quoted in Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, p. 104.

The centrally placed "born again" (line 13), recalls the poem "After Ramprasad Sen" in TBC: This person is Kai, but his personal existence is one appearance of a life that continues, "falling through flicker / Of womb after womb ... Forever born again" (TBC p. 106). As the child is born "up / And out from her", Masa becomes "the Mother". At this extraordinary moment, as in "It Was When", the most accurate description is by metaphor, a memory of blue dolphins leaping in the sea.[31]

This is followed by "Not Leaving the House", which succinctly evokes the sacramental sense. Here, the "nothing special" of daily life requires no further miracle.

> From dawn til late at night
> making a new world of ourselves
> around this life. (RW p. 44)

(4) REGARDING WAVE: The Voice is a Wife

> With a known vocabulary of forms and the freedom of the brush they could invent mountains that ... seemed to float in mist. But the life is what counts: this vision of earth surface as organism, in which water, cloud, rock and plant growth all stream through each other.[32]

This comment in an unpublished manuscript of Snyder's about Asian attitudes towards nature could well be an account of the experience presented in the poem "Regarding Wave". In "Wave", Snyder examined the texture of natural objects, and the sense of correspondence this evokes.

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31. Steuding's commentary on this is useful: "Because of a deeper level of consciousness of the reader, a strong connection exists between the birth and the dolphins who leap up and out of the wave slip of the sea" (Steuding, p. 139).

32. Snyder, Unpublished Manuscript, quoted in McLeod, "Images of China," p. 379.

The focus is close, the attention to the "dancing grain" suggesting a sense of the flow of matter at a molecular level. This is reversed in "Regarding Wave", although the concerns of the two poems, the acts of mind they represent, are very similar. The later poem serves to establish that the relations in "Wave" remain. After the climactic central events and experiences, "The Voice / is a wife / to / / him still" (RW p. 45). But the field of vision has widened. Here the "flow" is perceived on an extended scale, recalling his earlier poetry and its similarity to Chinese landscape painting.

DHARMA is a Sanskrit word, its most general meaning being the law, the way things are, the process of things. To this extent it is close in meaning to TAO, and what was said about Taoism in my discussion of "Wave" applies here too. More particularly, though, the word refers to the teachings of the Buddha, and this implies verbal transmission. The word "voice" is therefore clearly more appropriate here than it would be for describing the TAO, which is rather the process of things, outside of any verbal articulation, and for which organic wave patterning is a better image. At the same time, however, the use of DHARMA suggests a Buddhist perspective that is different from that which "Voice" in the same poem seems to represent. While "Voice" is one of the Buddhist Three Mysteries, Snyder's discussion of it as the goddess VAK in EHH is informed by Sir John Woodroffe, and his exposition of Hindu Shaktism. This is not to say that the two traditions are incompatible, although this eclecticism does create some problems of interpretation which I will return to in my final chapter.

Snyder's description of a text as being a "scoring" is particularly applicable to an account of "Voice": a poem that is as metaphorically cohesive as this one (or "Wave") is, functions very like a piece of music

in which themes and sounds are picked up, repeated, varied, and contained in a single form (see Appendix).

The Voice is described as "a shimmering bell / through all". The bell has obvious feminine symbolism (Tibetans use the VAJRA and bell as ritual instruments, corresponding to masculine and feminine respectively), which is appropriate, given the attention to "the feminine" in the collection as a whole. Apart from this, use of "bell" alludes to the fact that mystic sound is often described as being like the sound of a bell.[33] Description of the bell as "shimmering" implies a blurring of the distinction between sight and hearing that is appropriate here: VAK, or what Woodroffe calls "natural sound", is not available to ordinary sense perception, and so any adjective must be an approximation. The omnipresence of the bell is conveyed phonetically by a repetition, with variation, of the "-l" sound in "bell", in much the same way that "wave" was used in the earlier poem. In the middle section, the consonance of "bell ... all" is picked up and echoed in the first line, "every hill still", and returned to in the last line with "all the hills". In the last section, "voice" has become "Voice", and "hills still" is recalled and altered in "him still". The use of the ambiguous "still" is interesting: two senses of "still" (namely, where stillness means "absence of movement" and/or "silence") contrast with the "shimmering bell", its sound and movement. Yet it is in the very stillness that the voice is heard. This paradoxical relation of "hill" and "still", as well as that of "still" and "flow" ("every hill still", yet, "all the slopes flow") is very like the interdependence of "wave" and "grain" in "Wave". An

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33. In this regard, Eliade mentions the Radha Soami sect, who meditate on mystical sound or SHABDA. When the sound of a bell is heard, it is the first sign that the meditation is valid (Eliade, p. 390). See also the description of "a far bell / coming closer" in "Six Years" (TBC p. 67).

important function of this is to suggest a mode of perception for which opposites are not mutually exclusive, their incompatibility being largely a function of the language. The device serves the same purpose as does the combination of contradictory propositions in Zen writings: to confound attempts to adhere to any linear linguistic articulation of a truth. In the final line this is augmented with a third meaning of "still" -- the Voice remains a wife to him. This, in order to be understood, draws on material outside the poem (namely the connections between "wave" and "wife" that the first poem establishes, and the poems that follow it reinforce).This serves to clarify the reference to "Wave" in the title of a poem ostensibly concerned with "voice".

It should be clear from this that while both "Wave" and "Regarding Wave" are internally cohesive, exhibiting a high degree of metaphoric patterning (and in fact representing a "metaphoric" way of seeing the world), the coherence of a single poem does depend to a large extent on the function it has in the context of the rest of the book, its total metaphoric structure. In framing the "Regarding Wave" sections of the book, these poems inform the others, defining the patterns according to which they are to be read. However, this mention of "framing" and cohesion raises the question of closure and its relation to open forms. In both poems, in addition to creating a verbal structure that is highly cohesive, Snyder attempts, by the most inconclusive of conclusions, to push the experience of reading the poem (and it is understood that the poems are to be read aloud) into a deeper experience of the world, and therefore of the Self. In the final lines of "Wave", the speaker asks to be thrown out of himself, out of the boundaries of the written, verbal text, to the very grain of the energy pattern in things, and to the recognition that this is at once the grain of his own mind. The

equivalent of this in "Regarding Wave" is the linguistically more dramatic transition from English to MANTRA, an intriguing development of the "new kind of closure" that Kern identifies in the earlier work (Kern, "Silent Form," p. 41).

The concluding use of the MANTRA — OM AH HUM — is very significant, foregrounded as it is against the expectations we are likely to have about a Snyder poem, or any poem in English. Although in TRW Snyder describes a recent concern of his to explore "the mantric possibilities within English ... within the English phrasings" (TRW p. 46), the use of MANTRA is uncommon in his work, as it is more obviously so in English poetry in general. More importantly though, this foregrounding takes place at a linguistic level, in terms of our expectations about how words operate. The sounds stand out from their linguistic context more so than, say, the word DHARMA does in the first line, or than the (equally uncommon) use of any obscure or esoteric reference would do -- for example, a Sanskrit word in an English sentence. This is because the linguistic function of the BIJA, or seed syllable, is quite simply different from that of words as they are ordinarily used. BIJAS are not, in the ordinary sense of the word, referential. Rather, as Snyder indicates in TRW, they are said to be "magical power" (TRW pp. 182-3). According to some interpretations, the sound itself is the meaning, while according to others, the meaning consists in the repetition of sounds. Mircea Eliade describes it this way:

> A MANTRA is a "symbol" in the archaic sense of the term -- it is simultaneously the symbolised "reality" and the symbolising "sign". (Eliade, p. 215)

An example of this is the mystical syllable OM which, according to Eliade, "incarnates the mystical essence of the entire cosmos. It is nothing less than the theophany itself, reduced to the state of a phoneme" (Eliade,

p. 51). Snyder acknowledges the special status of MANTRA, and the unusual demands it places on the reader, in an interview with Road Apple. If a central problem for the language of epiphany has been to express the ineffable in words, then his poetry has been, he remarks, an attempt to "walk the razor edge" between what can be said and that which cannot be said. According to this, poems that fall too much into the realm of what cannot be said are no longer poems -- "They are meditation themes like the KOAN, or they are magical incantations, or they are MANTRAs" (TRW p. 21). Because these forms are "superelliptical" they may require extended meditation in order to be grasped (TRW p. 21).[34] Given this, it is absurd to attempt to "explain" the meaning of the MANTRA. But it is useful to consider how it functions in the poem, the meaning of its foregrounding. For this purpose, some brief comment on the theory of mantric sound and the significance of these particular syllables will indicate the close connection of the BIJAS with the experience of VAK, and so with the poem and the collection as a whole.

Snyder's use of Woodroffe in EHH suggests that his understanding of MANTRA is worth attention. According to his sources, the BIJA-MANTRAS are approximate representations of the "natural names", where the natural name or sound of an object is "the sound of the causal stress which generates and keeps together" the object (Woodroffe, p. 75). Woodroffe's introduction makes it clear that MANTRA is the closest human articulation of Snyder's "shimmering bell / through all":

> The waves as all else are MANTRA, for MANTRA
> in its most basal sense is the World viewed as
> -- and in its aspect of -- sound. (Woodroffe, p. 75)

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34. This is also dealt with in EHH p. 118.

More particularly, the three syllables in OM AH HUM correspond to the three planes of reality (the universal, the ideal and the individual), or to the three great Mysteries in Buddhism mentioned earlier: Body, Speech and Mind. Snyder's reference to the three in the EHH essay does not mention the MANTRA, but the connection should be clear.

Each of the BIJAS has accrued a heap of explanatory literature, some of which is idiosyncratic and contradictory. The briefest of summaries will have to do here:

OM is the fundamental seed syllable, the BIJA of the cosmos, its function being, according to Govinda, to express the experience of the infinite within us (Govinda, Tibetan Mysticism, p. 22). He describes it as "the transcendental sound of the inborn law of all things, the eternal rhythm of all that moves, a rhythm in which the law becomes the expression of perfect freedom" (Govinda, Tibetan Mysticism, p. 47). The relation of this to the earlier discussion of "Wave" should be clear. Comparing it with HUM, Govinda states that if OM is the ascent towards universality, HUM is the descent of the state of universality into the depths of the human heart. HUM cannot be without OM.

Most relevant for the discussion of VAK is the middle syllable, AH. It is one of the most important mantric sounds, and corresponds to the mystery of Voice, representing the LOGOS and the faculty of speech and thought. It is described as the first sound of a new-born child, an expression of wonder and direct awareness,[35] and it is in this sense that Snyder uses it in the discussion of Voice in EHH. Its context here suggests that it is intrinsic to an experience of epiphany:

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35. Govinda, Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness (London: Unwin, 1977), p. 74.

> The phenomenal world experienced at certain pitches is totally living, exciting, mysterious, filling one with a trembling awe, leaving one grateful and humble. The wonder of the mystery returns direct to our senses and consciousness: inside and outside; the voice breathes, "Ah!" (EHH p. 123)

In the later collection, Songs for Gaia, Snyder uses "ah" for a similar purpose, making explicit the connection between the BIJA, epiphany, the Goddess, and the phenomenal world:

> Deep blue sea baby,
> Deep blue sea.
> Ge Gaia
> Seed syllable, "ah!" (SFG n. pag.)

This poem, "Gaia", the last in the slim volume, ends with the lines:

> Twenty thousand square hill miles of manzanita.
> some beautiful tiny manzanita.
> I saw a single, perfect, lovely,
> little manzanita.
>
> ah.[36]

But what does it mean to use MANTRA in this way? What is the significance for the reader of making these sounds? Opinions vary about what is happening when a MANTRA is repeated. Woodroffe suggests one extreme when he quotes the belief that uttering a MANTRA must generate the object or quality whose sound is being pronounced. Govinda explicitly contests this: "MANTRAs do not act on account of their own 'magic' nature, but only through the mind that experiences them (Govinda, Tibetan Mysticism, p. 27). Snyder's position is suggested by his comment about MANTRA chanting in "The Voice as a Girl". According to this, it is just

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36. Oddly, in the version of "Gaia" that appears in AH, the last word has become "Ha". In response to my question about the alteration, Snyder explains that it was intentional: "I felt that the Ah syllable was too predictable and not explosive enough, not evocative enough" (Letter 20/8/84).

when the "magic utterances" have been repeated over and over, to the point of most weariness and boredom, that --

> a new voice enters, a voice speaks through you clearer and stronger than what you know of yourself; with a sureness and melody of its own, singing out the inner song of the self, and of the planet. (EHH p. 123)

These general observations are applicable to the MANTRA in "Regarding Wave" although it is not repeated in the text, since repetition is implicit in any written form of a MANTRA. This means that in concluding a poem (and a cycle of poems) in this way, Snyder is doing something rather unusual, which is at the same time very appropriate to his main concerns. The use of a MANTRA invites the reader to participate, not in ideas about VAK, the interconnectedness of phenomena, of the "self" and the "universe", but rather in direct experience of these. It represents an extreme form of the tendency Altieri perceives in Snyder's poetry:

> Snyder is trying to create potentially not so much a system of references that will articulate "The Way", as an emotional cosciousness of what it feels like to know oneself as part of such a system. (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 144)

This is quite a daunting project, and I am not sure whether this particular attempt is really successful. As the extent of my comments about MANTRA should indicate, it must surely be a fairly well-informed reader who will gather the significance of reciting the mystic syllables.

(5) LONG HAIR AND TARGET PRACTICE: The Way to the Pattern

(i) Long Hair

The poems in "Long Hair" involve a movement outwards from the personal intensity of those in "Regarding Wave". The first poem, "Revolution in the Revolution in the Revolution", articulates Snyder's sense of the relation between interbirth and revolutionary consciousness, revealing an onion skin set of correspondences, at the centre of which are the "seed-syllables" of the previous poem. By combining the relations that have been established earlier between waveness, or VAK, and energy, or power, and the rather different expectations one is likely to have about the power of revolutionary liberation, the concluding lines suggest that their origin is, in an important sense, the same: "& POWER / comes out of the seed-syllables of mantras" (RW p. 49). The term "Communionism" a fusion of "Communism" and "Communion" points to Snyder's crucial transvaluation of both religious and political terminology. As this suggests, the poem is probably the most succint statement of his understanding of the inseparability of political and personal, or "spiritual", liberation: each must imply the other in order to be meaningful at all.[37] The appearance of the poem in this collection, and its placement near the center and immediately after the poems describing

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37. Molesworth considers the poem one of Snyder's most explicit political statements, which "unabashedly declares the religious ground of the poet's political vision" (Molesworth, Vision, pp. 86-7). While he decribes this as Snyder's "Buddhist Marxism" (p. 86), the term "Buddhist Anarchism" would seem more generally appropriate.

the intense delight of birth and the perception of Wave, is significant, serving as it does to indicate a further context in which the "personal" epiphanies may be read.

In the poems that follow, grain and wave are recalled, their repetition remaining the basis of the metaphoric structure. But whereas the poems in the first section celebrated a sense of the personal and intrapsychic correspondences with these, here the pressure to point this out seems to be off. It is as though the resonances of grain and wave have been made explicit, and so it is enough to describe the "Running Water music" itself:

> under the trees
> under the clouds
> by the river
> on the beach,
>
> "sea roads."
> ....
>
> sat on a rock in the sun,
> watched the old pine
> wave
> over blinding fine white
> river sand.(RW p. 54)

The correspondences established in "Seed Pods" are implicit in the next poem, "Sours of the Hills":

> barbed seeds in double ranks
> sprung for sending off;
> ....
>
> in the hair and from head to foot
> stuck with seeds--burrs --
> next summer's mountain weeds--
>
> a strolling through vines and grasses:
>
> into the wild sour. (RW p. 55)

In contrast with many of the poems, which convey syntactically and in

other ways the adult Snyder's desire for merging with the phenomenal world "out there", the depiction of Kai in "Meeting the Mountains" suggests the reverse (RW p. 70). The poem takes as given a sense of the child's connection and familiarity with mountain and "foaming creek". But the particular event it records is the necessary beginning of the child's consciousness of himself as a separate agent, a subject. As this assertive encounter suggests, entry into differentiated ego involves for the first time the ability to "meet" torrent and mountain as different from oneself. The impression that this is a significant moment in the child's development is reinforced by the narrative succession of events (unusually climactic and conclusive for Snyder), with each line beginning a new action of which he is the subject: "He crawls", "He backs up", "He puts a finger", "Puts both hands", "Puts one foot". This gradual assertion is completed as he rises to his feet: "He cries out, rises up and stands / Facing toward the torrent and the mountain / Raises up both hands and shouts three times!"

The sense of the human as participant in continuous process, birth and rebirth, that was evoked at Kai's birth, reappears in "For Jack Spicer", a poem written after the death of his friend in the Skagit river. In addressing itself to Jack, and resisting formal closure, the poem suggests a perception of death as a sign of the self's remerging in the flow:

> You leave us free to follow:
> banks and windings
> forward:
> and we needn't want to die. but on, and
> through.
>
> through. (RW p. 73)

This is followed immediately by "Running Water Music II". By now, three quarters of the way into the collection, "water", "music" and "running

stream" have acquired so much condensed allusion, that the form of the words on the page can be perfectly simple:

Clear running stream
clear running stream

Your water is light
to my mouth
And a light to my dry body

your flowing
Music,
in my ears. free,

Flowing free!
With you
in me. (RW p. 74)

"Long Hair", the title poem, is the last one in this section. The curious story it tells about deer hunting whimsically reverses the ideas one is likely to have about agents and patients: "Once every year, the Deer catch human beings. They do various things which irresistably draw men near them; each one selects a certain man...." (RW p. 75). Versions of hunting like this (where the animal is seen to be a willing participant) recur in the poetry, and will be discussed in the next chapter. In relation to the other poems in RW, what is of interest in the poem is what it suggests about interactions with "objects ... outside ourselves", confirming and making explicit the ideas about eating in "Song of the Taste" and "Shark Meat". In eating, objects from the outside are internalised -- "Then the Deer is inside the man." The potentially subversive influence of the Deer within is called "takeover from the inside." Recording a return to America, the poem indicates Snyder's sense of this revolutionary presence within the land, and in himself as one of its inhabitants. As before, the final lines describe the penetration of the human speaker by the patterned movement of natural objects: "Deer spoor and crisscross dusty tracks / Are in the house: and coming out the

walls: / / And deer bound through my hair."

(ii) Target Practice

> Haiku are an expression of the joy of our reunion with things from which we have been parted by self consciousness. (Blyth, p. 260)

Ginsberg described Snyder as one of the few American poets capable of writing genuine haiku (quoted in Thomas Lyon, "Western Poet," p. 207), and certainly this traditional Zen form is the simplest, and perhaps most powerful, way of putting into words an experience of "becoming one with something". The poems in "Target Practice" are not haikus, but they do show the apparently effortless condensation and concentration that are characteristic of the form, and for the same reasons. In this way they represent one approach to the dilemma Thomas Lyon describes as:

> how to talk about things, especially wild ones, without harming their integrity by language; how to preserve and communicate suchness without falling into an arch aesthetic distance between subject and object, a romantic decoration that destroys the very wholeness, which is wildness.... (Lyon, "Ecological Vision," p. 119)

This account points to the fundamental problem of how to describe a mode of perception I have called the sacramental view, when as a spiritual Way it is one which by definition evades verbal articulation. In Zen poetry, notably the haiku, the solution involves <u>pointing</u> to the object itself, with no superfluous explanation. "Target Practice", as the name announces, is the attempt to do just this -- to hit succintly at the thing itself, with a minimum of linguistic flab, the effect being rather similar to that of Snyder's earlier poetry, with its conscious imitation of Chinese models. In this collection, though, the reading of these brief pieces is informed by the more extended descriptions of intensely perceived correspondences in the poems that have preceded them. Given the sense of the interdependencies of things which the other poems in the

collection suggest -- with metaphoric patternings, repetitions, parallelisms -- it is now enough to return with delight to any apparently insignificant fragment. As Suzuki puts it: "When an object is picked up, everything else, One and All, comes along with it" (Quoted in Blyth, p. 256).

By attending in this way to minute particulars, the necessarily declimactic and apparently inconclusive last section returns the reader to the metonymic detail of experience on which, as in Williams' Red Wheelbarrow "so much depends". As this might suggest, Snyder's work may be seen, as Altieri describes it, as an extension of Williams' objectivism (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 150). In an essay about modern poetry, Altieri discusses the features of this orientation. Using Jakobson's model of metaphor and metonymy, he proposes that two main traditions derive from different strategies for approaching the metonymic image and transcending its limits. The first, essentially symbolist, tradition ("mythmakers" like Yeats, Eliot, Stevens) derives from idealist modes of thought. It assumes that the mind requires informing universals if it is to be satisfied in experience, and so it finds in metonymy a cause for despair. For the second tradition (Williams, for example), metonymy is a step in the right direction because "the source of despair is not metonymy itself but the dream that consciousness can find single unifying structures" (Altieri, "Objective Image," pp. 108-9). However, the crucial difference between Snyder's use of metonymy and that which Altieri describes is that in this case, the context in which a wheelbarrow (or anything else) is perceived, is a universe of complex correspondences, mutual interpenetration, in which all things are wave-patterned, an expression of Voice: all things, even the inanimate, have Buddha-nature. Given this, the poet's work is to recognise and make explicit a metaphoric

interrelation which already exists among the metonymic elements, this process being subtly different from either of the categories Altieri identifies.

However, to speak of it in this way, using terms like "TAO", "Buddha", or "Goddess", and "Voice" or "Wave", does not (given the way these have been defined) imply a reading of the poetry on a second "level" -- namely in terms of its metaphysical or "deeper" implications. This conclusion is a common mistake, due often to the dualism inherent in our language. It does, however, suggest a crucial misreading of attitudes towards the phenomenal world, "those things we take to be outside our selves", expressed by the philosophical traditions Snyder favours. Alan Williamson, for example, writes that:

> The pattern of a Snyder poem very strikingly resembles that of a religious experience ... a process of meditation or spiritual exercise, clearing the path from temporal life to the moment of Enlightenment -- the sudden dropping away of the phenomenal world in the contemplation of the infinite and eternal, All and Nothingness. (Williamson, "Language Against Itself," p. 60)

The inaccuracy of this comment should be clear, given what has been said about the problems with transcendent, "otherworldly" philosophies, and the consideration that in MAHAYANA Buddhism the phenomenal and the noumenal are equivalent. Zen poems are about things, but the attention given to things is not intended to imply that they have some godly or metaphysical quality. Zen is not pantheism, not even panentheism. Consider, for example, this comment in Blyth's discussion of Zen haiku, an explicit counter to the kind of interpretation Williamson offers:

> It is a mistake to suppose that in poetry we are to perceive the absolute in the relative, the eternal, the infinite in the finite, the spiritual in the material. If there is any antithesis to Zen, it is this kind of Zoroastrianism, so easy to fall into, because it is of the very nature of the intellect to function dichotomously. (Blyth, p. 248)

This point relates to another more important one: what name is one to give to the orientation towards "things" as sacramental that the poems in RW represent? -- that is, the perception of the participation of all things in "Wave" or "Voice", which is their participation in the "dancing grain" that is the ground of all existence, including the human. In terms of the oppositional categories that Western theological language usually offers, the obvious description would be to say that the poems stress "immanence" as opposed to "transcendence", absorption in the "nothing special" of the given, material reality "within", by contrast with "otherworldly" spiritual asceticism "out there". But this interpretation is complicated firstly by the fact that Snyder alludes to "transcendence" quite frequently, and secondly, by the fact that even the term "immanence" is foreign to Zen language because of the dualism it subtly implies.[38] Probably the clearest statement on this is from Snyder himself in "Poetry and the Primitive",in which he indicates a state of consciousness that has "gone beyond" both immanence and transcendence:

> Mystical traditions within the great religions of civilised times have taught a doctrine of Great Effort for the achievement of Transcendence. This must have been their necessary compromise with civilisation, which needed for its period to turn man's vision away from nature, to nourish the growth of the social energy. The archaic, the esoteric, and the primitive traditions alike all teach that beyond transcendence is Great Play, and Transformation. After the mind-breaking Void the emptiness of a million universes appearing and disappearing, all created things rushing into Krishna's devouring mouth; beyond the enlightenment that can say "these beings are dead already; go ahead and kill them, Arjuna" is a loving, simple awareness of the absolute beauty and preciousness of mice and weeds. (EHH p. 128)

In an interview in TRW, he makes a similar point about "mice and weeds":

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38. However, Snyder's response to a question of mine about immanence is as follows: "As for immanence, my sense of that is the BODHISATTVA's vow that insight be carried into action, that the world be moved in as sacramental" (Letter 3/1/84).

"beyond the ultimate void is this.... because the universe is empty, and infinite, and eternal. Because of that, weeds are precious, mice are precious..." (TRW p. 21, and p. 17). This is the context in which Altieri, in commentary which I do not wish to add to, very appropriately reads the images of realised perception in the poems in "Target Practice". According to this, their simple playfulness is evidence of that Great Play beyond transcendence, where "interbirth depends no longer on a self in action, but can be recognised in whatever phenomena strike the eye" (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 149). So mice and weeds, and the kitten as it "sniffs deep / old droppings" become precious and beautiful ("Cats Thinking About What Birds Eat", RW p. 79).[39]

The Way to the Pattern must be one that can't be mapped. Snyder's version of the Buddhist idea of the Pathless Path, the Gateless Gate, appears in the poem "The Way is not a Way" in "Long Hair". Hitting the target must involve, paradoxically, "Looking for Nothing" —as the first poem in "Target Practice" indicates, a directive which closely resembles Blake's in "Auguries of Innocence",[40] or that of Svetaketu's father in response to his son's questions about "the subtle essence", recorded in the Upanishads:

> Look in the eye of a hawk
> The inmost ring of a log
>
> The edge of the sheath and the
> Sheath--where it leads--
>
> River Sands.

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39. The phrase "Gone Beyond Wisdom, which he used in commentary on the name "Regarding Wave", applies to this sort of consciousness. It will be discussed in a later chapter, by which time sufficient ground will have been covered to make it more intelligible.

40. William Blake, Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (1957; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p. 431.

Tara "Joy of
Starlight"
thousand -
eyed. (RW p. 79)

TARA is the Goddess, in some regions the Great Goddess, and certainly one manifestation of "woman as nature the field for experiencing the universe as sacramental." While evoking, often very effectively, a sense of this, the poems demonstrate, paradoxically, that the simple and complex interaction denoted by the ambiguous "Regarding Wave" is one to which the finest poems can only act as pointers:

You ask me the way to the Pattern.
Fisherman's song deep into the cove.[41]

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41. Wang Wei's "Answer to Vice-Prefect Chang", quoted in Yip, p. 220.

Chapter 3

DELIGHT WITHIN: Getting the People Grounded

(1) THE WILDERNESS, MY CONSTITUENCY
(2) THE SICK, FAT VEINS OF AMERIKA
(3) TURTLE ISLAND
(4) POWER WITHIN

This chapter is made up of four parts, preceded by some introductory remarks. Part (1) defines a context of assumptions within which the poems may be read, and the formal consequences of this point of view. Part (2) examines the critique of culture the poems offer. The title refers to a recently acquired Western technological civilisation, wherever this may occur. The essentially diseased "Amerika" is used to exemplify the direction implied by its ideology. Part (3) discusses the hidden life that "Turtle Island" represents. In common with his Buddhist sources, Snyder assumes the possibility of liberation. The counter-facts which motivate his critique in Turtle Island involve a recognition of the interdependence of all phenomena, the energy of which, the collection suggests, must be more "real" than that of "Amerika". This is followed by (4), a briefer concluding section, which argues that the "power within" to which "Turtle Island" gives access is more than the negative complement or "mirror image" of Snyder's Amerika.

> Delight is the innocent joy arising
> with the perception and realisation of
> the wonderful, empty, intricate,
> inter-penetrating,
> mutually-embracing, shining
> single world beyond all discrimination
> or opposites. (TI p. 113)

RW celebrated a sacramental sense of reality. The collection as a whole is a highly patterned presentation of "interbirth" or Communionism -- the joyful interpenetration of the self, or individual organism, and the community of objects ostensibly external to it. TI attends, among other things, to some of the political implications of this sort of orientation. But to claim that it is more overtly "political" than the previous collection is not to suggest that RW is apolitical. Rather, as this chapter seeks to demonstrate, TI extends and elucidates the notion of "Revolution in the Revolution in the Revolution" introduced previously, and thereby serves to show how the intensely "personal" or "spiritual" concerns of RW are, at the same time, political ones.

Returned to "Amerika", the speaker here is concerned about the dominant culture's denial and exclusion of the order of experience enjoyed in the Japanese island community, and its consequent exclusion of the sacramental vision of things. The underlying intention (and it is impossible not to speak of "intention" when the poetry and prose are so clearly motivated) is the shaman's work of "healing". As in RW, this healing requires a dissolution of the rigid boundaries between "self" and "other", a process which resembles the shaman's "becoming one" with the non-human animal. The direction this takes is towards the delight expressed in RW, the energy of which is proposed as a powerful alternative to the energy of fossil and nuclear fuels. The form of the poetry is more prescriptive and

polemical than Snyder's previous work, a point that has prompted some adverse criticism. As Snyder's Introductory comments on the name "Turtle Island" indicate, its directive is to descend to buried resources of delight "within" the land itself and the wisdom of its native peoples, beneath the cultural accretions of the U.S.A. and its "arbitrary and inaccurate impositions on what is really here" (TI p. 1). This descent to "Mother Nature", the non-human, implies simultaneously, exploration of the unknown regions of the self, its hidden energies.

The assertion of sacramental delight on which the collection ends requires a long look at the "Facts": informed analysis of culture, which in this case gives prominence to sexual politics. TI is dedicated to Snyder's mother, by contrast with the previous book, which was for Masa. This suggests a change of focus towards a different aspect of the "feminine". In contrast with the previously recurrent Wave/wife, the central image here is of the Earth as Mother, and the enormity of her destruction by patriarchal-technological culture. The concerns are, nevertheless, a continuation of those described in the previous chapter: the present ecological or biosocial crisis is shown to be the direct consequence of "otherworldly" (and often patriarchal) assumptions, and the Cartesian dichotomies with which these have become linked. Colonialism and Imperialism are shown to be the "autonomous individual" writ large, their arrogant take-over and destruction of other people's land, religion, social structure, being evidence of a naive attachment to the belief that a single organism or "individual" or government is meaningfully separable from "the rest", in relation to which it stands in opposition. This is in agreement with Wilden's analysis, according to which "someone else's ecosystem" is a metaphor of the epistemological error which lies behind the present biosocial crisis (Wilden, pp. 207-10).

The version of this presented in TI involves a sort of colonialism (exemplified by the U.S.A., and identified as "Amerika") in which the authority of the dominant power is necessarily in opposition to the earth and its inhabitants, which are perceived as being the "Adversary", separable, and "out there". Destruction of the Earth is shown to be symptomatic of the exclusion of certain values and attitudes, which in an epistemology of oppositional relations are perceived as being outside the fold. In a culture in which (in Wilden's terms) experience tends to be dichotomised into polar oppositions (man - woman, self - other, culture - nature, human - non-human, civilised - primitive, reason - emotion, white - non-white, etc.), and primacy is given to one side of the opposition (here the first term in each case), Snyder deliberately celebrates those values and attitudes that tend to be found on the wrong side of the fence. Identification with these is shown to be necessary for the survival of the planet, since:

> How can the head-heavy power-hungry politic scientist
> Government two-world Capitalist-Imperialist
> Third-world Communist paper-shuffling male
> non-farmer jet-set bureaucrats
> Speak for the green of the leaf? Speak for the soil? (TI p. 48)

Clearly, in Snyder's terms, they cannot. Given this, the implied celebration of a consciousness that can "speak for the soil" is an extension of the emphasis on the Goddess mentioned in the previous chapter.

To some extent this emphasis in Snyder can be shown to involve the sort of over-compensation that attempts to redress a balance which is already overweighted the other way. In this case it means giving prominence to the "feminine" pole of the dichotomy, and thereby to those aspects of experience that have been excluded by civilised patriarchal culture.

This can be seen as a strategic device, politically useful, but ultimately unsatisfactory.[1] The point is essentially that in order to counter patriarchal-technocratic dualism, it is not sufficient merely to assert its opposite. This is because exclusive emphasis on, say, the feminine, nature, animals, etc., would perpetuate the very dualism which, in agreement with his Buddhist and systems models, Snyder's work must reject. Antony Wilden clarifies the situation as follows:

> we cannot destroy the master by simply taking his place; we have to make him irrelevant -- and that means to reduce his mastery by transcending the oppositional relationship in which we find ourselves in a negative identification with him. To destroy exploitative mastery we must do more than become the negative complement of the master, his mirror-image; we must know what he knows, which, in essence, is nothing we don't already know. [my emphasis] (Wilden, p. 30)

I hope to show that Snyder's imagery is able to work in this way: increasingly in the later work, terms such as the Goddess (and the range of possibilities with which she is associated) become not merely the reverse image of patriarchal-technological culture, but suggestive of a metaperspective on the conceptual divisions on which it is based. This metaperspective is of a whole system in which things are interdependent and mutually defining, an image of "the single world beyond all discrimination / or opposites" (TI p. 113).

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1. Much contemporary feminist rhetoric seems problematic in this way.

(1) THE WILDERNESS, MY CONSTITUENCY

According to the view which informs the poems, attitudes towards Nature, "the Wilderness", have crucial political implications: the issue is clearly not just a case of "being nice to squirrels."[2] In this section I indicate briefly three areas of concern whose supposed "neutrality" this point of view brings into question. These are (i) mysticism and religious institutions, (ii) the relation of mind and nature in the act of perception, and (iii) "nature poetry" itself. My reading suggests that the poems in TI represent a conscious attempt to write "Nature poetry" that is politically radical as well as "spiritual", and thereby to redefine current expectations about what these categories mean. In part (iv) I discuss briefly some of the consequences of this orientation for his formal poetics in TI.

(i) Mysticism and Ideology

> What the many proponents of spiritualist and sentimental spirituality fail to comprehend is the inherent politics in all mysticism. For all energy is interconnected, whether it be energy of politics, or of the flight from politics.[3]

This comment by Matthew Fox in an essay about Meister Eckhart and Karl Marx nicely approximates Snyder's position. In common with people like Eckhart, Blake, Thomas Merton, and some groups like the proponents of liberation theology or feminist spirituality, Snyder has consistently

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2. "The ethics or morality of this is far more subtle than merely being nice to squirrels" (TOW p. 63).

3. Matthew Fox, "Meister Eckhart and Karl Marx: The Mystic as Political Theologian," in Understanding Mysticism, ed. R. Woods, p. 540.

emphasised the crucial political significance of spiritual concerns. The point of view indicates a marked deviation from the famous conservatism of much institutional religion. In EHH, Snyder criticises the ultimately uncompassionate and destructive tendency of institutional Buddhism to "ignore the inequalities and tyrannies of whatever political system it found itself under" (EHH p. 90). Instead, he describes the actual achievement of Buddhism as being "the development of practical systems of meditation toward the end of liberating a few dedicated individuals from psychological hangups and cultural conditionings" (EHH p. 90). This liberatory function has crucially to do with Buddhism's ambivalent relation towards language, and its attempts to "descend beneath" it. Implicit in Snyder's comment is the recognition that language is ideologically or culturally specific, and that the meditator's uneasiness with it may have political as well as spiritual meaning. Many commentators on mysticism and the problem of language tend to overlook this consideration, making a mistake which Fox attempts to remedy. He reads Eckhart's use of the "via negativa" as a political as well as a theological assertion: "For to wipe one's mind clean of an inherited language is to wipe one's mind clean of an entire culture with its social and symbolic structures" (Fox, p. 543).

Assuming that religious or mystical positions (and in particular the language by which they are made accessible) may not be ideologically neutral, Snyder gives extensive attention to the political meanings that religious orthodoxies have embodied. In particular this concerns the significance of the attitudes towards nature implicit in their doctrines. This comment from his recent Schumacher Lecture is representative of the critique, according to which the consequences of "civilisation" have been:

> austerities, obedience to religious authority, long bookish scholarship, a dualistic devotionalism (sharply distinguishing "creature and creator") and an over-riding metaphor of divinity being centralised, just as a secular ruler of a civilised state is at the centre -- of wealth, of the metropole, of political power. A king. The efforts entailed in such a spiritual practice are a sort of war against nature -- placing the human over the animal, the "spiritual" over the human. [my emphasis] (SCHUM p. 14)

(ii) Mind and Nature in the Act of Perception

> To subjugate all non-rational nature to himself, to rule over it freely and according to his own law, is the ultimate goal of man."[4]

This explicit statement of the "bad metaphysics" mentioned in the previous chapter, is quoted in Natural Supernaturalism. Abrams examines the language used in German and English Romanticism to describe the act of perception, and the political significance of understandings of the relation of mind - natural world, ego - non-ego, self - Nature. In Fichte, as the quotation would suggest, the language is, revealingly, that of "Machtpolitik". Abrams remarks on the significance of this imposition of essentially "political" terminology (such as "conflict", "mastery", "tyranny", "submission", "freedom") into the cognitive realm, to represent the relation between the mind and the natural world, or between the mind and the physical senses, in the act of perception (Abrams, p. 363). Snyder's attempt to reassess the boundaries between "self" and a hostile Nature "out there" (as described in the previous chapter), implicitly recognises the ideological significance of this, and represents a reversal of the assumptions present in the sort of language Abrams describes, according to which "I will be the master of nature; and she shall be my servant."[5]

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4. Fichte, The Vocation of the Scholar, quoted in Abrams, p. 359.

5. Fichte, Treatise on the French Revolution, quoted in Abrams, p. 360.

(iii) Nature Poetry is not Neutral

> The reason I am here is because I wish to bring a voice from the Wilderness, my constituency. I wish to be a spokesman for a realm that is not usually represented either in intellectual chambers, nor in the chambers of government. (TI p. 106)[6]

It should be clear that recognition of "the inherent politics" in all mysticism or epistemology, implies for Snyder the related assumption that the same necessarily applies to literature. The point of view is becoming increasingly familiar in English Departments, under slogans such as "Art is not neutral". In such contexts, the sort of poetry that he writes -- Nature poetry -- is precisely that which is frequently described as being politically conservative. A common argument here is as follows: absorption in the beauty of what is "natural", uncivilised, non-human, etc., amounts to a Romantic escapism which is seductive precisely because it draws attention away from the world of social/economic transactions and exploitation, the world whose tensions are essentially human, material and ideological, and which is the locus of our real existence. According to this argument, we pacify our response to these by turning to Nature and contemplating a mythic other realm where such problems no longer exist.

However accurate this assessment often is, there are exceptions -- some of the clearest being in the radical committment to the French Revolution of "Romantic" poetry itself, later conservatisms aside.[7] The "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads", for example, is as much a conscious political response to the climate of the French Revolution, as it is a statement of

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6. This is from the transcript of a statement made at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, California.

7. Wordsworth, for example, the Nature poet par excellence, claimed to have devoted "twelve hours thought to the conditions and prospects of society, for one to poetry" (Abrams, p. 357).

poetic intent. Here, the attempt to use "the real language of men" in place of the elitist excesses of "poetic diction" may be seen as the linguistic corollary of the peasant uprising.

It should be clear, however, that in Romantic poetry "Nature" was used in the promotion of essentially human freedoms and equalities -- in particular, the freedom and equality of men, as Mary Wolstonecraft and others since then have pointed out. Snyder's nature poetry takes this a great deal further, in poems that propose a revolution within the revolution within the most inclusive revolution Wordsworth could have envisaged. According to the view that the poems suggest, human liberation is only the first step towards the desired state of "True Communionism", which would imply the liberation of the most exploited classes, including "Animals, trees, water, grasses" and their intra-psychic corollaries. "Liberation" in this context indicates not the illusory freedom of the "autonomous individual", but rather, a definition of "self" which implies the freedom to perceive oneself as part of the interconnected network of beings. In this Snyder's position agrees with (and has helped to define) that of increasing numbers of people in radical political circles, for whom the search for an "ecological" future has become imperative. This from Andre Gorz in Ecology as Politics is fairly representative: "Socialism is no better than Capitalism if it makes use of the same tools. The total domination of nature inevitably entails a domination of people by the techniques of domination."[8] From a similar perspective, Murray Bookchin writes The Ecology of Freedom, in the attempt to satisfy the need for "a consistently radical social ecology". His model proposes:

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8. Gorz, Ecology as Politics (Boston: South End Press, 1980), flyleaf comment.

> The reconciliation of nature and human society in a new ecological sensibility and a new ecological society — a reharmonisation of nature and humanity through a reharmonisation of human with human.[9]

In his interview with Geneson Snyder discusses the potentially subversive function of poetry in terms of the imperative need to locate the most vulnerable place ("where the heart is hidden") in the monster of the monolithic state, and then to kill it. He sees this to be largely the work of poets and visionaries, rather than of politicians, since the latter are likely to "think too rationally and too reasonably to figure out where the heart is" (GEN pp. 85-86). In this context, Snyder identifies his own work as being to bring "a voice from the Wilderness ... my constituency."

This role is shown to correspond to the shaman's one of acting as speaker for animals and plants, the Great Goddess or Mother Nature, and thereby for the unconscious realms of the human psyche. The assumption of the function of shaman (primarily that of poet/healer, as opposed to that of a political activist) is founded on the conviction that the ideology of civilised culture embodies prejudices and destructive fears, which are an expression of deep, often unconscious, psychic patterns or "myth blocks". According to this, poetry can direct radical transformation precisely because it has access to, and works in terms of these "key images, myths, archetypes, eschatologies, and ecstasies" (TI p. 101), aspects of experience which the primitive world-view takes seriously. In TRW Snyder describes the need to examine these mythic blocks and see if they are

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9. Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy (Palo Alto, California: Cheshire Books, 1982), p. 11. See also James Robertson, The Sane Alternative: A Choice of Futures (Shropshire: Robertson, 1983), and Roszack, Person/Planet: The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Society (1978; rpt. London: Gollancz, 1979).

working properly: "Poetry effects change by fiddling with the archetypes and getting at people's dreams about a century before it actually effects historical change" (TRW p. 91).[10]

(iv) The Role of Prophet

In this context, TI represents a deliberate use of the recognition that "art is not neutral" to particular political ends. This is manifested in a polemical, often didactic and generalising style, and the appearance of a significant prose section in addition to the poetry. Whereas RW clearly represents a fairly unified marriage of form and content, TI is much more heterogeneous, and its formal deviations have provoked some adverse criticism. Kern sees TI as "a deeply divided book", representing a move away from Snyder's earlier stylistic preferences, in favour of "an audience-oriented rhetoric, strong closure, and forms that, in their frequent closeness to ritualised chant, are highly foregrounded" (Kern, "Silent Form," p. 48). Altieri identifies the reason for this as follows:

> while the seer can present images for those capable of understanding them, the prophet must somehow generalise and interpret his images so that they affect the imagination, if not the intelligence of a sufficient number of people to make social change possible. The prophet must, in short, transform images into myths. (Altieri, "Seer and Prophet," p. 769)

In Snyder this has meant, at the formal level, the appearance of rhetorical generalisation or caricature, particularly evident in the conclusions of poems. Both critics cite some of what they call the

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10. Snyder gives here an example of how this might work, quoting the appearance of a legalistic argument for the involvement of trees in democratic processes, "Should Trees Have Standing?" by Christopher Stone, a couple of decades after poets like himself had introduced the idea in poetry. Stone's argument now appears in book form: Can Trees Have Standing? Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects (New York: Avon Books, 1975).

"most egregious" examples of such conclusions.[11]

My response to these objections is initially to concede with Kern and Altieri that some of the examples they cite are certainly unsuccessful, and I do not intend to examine them further. However, the issue is not as simple as this. For example, one of the conclusions Altieri quotes is that of the poem "Tomorrow's Song": "In the service ... of the Mother's breasts!" (TI p. 77). It seems worth noting that in an interview in TRW, Snyder sings this ending: clearly, the poem is a song in more than name (TRW p. 47). Similarly, Molesworth discusses another of the "egregious" conclusions that both critics cite -- "Stay together / learn the flowers / go light" (TI, p. 86) -- comparing it favourably with the order of simplicity we associate with Blake, and the whole tradition of the literary ballad (Molesworth, Vision, p. 104). While these examples do not remove Altieri's objection, they indicate one important direction that the later poetry is taking, and which should work to recast the assumptions according to which it is assessed. In what follows, I will assume Molesworth's reading of Snyder's attempt to find new forms for the lyric, according to which Snyder experiments with alternatives to the "privatised reader", deliberately incorporating forms that may be sung, or that are reminiscent of ritual utterance (Molesworth, Vision, pp. 92-107).

Given what Kern calls the "ecological urgency" that informs the collection, it seems likely that many of the poems in TI do, as Altieri suggests, give more place to generalised images or metaphors than was the case in the earlier work. However, I am interested in whether these do in

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11. Altieri does question the adequacy and effectiveness of Snyder's prophetic mode further, identifying other problems than these formal ones. Although it is not the primary business of my thesis to assess the work in this way, I will, however, return briefly to these objections in Chapter Five.

fact degenerate into "abstractions" to the extent that he claims, gaining emotional power "only because of their vagueness, generality, or ideological resonance" (Altieri, "Seer and Prophet," p. 770). In discussing the approach to the sacramental question in TI, I will give some attention to the ideological-philosophical position which informs the poems and prose. This will then imply examining in some detail the imagery by which the position is articulated.

(2) THE SICK, FAT VEINS OF AMERIKA

> The fundamental principle of our civilisation is exploitation. This is an exploitation of nature, of workers, of "other" races, of undeveloped countries, of women, of children -- and, worst of all, the internalisation of this ethic of exploitation to the point that we end up exploiting ourselves. (Wilden, p. 280)

"Amerika" is Snyder's metaphor in TI for the state of consciousness which fosters this exploitation. In the previous chapter I described the Tantric expansion of the senses as a spiritual way appropriate for the KALI-YUGA. In addition to this, though, living in these times is shown to mean sharing the planet with the debris our culture wears, and which, being synthetic, is not easily destroyed.

> Aluminium beer cans, plastic spoons,
> plywood veneer, PVC pipe, vinyl seat covers,
> don't exactly burn, don't quite rot.
> flood over us,
>
> robes and garbs
> of the Kali-yuga
>
> end of days. (TI p. 67)

In TI, the "Facts" of this situation are given extensive attention: about

a third of the poetry, and most of the "Plain Talk" are explicitly concerned with the urgent problems of the dominant American culture, and its assumption of what I refer to as "biosocial imperialism". As the "poem" of this name ("Facts," p. 31) outlines, the central considerations here have to do with energy consumption, distribution of resources, and the sorts of aspirations and beliefs that are implied by a consumer society of this kind. In EHH this situation is succintly described with reference to the Tibetan Buddhist idea of the PRETA LOKA or "Hungry Ghost Realm" (EHH p. 91). These hungry ghosts are mythic creatures with insatiable appetites and impossibly tiny throats, the state of consciousness they represent being characterised, as Chogyam Trungpa puts it, by the fascination with anticipated pleasure, and the inability to enjoy the pleasure itself.[12]

As this suggests, consumer society has important implications for Snyder with respect to the sacramental view. In "Four Changes" the significance of its relation towards "possession" is made explicit. Here, the Cartesian notion of the self as separable and distinct is shown to imply what Ursula Le Guin has called a "propertarian" relation towards things,[13] of which imperialism or colonialism is a massive extension:

> It is hard even to begin to gauge how much a complication of possessions, the notions of "my" and "mine", stand between us and a true, clear, liberated way of seeing the world." (TI p. 99)[14]

The Buddhist analysis of the situation which this implies speaks of

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12. "The torture of the Hungry Ghost Realm is not so much the pain of not finding what he wants; rather it is the insatiable hunger itself which causes pain" (Trungpa, pp. 139-140).

13. In The Dispossessed (London: Gollancz, 1974).

14. Compare with TRW p. 69 on "bad metaphysics" and "real seeing".

"attachment" as being at the root of the barrier to sacramental seeing. In Buddhist terms, either attachment (or aversion) is based on the mistaken conviction that the object to which one clings (or by which one is repelled) is essentially other than, or outside of, oneself. In this context, Snyder's analysis of "Amerika" suggests that its dualistic ideology is so complete that "nature" (in particular "wild nature" and the range of possibilities symbolically associated with it) is perceived as something not only "outside ourselves", but essentially hostile to us: an "Adversary". It is on the basis of assumptions of this kind that Amerika's domination of "nature" and celebration of "culture" depends:

> A ruling class, to survive, must propose a Law: a law to work must have a hook into the social psyche -- and the most effective way to do this is to make people doubt their natural worth and instincts, especially sexual. To make "human nature" suspect is also to make Nature -- the Wilderness -- the adversary. (EHH p. 115)

In what follows, I will discuss poems in TI that examine these assumptions, and the ethic of consumption and control that they imply. Where appropriate I will refer to some of Snyder's earlier work on the subject.

(i) Animals

The first poem in TI that explicitly addresses American culture, concerns its relation towards animals.[15] Frequently identified by humans with the "undesirable" ("bestial") parts of themselves, animals are probably the most symbolically powerful embodiments of "wild Nature". As such they are intrinsic to the whole issue of consumption and stewardship. This collection of poems gives particular attention to the

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15. The poem mentioned here is "The Dead by the Side of the Road". It will be discussed in due course.

meanings of ways of relating to non-human creatures, RW's directive to see "animals as persons" being repeated and contextualised. An important issue here concerns the status of animals as food, and the position suggested on this in RW is given emphasis. In this context, the production of meat in consumer society is shown to be significantly different from the relation that Snyder claims to exist between a skilled hunter and his animal.

In the earlier poetry, the desire to conquer and subdue other animals is shown to be one of the clearest indications of alienation from, and fear of the Wild. It is useful here to compare two consecutive poems in M&T: "Hunting" 7 and 8 (M&T pp. 65-66). In the second poem, the speaker one night shoots a deer -- "that wild silly blinded creature" -- from his car, as he sees it "Dancing in the headlights / on the lonely road." This contrasts strongly with the rabbits in the previous poem that hang "All beaded with dew" from alder snares set by the Shuswap tribe. Their death represents a very different sort of relation, one which acknowledges the appropriate and necessary web of interconnection between the hunters ("Our girls get layed by Coyote") and the prey: "The spider is building a morning-web / From the snared rabbit's ear to the snare." Whereas the deer is silenced and reduced to a collection of remains that are bundled into the car trunk, the rabbit's death gives it a voice and a dance that continues:

> I dance
> On every swamp
> sang the rabbit
> once a hungry ghost
> then a beast
> who knows what next? (M&T p. 65)

This joyful recognition on the part of the animal of its dependence for transformation on the human hunter, is markedly different from the

remorseful conclusion of the deer poem, for which it is the work of the following poems to atone:

> Deer don't want to die for me.
> I'll drink sea-water
> Sleep on pebbles in the rain
> Until the deer come down to die
> in pity for my pain. (M&T p. 67)

This use of the first person is characteristic in M&T, a cycle which mythologises among other things the "text" of Snyder's own participation in some of the destructive aspects of American culture: "Logging", "Hunting", "Burning".

In "The Dead By The Side Of The Road" Snyder gives a fairly literal description of what John Berger has called the "cultural marginalisation" of animals.[16] Berger considers the proliferation of pets, realistic toys, Disney-type cartoons, and the zoo, as evidence of the gradual disappearance of animals from our lives: "The zoo is a monument to the impossibility of ever really meeting animals" (Berger, p. 9).[17] This poem describes finding animals that have been knocked down and disregarded on the big American highways:

> How did a great Red-tailed Hawk
> come to lie--all stiff and dry--
> on the shoulder of
> Interstate 5 ?
>
> Her wings for dance fans. (TI p. 7)

Like the state and county divisions of the U.S.A., these roads are

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16. This appears in his useful essay, "Why Look at Animals," in About Looking (London: Writers & Readers, 1980).

17. His analysis traces this tendency from Cartesian dualism to its outworking in industrial society, where the animal becomes nothing more than a machine, and is finally superceded by the machine.

"arbitrary and inaccurate impositions on what is really here" -- in this case, "Our ancient sisters' trails", which the roads were laid across at the animals' expense. Attempting to restore these deaths to the meaningful ritual they have been denied, the speaker describes how the remains will be used, the use in each case appropriate to the shamanistic consciousness the poem seeks to recall: "dance fans", a tanned pelt, and "she will be a pouch for magic tools". The healing is completed in the reverent attention of the concluding lines. Here by means of the syntax, imitation of primitive ritual is rendered suitably ambiguous -- it is not clear whether the speaker or reader is the subject of the action: "Pray to their spirits. Ask them to bless us."

Evidence of increasing marginalisation of animals is, Berger shows, their reduction to the status of a resource, raw materials. Most literally, we eat them. The poem "Steak" demonstrates something of this process, the coyly "smiling disney cow" on the steak house sign, recording precisely the sort of alienation that is involved. As the title confirms, for the assorted notaries who eat there, the animals they are eating have existence only as the sliced meat on the plate. The context is such that any relationship with the living animal is precluded. An attempt to see beyond the "Steak" reveals the animals to be slow and heavy, products of another exploitation:

> And down by the tracks
> in frozen mud, in the feed lots,
> fed surplus grain
> (the ripped-off land)
> the beeves are standing round--
> bred heavy. (TI p. 10)

The isolated, circumscribed existence in the feed lots images that of the overfed society for whose further consumption they have been produced. In this way, the process whereby animals, like the rest of the Earth, become

raw materials, is shown to be, as Berger describes it, the same as that whereby men have become reduced to isolated productive and consuming units (Berger, p. 11).

(ii) Sovereign Use of Natural Resources

On the larger scale, the corollary of over-eating is a culture fed and continually extended by excessive amounts of expensive energy. Snyder describes this in terms of a dangerous addiction: "The United States, Europe, The Soviet Union, and Japan have a habit. They are addicted to heavy energy use, great gulps and injections of fossil fuel" (TI p. 103). "Mother Earth: Her Whales" addresses the problem of a country's assumption of the right to "Sovereign use of Natural Resources", and the connection this implies between the exploitation of animals and wild nature, and that of other persons:

> 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? (TI p. 47)

As a child, Snyder was never happy with the Christian doctrine according to which animals have no souls, and man has been given dominion over the earth.[18] Related to this is the Old Testament's implied directive to consider wife, house, field, servants, ox, ass, as either my or my neighbour's possessions (see Deuteronomy 5) -- a fairly unambiguous perception of "objects ... outside ourselves". According to the critique which informs "Mother Earth: Her Whales", the "priapic drive for material accumulation" that has characterised Western civilisation, and the present

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18. "Animals don't have souls, can't be saved; nature is merely a ground for us to exploit while working out our drama of free will and salvation under the watch of Jehovah" (EHH p. 122).

ecological crisis which is its consequence, are the clear outcome of the Judaeo-Christian world-view: "men are seen as working out their ultimate destinies (paradise? perdition?) with planet earth as the stage for their drama -- trees and animals mere props, nature a vast supply depot" (TI p. 103). In this, Snyder's analysis agrees with a fairly common one in contemporary environmental philosophy, although his assessment of the degree of Judaeo-Christian responsibility for the relation to Nature as "Adversary" is less subtle than the current debate would tend allow.[19]

M&T began with a quotation from Acts 19:27, which includes the announcement that "the temple of the great Goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." In this collection, which clarifies the position for the rest of his work, the present ecological crisis is seen to be, not a 20th century aberration, but the clear outcome of a tradition of values that elevates man above his environment, "spiritual" values above those of "fleshly", fallen matter, dichotomising body - soul, self - others, resulting in a barren intellectuality, and consequent sexual taboos: "Again the ancient meaningless / Abstractions of the educated mind" (M&T p. 39). Wilden's similar analysis of the problem traces its origins to an epistemological position regarding conceptions about the separability of self - other, us - them, etc (from which the notions of "my" and "mine" mentioned earlier derive their authority). The core issue in this returns to the question posed in the previous chapter -- that is, "How do we relate to those objects we take to be outside ourselves?"

In "Logging" 14, the responsibility of patriarchal, "otherworldly"

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19. John Passmore's book, Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions (London: Duckworth, 1974) is an important contribution to this debate.

philosophies for this situation is made remarkably explicit:

> 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
> Bulldosed by Luther and Weyerhaeuser
> Cross-cut and chainsaw
> square-heads and finns
> high-lead and cat-skidding
> Trees down
> Creeks choked, trout killed, roads.
> Sawmill temples of Jehovah.
> Squat black burners 100 feet high
> Sending the smoke of our burnt
> Live sap and leaf
> To his eager nose. (M&T p. 56)

This portrayal of "Jehovah" as Urizenic sky-god-destroyer-of-forests draws a powerful connection which lies at the core of Snyder's analysis. The second poem in "Logging" begins with a quotation from Exodus 34:13 -- "But ye shall destroy their altars, / break their images, and cut down their groves."[20]

The sort of consciousness that issues this directive is succintly

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20. While in this case the blame is laid at the door of Western culture (which certainly provides numerous examples) Snyder is careful elsewhere to include evidence of similar Oriental attitudes (eg: in "The Wilderness," TI pp. 106-7). On a related issue, see Rhoads Murphy's "Man and Nature in China," Modern Asian Studies, 1, No. 4 (1967), pp. 313-33. Murphy describes the remarkable reversal in attitudes towards Nature that has characterised post-Revolutionary China. By contrast with the traditional view, according to which harmonious co-operation with Nature is essential to the well-being of all, was at the time of writing (1967!) seen as pre-eminent, unequivocally in conflict with Nature: Nature is no longer to be accepted but must be "defied" and "conquered". Murphy cites the titles of some contemporary articles celebrating this: "We Bend Nature to Our Will", "Chairman Mao's Thoughts Are our Guide to Scoring Victories in the Struggle Against Nature", "Hard Work Conquers Nature", etc.

described by Susan Griffin in a discussion of pornography. Her analysis complements Snyder's, since she considers exploitation of women to be a sign of fear of nature, and Snyder sees alienation from Nature as denial of the feminine. Thus their diagnosis of the malaise is essentially the same: in patriarchal culture, woman, nature, and eros are identified and feared because seen to be suggestive of darkness, corruption and death. Because of this, "nature" must be separated from "culture", and branded as inferior, since the "feminine" symbolism it represents is perceived as being so threatening. Given this, it is essential for culture that the deity be represented as male, and that the groves of the Great Goddess -- in this case, Diana -- be cut down:

> For the proposition that woman, who is nature, could be sacred is not a possible concept in a culture which is by definition above nature.[21]

As this suggests, gender relations are central to Snyder's analysis of culture. In both M&T and TI, derogatory mention of "men" is frequently used to imply (among other things) patriarchy's essentially self destructive denial of the genetic principle. Here, the civilisation that destroys the Earth, its source of nourishment, and the memory of its primitive origins, is mythically equivalent to the son who kills his mother. The position should be clear: "The more we conquer Nature, the weaker we get" (EHH p. 131). The contemporary outcome of this "religio-economic" position is represented as a continually growing economy that has become a cancer which must progressively destroy the life of the continent it feeds on:

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21. Susan Griffin, Pornography and Silence, p. 71. Griffin shows that pornography, while ostensibly a rebellion against, say, Judaeo-Christian moralism, appears in fact to be symptomatic of the very same patriarchal assumptions. See also Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in Woman, Culture and Society, ed. M. Z. Rosaldo et al. (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 67-87.

Every pulse of the rot in the heart
In the sick fat veins of Amerika
Pushes the edge up closer-- (TI p. 18)

In "Front Lines" Mother Earth has cancer : " The edge of the cancer / Swells against the hill". The "foul breeze" of this sick and uncontrolled destruction contrasts with the "hot clean burn" described in "Control Burn" on the facing page, a purgatorial fire which may, the poem suggests, be the only cure. In "Plain Talk" the civilised disease is specified further as being breast cancer, appropriately so: "The cancer is eating away at the breast of Mother Earth in the form of strip mining" (TI p. 104). This acquisitive advance on the land amounts to a rape: "Landseekers, lookers, they say / To the land, / Spread your legs." A disgustingly destructive bulldozer ("grinding and slobbering / Sideslipping and belching on top of the skinned up bodies of still-live bushes") is shown to be the tool of the man from town. This recalls a passage from "Logging" 15:

Men who hire men to cut groves
Kill snakes, build cities, pave fields,
Believe in god, but can't
Believe their own senses
Let alone Gautama. Let them lie. (M&T p. 57)

An attitude that can't believe its own senses is essentially diseased, symptomatic of a culture that has denied their value and that of the earth, in favour of the bliss of a supranaturalistic heaven -- some realm where all experience is incorporeal.

(iii) All these Americans up in Special Cities in the Sky

Destruction of nature, and thereby denial of the Goddess (and with her, all that RW celebrates), indicates, in Snyder's terms, a significant alienation from what he calls the "ground of being". This is made

explicit in one of the prose sections in TI:

> There are many things in Western culture that are admirable. But a culture that alienates itself from the very ground of its own being -- from the wilderness outside (that is to say, wild nature, the wild, self-contained self-informing ecosystems) and from that other wilderness, the wilderness within - is doomed to a very destructive behaviour, ultimately perhaps self-destructive behaviour. (TI p. 106)

"The Call of the Wild" gives local examples of ways of relating towards Nature as "Adversary". The poem describes "A war against earth" which implies, simultaneously, a war against our "natural" selves. Ironically recalling the book of the same name, the title alludes to the significance "wild" has acquired in civilised culture. The subject is discussed in EHH, where it is made clear that again the consciousness is not restricted to Western civilisation. Snyder shows that as the frightening "other", the term "wild" refers in Japanese to what is "uncontrollable, objectionable, crude, sexually unrestrained, violent", etc. As a consequence of this sort of attitude, Far Eastern love of Nature has become fear of Nature, so that "gardens and pine trees are tormented and controlled" and the province of nature aesthetes (EHH p. 120).

The poem illustrates a similar attitude towards the "wild" as that which is described in "Four Changes". Here a connection is drawn between over-enthusiastic use of insecticides, and the fear of what Snyder calls one's own psychic wilderness areas: "There is something in Western culture that wants to totally wipe out creepy-crawlies and feels repugnance for toadstools and snakes" (TI p. 96). In this respect, the "ex acid-heads from the cities" in "The Call of the Wild" are perhaps the most interesting. The poem illustrates how members of the "counter-culture" assiduously bent on "alternatives" may well be living out the very ideology they seek to oppose:

The ex acid-heads from the cities
Converted to Guru or Swami,
Do penance with shiny
Dopey eyes, and quit eating meat.
In the forests of North America,
The land of Coyote and Eagle,
They dream of India, of
    forever blissful sexless highs.
And sleep in oil-heated
Geodesic domes, that
Were stuck like warts
In the woods. (TI p. 21)

Their effective alienation and lack of "real seeing" is evident at every point. Remarkably out of touch, and having, significantly, no sense of the given "place", they dream of India (with "Dopey eyes", the opposite of Zen "attention") while living in the forests of North America. Their unlikely dwellings are described as "warts": unnatural growths, not integrated into the environment. Essentially ignorant about wild systems, and retaining a civilised wariness about them, they cut down virgin cedar trees, in obedience to some authority who has told them they are "full of bugs". The corollary of dreaming of "India" is a wistful longing for ascetic "sexless highs". This is shown to be inappropriate, symptomatic of the very same "otherworldly" mentality that governs the men in the earlier poem who "Believe in god, but can't / Believe [or give value to] their own senses."

Following immediately afer this, the last section of the poem confirms the hippies' real identification with the "American" culture to which they are superficially opposed, and whose representatives are, like Jehovah himself, "up in special cities in the sky". The inevitable outcome of the exclusively transcendental, "bad metaphysics" which they share, and the alienation from self and Nature this implies, is the horribly destructive war against earth which the concluding lines describe:

The Government finally decided
To wage the war   all-out. Defeat

is Un-American.
And they took to the air,
Their women beside them
in bouffant hairdos
putting nail-polish on the
gunship cannon-buttons.
And they never came down,
for they found,
the ground
is pro-Communist. And dirty.
And the insects side with the Viet Cong.

So they bomb and they bomb
Day after day, across the planet
blinding sparrows
breaking the ear-drums of owls
splintering trunks of cherries
twining and looping
deer intestines
in the shaken, dusty, rocks. (TI p. 22)

(3) TURTLE ISLAND

Turtle Island swims
in the ocean-sky swirl-void
biting its tail while the worlds go
on--and--off
winking. (TI p. 80)

If Snyder's criticism of "Amerika" seems at times, as Altieri suggests, somewhat two-dimensional (Altieri, "Seer and Prophet," p. 773), then "Turtle Island" as metaphor goes beyond this. The name acts as a focussing metaphor for the concerns of the book -- its critique, and the images of hope it suggests. The Introductory Note summarises the senses in which it is used, a characteristic example of Snyder's fondness for making connections. Any use of the snake as symbolic tends to be ambivalent, associated with the primordial, with energy itself, and so with both masculine and feminine. Here, in identifying the turtle with the serpent-of-eternity, the ancient prop of the world, Snyder establishes from the beginning its identity with the primal creative energy

that precedes polar differentiation: the ouroboros biting its tail.[22]

> The poems speak of place, and the energy pathways that sustain life. Each living being is a swirl in the flow, a formal turbulence, a "song". The land, the planet itself, is also a living being -- at another pace. (TI p. 1)

The relation which this passage, so reminiscent of RW, establishes between the turtle or serpent, the focus given to "place", and "the energy pathways that sustain life" is important. The land itself is seen as the primal source of energy, its life much more like that of a living being than we have generally been led to believe. In proposing ways of access to its buried power, the poems attempt to regain those aspects of experience that recent civilisation has tended to deny. In this context, then, a "sense of place" implies being "grounded" to the maternal Earth, and perception of the complex interdependencies of things involves a sense of oneself as part of her family.

(i) Underground

> I'd like to see people grounded.... Get the people grounded and the poetry'll take care of itself. (TRW p. 72)

In Snyder's work, recovery of a sense of the land itself frequently involves a healing descent.[23] The second-to-last poem in the collection, most explicitly a polemical directive, describes the tendency of the dominant culture which involves "the steep climb / of everything, going up, / up, as we all / go down" (TI p. 86). The poetry suggests that

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22. Compare Jung's use of the ouroboros as symbolic of primal, undifferentiated consciousness. Equally appropriate is to J. E. Cirlot's definition in A Dictionary of Symbols (2nd ed., 1962; rpt. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 247: "The ouroboros biting its own tail is symbolic of self-fecundation, or the primitive idea of a self-sufficient Nature."

23. This is the general drift of Folsom's article on TI, "Gary Snyder's Descent to Turtle Island." As I will make clear, my understanding of the form this descent takes is rather different from his.

ascent, "progress", and continual transcendence of limits at every level are significant characteristics of our society. They are crucially linked with the acquisitive and competitive drive for personal ("individual") possession and achievement. Contrasting with this, descent (and a consequent "sense of place"), is frequently proposed as an alternative, representing the fundamental desire to "get the people grounded". Politically, this development of "a sense of place" involves a deliberate counter to the sort of consciousness that may be seen as a typical feature of colonialism. According to this, although the colonised land and its people are available for conquest and exploitation, these remain (from the point of view of the coloniser) to some degree alien, and of lesser importance: secondary to the main things which are happening overseas in the country of origin.

As in RW, the opening poem of the collection is crucial in preparing for what is to come. The first two poems in TI, "Anasazi" and "The Way West, Underground" attempt to undo some of the work of the colonisers, the air-borne Americans, by going down into the ground. Given this function, their placing is important, in that speaking of "place" provides a good base for what is to follow. The first poem is particularly interesting, since it assembles some of the linked meanings that descent involves in the poetry. The Introductory Note referred to "creation myths", and certainly RW's search for origins, "seeds" and the beginnings of things reappears here as a seeking-out of "roots", roots that necessarily lie hidden in the dark earth. In this context then, "descent" (or "getting grounded") implies reestablishing contact with one's primitive past, which civilised culture tries to disregard. Further, it implies encounter with the real people who still inhabit these realms, and thereby with the "wild nature" with which they are familiar. Consequently, it implies the

humility to learn from their stories and practices -- "The Old Ways". In addition, becoming "grounded" equally suggests for Snyder a descent to what Paul Tillich first named the "Ground of Being". For Tillich, "the name of this infinite and inexhaustable depth and ground of being is God " -- that which is the most meaningful experience of our own selves.[24] And finally, in whatever sense it is understood, "descent" is likely to imply incorporation of the "other": the feminine, the non-human, and those sides of the polar opposition with which they are linked. At every level this contrasts with the attempt to establish one's identity as autonomous and separable, "clear and distinct":

> One moves continually with the consciousness
> Of that other, totally alien, non-human:
> Humming inside like a taut drum,
> Carefully avoiding any direct thought of it,
> Attentive to the real-world flesh and stone. (M&T p. 76)[25]

"Anasazi" describes an awed encounter with this other -- the tribe of this name who were the oldest inhabitants in the region. As such, it represents a powerful assertion of the buried life deep beneath the accretions of the U.S.A. In this poem, looking at the social system of the Anasazi reveals the mysteries that inhere in the daily activities of such people, and which are, the second poem discovers, "Painted in caves, /

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24. Paul Tillich, "The Depth of Existence," in The Shaking of the Foundations (1949), quoted in Robinson, p. 22. The reasons for the theologians' introduction of this term were similar to Snyder's emphasis on descent: that is, a deliberate counter to outdated supranaturalistic metaphors which represented God as "out there" and transcendent. See also Perera, Descent to the Goddess.

25. In TOW, he describes the poet's concern with the planet in terms of the ancient shamanic function of singing the voice of the corn, the voice of the stars, and the animals: "To contact in a very special way an "other" that was not within the human sphere; something that could not be learned by continually consulting other human teachers, but could only be learned by venturing outside the borders and going into your own mind-wilderness, unconscious wilderness" (TOW pp. 36-7).

Underground": growing, watching, giving birth. The culture so evolved, far from being antagonistic to nature, is closely identified with it. In the state of shamanic epiphany described here, the human person is drenched and absorbed in the non-human: "Your head all turned to eagle-down / and lightning for knees and elbows" (TI p. 3). The experience of participation is such that the natural world is continually impinging on the senses:

> Your eyes full of pollen
>
> the smell of bats.
> the flavor of sandstone
> grit on the tongue. (TI p. 3)

Significantly, the gods are encountered through going down into the material, rather than through spiritual transcendence. Thus, immersion in divinity involves a progressive absorption into the primal earth -- "sinking deeper and deeper in earth / up to your hips in gods". This mention of "hips", traditionally the "lower" part of the body (instead of the head or heart), emphasises the fact that the experience is a very sensual, physical one, rather than exclusively "spiritual" or "mental". The point is, of course, that it is dichotomies such as these that are being questioned. Similarly, the experience of sacramental union as it is described here is not an isolated one, a "religious" event, but one part of the ongoing process of the lives of these people.

The sense of this is reinforced syntactically. Repeated use of the indefinite participial verb ("growing", "sinking") indicates continual activity, rather than isolated events. As before, the single subject is characteristically avoided. When a subject is indicated, it is suitably ambiguous: "your hips", "your head", "your eyes", etc. This may refer to

the tribespeople, the reader, and/or the equivalent of an indefinite "one".

In a similar way, the use of "birthing" suggests a repeated bringing to life. At the source of things, at the foot of the ladder, is the continued presence of the mother, giving birth in the dark:

> women
> birthing
> at the foot of ladders in the dark (TI p. 3)

The use of "dark" reinforces the effect of "down", or "earth". The emphasis here contrasts significantly with that of transcendental, patriarchal religion, which is traditionally associated with "light", "ascent" and "sky".[26] The presence of the mother is appropriate here, given the mythic significance of descent, and this as image of psychological process. In Jungian terms, the way "Underground" corresponds to the way of descent into the depths of water, so important in RW. In each case, the emphasis implies matriarchal (or "matricentric" as Murray Bookchin would have it), as opposed to patriarchal modes.[27] The etymological relation of mother - matrix - matter should be evident, and as Erich Neumann illustrates, even the most rarified matriarchal transformations always remain grounded in material reality: the matriarchal world is essentially geocentric -- "this-worldly" by contrast with the supranaturalistic philosophies and religions of patriarchy.[28]

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26. Compare the use of "dark" by Blake and other mystics as a counter to the orthodox Christian emphasis on the "light" of heaven.

27. In The Ecology of Freedom, Bookchin argues that it is misleading to speak of "matriarchy" because of the sovereignty that this inappropriately implies (Bookchin, p. 58).

28. Erich Neumann, The Great Mother (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 55-63.

Reference to things hidden "underground" implies some effort and ingenuity in uncovering them. It is significant that several of the poems speak of a secret hidden "within" the appearance, which suggests that the words on the page are in some way giving access to hidden, buried truths: "trickling streams in hidden canyons / under the cold rolling desert." The placement of these lines is interesting. In one sense, knowledge of where to find water in the desert is precisely the sort of knowledge the Anasazi would have. At the same time, "streams" is used metaphorically: this glimpse of a way of living on Turtle Island is like the miraculous discovery of hidden water in the desert.

My comments so far have been largely in agreement with Folsom's discussion of "descent". However, I do find one important statement of his rather peculiar. "Descent" in his terms, is a significant divergence from what he calls "the Oriental influence on his [Snyder's] work":

> Snyder, in his recent journeys to the Far East learned ways to transcend, but his most recent poetry, and particularly Turtle Island, demonstrates that his powers of transcendence end up in the service of descent, of digging into this land. [my emphasis] (Folsom, p. 106)

This is certainly inaccurate, and suggests an essential misinterpretation of the nature of his Buddhist studies, and of the function of meditation. By contrast with "learning ways to transcend", in Snyder's terms, meditation practice constitutes precisely such a descent into Mind. In Zen monasteries, for example, one kind of "descent" is prompted by the contemplation of a KOAN, like the one about Original Mind recalled at Kai's birth in RW. Further, although recent comparative readings in psychology have shown the important incompatibilities between (essentially dualistic) Western models of "conscious" and "unconscious", and the understanding of "mind" which underlies Buddhist meditation practice,

Snyder makes use of both models.[29]

Given this, the intrapsychic equivalents of what has been said about "Descent to Turtle Island" should be clear: the shaman's descent to the non-human realm, or the reabsorption in one's primitive past indicates as much as anything else, a descent into the unconscious, a necessary journey into the underworld of the mind, on which the reintegration of psychic polarities depends. The fundamental object of Zen Buddhism is the exploration of "Mind", which roughly approximates to "Ground of Being", and seeking "power within" largely involves in this context meditation practice. Intrinsic to this is what Suzuki describes as the need to plunge deep into the abyss of the "Nameless" in order to acquire a new mode of perception which is not structured by dualistic linguistic categories. In addition, for Snyder this means here (as it does for Eckhart, as Fox's discussion revealed), a way of examining and getting rid of ideological programming: descent "beneath" a necessarily culture-bound language.

Two other poems, "Toward Climax" and "What Happened Here Before", make explicit the attempt to descend through the layers of acquired civilisation, 80 million, 300 million years back. The end of "Toward Climax" prescribes a halt to the accelerating drive of progress. Unlike the robes and garbs of the times, which "don't quite rot", the directive here is downwards, towards absorption in natural process and in the natural movements of Mind, to the extent of its inevitable

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29. In The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology for example, the issue of the relation between Western and Buddhist psychologies is frequently discussed. See here for example: Robert Aitken, "Zen Practice and Psychotherapy," 14, No. 2 (1982), 161-170; Daniel Goleman, "Buddhist and Western Psychology: Some Commonalities and Differences," 13, No. 2 (1981), 125-136; John Welwood, "Meditation and the Unconscious: A New Perspective," 9, No. 2 (1977), 1-26.

"detritus pathways":

> maturity. stop and think. draw on the mind's
> stored richness. memory, dream, half-digested
> image of your life. "detritus pathways"--feed
> the many tiny things that feed an owl.
> send heart boldly travelling,
> on the heat of the dead and down. (TI p. 84)

Practical evidence of descent is likely to involve what Snyder calls "being specific to a place" -- the particular, given community:

> no transformation without our feet on the ground. Stewardship means, for most of us, find your place on the planet, dig in, and take responsibility from there -- the tiresome but tangible work of school boards, county supervisors, local foresters -- local politics. (TI p. 101)

Snyder calls this sort of involvement "Reinhabitation". In an essay of this title in TOW he indicates its implications with respect to a sense of oneself as part of the "Whole Self" (TOW. pp. 63-64. See also TOW, p. 75).

(ii) The Great Family: Twining and Knotting through Each Other

> Man is but a part of the fabric of life --
> dependent on the whole fabric for his very existence. (TI p. 91)

The dismal "Facts" of exploitation, possessiveness, attachment, alienation, fear, and the consequences of dualistic relations are real enough. But the counter-truths are, TI suggests, more important. The inner principle in this point of view is a restatement of that in RW, namely "the insight that we are interdependent energy fields of great potential wisdom and compassion" (TI p. 99), an alternative to the notion that the world is "out there", separable from the individual, and that nature is the adversary, ripe for plunder. The sacramental view which this implies is shown to be crucial to the survival of the planet. For this reason, the directive to perceive oneself as part of the sacramental

energy-exchange system appears unequivocally in "Four Changes". Here the reader is encouraged to "find psychological techniques for creating an awareness of "self" which includes the social and natural environment"[my emphasis] (TI p. 107). The implication of this is that discovery of "self nature" is (as always in Snyder's work), linked with the discovery of "Mother Nature" (TI p. 103). So in TI, the energy relations which link us, most primarily those of the food-chain, are described through the metaphor of the family, and that of the web or interwoven fabric.

It should not need to be argued that as a primary locus for the production and reinforcement of ideology the family is crucial politically as well as spiritually or personally. Given this, it is appropriate that in TI, the more obviously "public" concerns should be interspersed with the particular, personal ones, from which they are not separable. "Bedrock", the poem for Masa, "Gen", and "Dusty Braces", for example, suggest a recognition of the self's participation in the wider context of the family.

Most remarkable here is "The Bath". Williamson describes it as

> the one contemporary poem which adds new territories of feeling to the tradition of humanist sexual prophecy (that is, prophecy about sex as a discovery or affirmation of a greater human identity) inherited from Blake, Whitman and Lawrence.[30]

The poem celebrates the very things civilised culture and patriarchal religion have tended either to taboo (the "body", sensual enjoyment, and physical love between parents and children), or consider insignificant (ordinary daily activities like bathing). It describes a great, shared

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30. Williamson, "Gary Snyder: An Appreciation," The New Republic, 173, No. 18 (1975), 29. According to Williamson, the poem goes to "what Freud considered the root of the problem, individually and historically -- the family romance" (pp. 29-30).

enjoyment of "nothing special", a fairly ordinary event, the experience of which becomes radiant, sacred, because of the shared, reverent attention which it is accorded:

> Washing Kai in the sauna,
> The kerosene lantern set on a box
> outside the ground-level window,
> Lights up the edge of the iron stove and the
> washtub down on the slab
> Steaming air and crackle of waterdrops
> brushed by on the pile of rocks on top
> He stands in warm water
> Soap all over the smooth of his thigh and stomach
> "Gary don't soap my hair!
> --his eye-sting fear--
> the soapy hand feeling
> through and around the globes and curves of his body
> up in the crotch,
> And washing-tickling out the scrotum, little anus,
> his penis curving up and getting hard
> as I pull back skin and try to wash it
> Laughing and jumping, flinging arms around,
> I squat all naked too,
> is this our body?
> (TI p.12)

The poem moves, through the repeated, varied refrain, towards a powerful sense that the boundaries of the tabooed "body" need not be confined to those of what Wilden calls "my skinbound biological individuality", and Snyder calls "this skin-bound bundle of clutchings": "is this our body? ... is this our body? ... this our body ... this is our body: ... this is our body" [italicised in the poem] (TI pp. 12-14).[31] These words, and the certainty to which they move, show clear echoes of the words of Christ recalled in the consecration of bread in Christian Communion: "This is my body, given for you and for many...." Their transvaluation in the poem is

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31. Wilden describes an important feature of biosocial imperialism as being the confusion of the boundaries of this skinbound biological individuality with those of the psychic "self" or social "role" (Wilden, p. 220). A poem like this one seeks to question assumptions of this kind. Snyder's term "skin-bound bundle of clutchings" appears in M&T: "A skin-bound bundle of clutchings / unbound and with no place to go" (M&T p. 87).

significant, recalling a similar device in "Song of the Taste" in RW. In both poems, the effect of this transvaluation is to point to an experience of "True Communionism", by virtue of which the simplest of pleasures becomes a sacrament. Intrinsic to the interrelation this suggests is the transformative giving and receiving of energies: "the seed ... that moved from us to him" which recalls "each other's seed" in the earlier poem.

In recasting things in this way, "The Bath" is informed to a large extent by the desire to find new structures for the family, the search for which (new social structures and marriage forms, "such as group marriage and polyandrous marriage") Snyder describes as being essential for our survival (TI p. 93). The attention given in the poem to the shared experience of bathing is representative of a deliberate making of community -- a way of experiencing "family" that is radically different from the nuclear, patriarchal structure with which one is all too familiar. It focuses on the significance of the version of "family" that people create, and on the sense that the event described is an ordinary miracle, something that will happen again and again, and not an isolated incident.

Developing, then, on the appearance in RW of the family as life-giving energy network, the notion of family as system of sacramental interrelationships is important in TI, in providing a model for perceiving the sacramental interconnectedness of all phenomena. In Snyder's portrayal of family, the dominant patriarchal father is replaced by an almost exclusive emphasis on the mother. This applies both at the level of the particular, human family, and in terms of the Mother as mythic image. In common with many mythic traditions, Snyder represents her as being the primary source of the patterns of transformation. In these terms, descent to the earth and "a sense of place" implies a return to the

cthonic mother, the Great Goddes, Gaia.

As with "wave", "voice", "mind", etc., in RW, it seems that if Snyder is using "family" here as a metaphor for wider relations, then it is a metaphor of a particular kind. What is suggested is rather an extension and redefinition of the nuclear family, this unit being understood to be both a microcosmic example of the power relations within the culture, and the logical extension of the notion of the individual as separate and distinct on which it is based. Thus "family" is redefined to include others who are not necessarily blood relations, and may even be non-human: "family" is thus better understood as being a participant in "Family", the Great Family of all beings.[32] In "Four Changes" this attitude is suggested as an alternative to population explosion:

> I am a child of life, and all living beings are my brothers and sisters, my children and grandchildren. And there is a new child within me waiting to be brought to birth, the baby of a new and wiser self. (TI p. 93)

In this understanding of "family", as in RW, the "feminine" as integrative, synthetic power, is shown to represent a counter to the oppositional, analytic "masculine". As the primary source of transformation, the Great Mother can be identified with the bottom of the food-chain, and hence, most obviously, her identification with plants, and the "lower forms" of nature.[33] As such, she is the material base by which energy, the traditionally masculine "sunlight", is made accessible and transformed. Several poems emphasise the fact that "our primary source of food is the sun" (eg: "The Uses of Light", and "FACTS"), but it

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32. This relation recalls what I identified earlier as the relation between "voice" and "Voice", "mind" and "Mind", "self" and "Self", etc.

33. "Plants are at the bottom of the food-chain ... so perhaps plant-life is what the ancients meant by the great goddess" (TI p. 108).

is clear that in order to be eaten it requires the action of maternal nature: "sunlight grown heavy and tasty / while moving up food-chains." Because of this, the Goddess is represented in the poems as being both the first mother of the family of Nature, while at the same time, she is the whole system, the whole Earth itself, Gaia.

"Prayer for the Great Family" follows immediately after the pessimistic ending of "Call of the Wild". The poem describes a restoration of pattern and communion to things, within and without the mind. Its formal (metaphoric) regularity -- parallelisms, repetitions -- works to convey a sense of the mythic or metaphoric world-view represented in RW, in which correspondence and interaction between all beings is possible. In accordance with this, the traditional Christian prayer form is significantly recast, and the essentially passive "Amen" is replaced by "In our minds so be it." This involves the speaker more actively in the process of transformation, as well as in an acknowledgement of the correspondence between "internal" and "external". In this way it recalls the status given to "mind" in RW. As before, mind is a participant in the pattern of nature, not in opposition to it, and marriage union is a metaphor for this interaction: "Grandfather Space / The Mind is his Wife" (TI p. 25).[34]

(iii) The World Tapestry

> All mother goddesses spin and weave.... Everything that is comes out of them: they weave the world tapestry out of genesis and demise, "threads appearing and disappearing rhythmically."[35]

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34. In "Seer and Prophet", Altieri considers the poem Snyder's most effective poem on the mind. I do not wish to add to this detailed and useful criticism (pp. 766-768).

35. Helen Diner, "Mothers and Amazons," quoted in Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology, p.1.

With this quotation Mary Daly begins her polemical and influential book, Gyn/Ecology. Primarily concerned with "the mind/spirit/body pollution inflicted through patriarchal myth and language on all levels" (Daly, Gyn/Ecology, p. 9), the book makes central use of the metaphor of woven fabric to describe the complex web of ecological interrelationship, and the role of women in weaving it. This metaphor (in EHH, the "jewelled net") is equally significant in Snyder's work, in representing the experience of "interbirth" and interrelationship. It is obviously appropriate to an orientation towards the Goddess, as the reading of AH should make clear.

The poem "On San Gabriel Ridges" links the image of the woven fabric to that of the family, recalling "Shark Meat" in RW. In doing so, it presents an experience in which old friends, lovers, children, squirrel and fox, are perceived as contributing to the fabric of interconnection, into whose "woven zones" all are drawn. Dreaming up on the rocks, the speaker recognises his participation in this, in the patterns of twigs, stickers and seeds that have impressed themselves on him. The present moment is similarly informed by the past and its "loves of long ago" to which it is still connected:

> O loves of long ago
> hello again.
> and all of us together
> with all our other loves and children
> twining and knotting through each other--
> intricate, chaotic, done. (TI p. 40)

The familiar greeting conveys a sense of ease in all of this: "hello again". Family connections are shown to be part of the same process that links squirrel and fox in the woven scats. Clearly, the poem suggests, the life of each is (often literally) bound up with that of the others --

dissolved, rotten, and born again.

This example of the food-chain and its energy relations, is certainly the clearest, and most materially demonstrable, evidence of (evidence of, rather than a metaphor for -- as the previous chapter should have made clear) the sort of energy interdependence which Buddhism describes. From either point of view (Buddhist or ecological), recognition of the relativity of perceived boundaries requires a revaluation of all marginalised beings:

> The Buddhists teach respect for all life and for wild systems. Man's life is totally dependent on an interpenetrating network of wild systems. (TI p. 104)

(iv) Wild Beings, Our Brothers

> At the root of the problem where our civilisation 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 feelings into account. (TI p. 107)

> Wildness is the state of complete awareness. That's why we need it. (TI p. 99)

It should be almost superfluous to point out that to consider all beings as participants in the Great Family, the interconnected web of the food-chain, requires a significant reorientation towards the wild systems by which we are sustained. In this regard, Snyder's role as a "Wilderness poet" has been given much prominence in criticism that I do not wish to repeat here. I do however want to look at the version of "wild" that appears in this collection. In place of the civilised fear of creepy-crawlies and poisons, TI suggests as one part of "a sense of place" the value of learning some ethnobotany, the names of plants and animals, the uses and dangers of mushrooms. The assumption here is clearly that knowledge is more useful than fear.

In this context, "The Wild Mushroom" works interestingly: uncharacteristically rhymed, regular, and predictable, it seems initially disappointing. However, the devices it employs are deliberate and functional, foregrounded as they are against the conventions of Snyder's other work. The poem is probably used as a song, devised to accompany mushroom-picking. It has some of the features commonly used in oral material for making important information easier to remember eg: "Don't ever eat Boletus / If the tube-mouths they are red / Stay away from the Amanitas / Or brother you are dead" (TI p. 46). In addition to this, it seems to me that the dependably regular (almost sing-song) form works to promote the sense of regularity and being at ease in the wild, that the collection as a whole conveys. Instead of being "red in tooth and claw", the natural world is there to be confidently met. Even its poisons need not be antagonistic to someone who is not afraid to be well-informed, as the rousingly jolly last stanza confirms:

> So here's to the mushroom family
> A far-flung friendly clan
> For food, for fun, for poison,
> They are a help to man. (TI p. 46)

A poem like this one reinforces in a very simple way the directive to "relax" given in "Four Changes": "Relax around bugs, snakes, and your own hairy dreams" (TI p. 96). Whether within the individual or in the culture as a whole, the way one relates to psychic "wilderness areas" is crucial. Such connections between Wilderness and the Unconscious are frequently implied in the poetry and prose, and sometimes made explicit, as in EHH:

> To transcend the ego is to go beyond society as well. "Beyond" there lies, inwardly, the unconscious. Outwardly the equivalent of the unconscious is the wilderness: both of these terms meet, one step even farther on, as one. (EHH p. 122)

Snyder's Schumacher lecture (1983) is entitled "Wild, Sacred, Good Land".

In this he argues that our ("civilised") fears that "the chaotic, self-seeking human ego" is a mirror of wild nature are unfounded: "It is not an imaginary chaos which threatens us (for nature is orderly) but the sickly entwined ignorance of the natural world and the mythos of progress, the two together masquerading as 'order'"(SCHUM p. 14).

Many of the poems present the mind's apprehension of this wild nature, which, as Snyder's lecture asserted, may be both "sacred" and "good". An important concern here is the attempt to suggest what it feels like to know animals "as persons", in imitation of the so-called "primitive" way. In cultures such as these, such knowledge is ritualised through hunting and the shaman's practice. What is required is a sense of "becoming one" with the animal -- a sort of epiphany. In "Four Changes" Snyder describes the extended view of persons (a kind of "ultimate democracy") practised in Pueblo societies with respect to animals, in which plants and animals are also given a place and a voice in the political discussions of humans. This is recalled in "Mother Earth, Her Whales":

> Solidarity The People!
> Standing Tree People!
> Flying Bird People!
> Swimming Sea People!
> Four-legged, two-legged, people! (TI p. 48)[36]

In his speech "The Wilderness", Snyder makes explicit the political meaning of the assumption of a shaman's role. According to this, human exploitation and exploitation of the Wild are not separable, and incorporation of "the other people" into the councils of government is becoming imperative: "I would like to think of a new definition of

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36. In addition to the appearance of Christopher Stone's argument on the subject, there is Marge Piercy's Utopia, Woman on the Edge of Time (1979; rpt. London: The Women's Press, 1983), in which this is precisely what happens.

humanism and a new definition of democracy that would include the non-human, that would have representation from those spheres" (TI p. 106).

Snyder's attention to animals has preceded and to an extent informed some of the work that has been done in the last decade or so on the issue of "Animal Rights". In this context, it is becoming possible to think of treatment of animals as an ethical consideration, and to recognise that attitudes towards animals may provide a revealing index to the culture's assumptions about itself. Mary Midgley describes their status previous to this as occupying part of "the unnoticed background" -- that realm which they have shared with women and slaves, outside man's central area of concern or attention.[37]

In contrast with the vegetarianism that Snyder's orientation would seem to imply, he gives considerable weight, both in this collection and elsewhere to the activity of hunting. In the important essay, "Poetry and the Primitive", he describes hunting as part of the activity he calls "making love with animals":

> To hunt means to use your body and senses to the fullest: to strain your consciousness to feel what the deer are thinking today, this moment; to sit still and let your self go into the birds and wind while waiting by a game trail. Hunting magic is designed to bring the game to you -- the

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37. Mary Midgley, Animals and why they matter: A Journey Around the Species Barrier (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 82. Peter Singer argues for equal consideration for animals in his important little book, Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for our Treatment of Animals (1975; rpt. New York: Avon Books, 1977). Midgley's book is probably more useful, is designed for a different readership, and is fairly critical of Singer (especially his influential introduction of the term "speciesism"). Her discussion of the correspondence between the roles assigned to animals, women and "non-white" races is more subtle than Singer's. See also the journal INQUIRY, of which the whole issue No. 22 (1979) is devoted to animal rights; and Alan Drengson, "Social and Psychological Implications of Human Attitudes Towards Animals," Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 12, No. 1 (1980), 63-74.

> creature who has heard your song, witnessed your sincerity, and out of compassion comes within your range. Hunting magic is not only aimed at bringing beasts to their death, but to assist in their birth -- to promote their fertility. (EHH p. 120)

The title of another poem in TI, a quotation from Hsiang-yen, makes this explicit: "One Should Not Talk to a Skilled Hunter about What is Forbidden by the Buddha" (TI p. 66). The way one goes about hunting offers, Snyder would suggest, a good index of one's relations towards the non-human. The form of the poem resembles a careful log-book entry describing in detail what has taken place, and thereby suggesting the seriousness of the activity. The degree of reverent attention to the animal itself that this implies indicates the significance Snyder accords to ritual hunting as a model for a sacramental relation to the world. This is of course provided that the death is not gratuitous or wasteful. Regard for wild beings as sacred implies what is said in "Four Changes" about wastefulness: "Don't shoot a deer unless you know how to use all the meat" (TI p. 98). Given this, the Buddhist directive to "cause no unneccessary harm" has not in fact been contradicted, since "harm" of this kind is a necessary condition of life on the planet. Looking "within" the animal reveals the remains of the animal it has eaten, confirming a sense of mutual participation in the food-chain:

> Stomach content: a whole ground squirrel well chewed
> plus one lizard foot
> and somewhere from inside the ground squirrel
> a bit of aluminium foil.
>
> The secret.
> and the secret hidden deep in that. (TI p. 66)

Discovering "the secret" that lies within, and which is itself the bearer of another secret, is a recurrent interest in TI. In this case it recalls the squirrel bones "crunched / tight and dry in scats of / fox", and the squirrel tooth found in a dried coyote-scat, pierced and hung from a gold

ring (TI p. 40 and p. 77 respectively).

Another hunting poem, "The Hudsonian Curlew" depicts a skilled hunter's interaction with the birds he shoots. The knowledgeable, reverent attention with which the speaker regards the birds makes their shooting seem appropriate -- part of a necessary energy-exchange. The birds are lovingly described in each stage of their transformation: the pattern of flying birds, "the long neck limp", plucked down which "eddies and whirls", insides which "string out, begin to wave", "two birds singed in flame", and finally three curlew next morning -- "pacing and glancing around" (TI pp. 54-57). The poem's attentive observation of this hunting episode, the sacramental meal to which it leads, and the ritual process by which these are enacted, speaks of a response to "the other people" which is wholly different from the attitude towards animals as consumable protein described in a poem like "Steak". In place of the alienation of the previous poem, the recurrent sense is that of the community of hunter and curlew in the reciprocity of the food chain. For this reason it concludes with no lasting sense of loss: birds return next morning. The "Mandala of Birds" described at the beginning is not irreparably damaged by the shooting -- in fact, the poem suggests, the hunter's work here confirms its pattern and his own participation in it.

(4) POWER WITHIN

> That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has itself. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.[38]

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38. Svetaketu's Education, quoted in The World's Great Religions, p. 19.

> The power within -- the more you give, the more you have to give -- will still be our source when coal and oil are long gone, and atoms are left to spin in peace. (TI p. 114)

Again and again, TI urges the reader to "seek power within", to begin to gain access to the secret hidden in the "dried coyote scat": resources that lie buried in the land itself, in its creative primitive past, in our own "wilderness areas" and in the deep beginnings of things -- what Snyder calls the Great Goddess. This power is shown to be more enduring than the energies by which our culture is powered, and he calls it delight. It involves the sort of interpenetration of "mind" and "nature" described in "Prayer for the Great Family" and elsewhere: "The Five Elements embracing; pierced by; Mind" (TI p. 114). It should be clear that in all these poems, whatever can be said about things on a large scale, applies equally on the internal, personal, particular realm, and vice-versa -- TI is as much a celebration of persons (human or non-human) as of place; if "power" is to be found within the Turtle land itself, it is also the essential life in all of its creatures.

The poem "The Egg" seeks out this hidden serpent force within the body of Snyder's child, and thereby a sense of shared participation in the living changes of energy, whose "snake-like beauty" links fish, bird and mammal, parent and child. The poem is densely allusive, in ways that I must merely point to.

According to many traditions, the spine is, for obvious reasons, the body's primary energy pathway. Seeing it here reveals Kai's participation in a family of vertebrates :

> The center line,
> with the out-flyers changing
> --fins, legs, wings,
> feathers or fur,
> they swing and swim

but the snake center
fire pushes through:
mouth to ass,
root to
burning, steady,
single eye. (TI p. 37)

In the Yogic tradition to which this alludes, the energy of this "snake center" in all creatures is the goddess KUNDALINI, the "she-serpent", who lies asleep until wakened through yogic practice. When this happens she is drawn upwards, through the body's CHAKRAS, or energy centers, to the CHAKRA at the top of the head. This is represented as a progression through lotuses -- "through the body's flowers" -- to the thousand petalled lotus in the head. Mention of "fire" and "burning" is appropriate, given KUNDALINI's significant relation with these: her awakening is said to involve the kindling of "inner heat", which is revealed by the sensation of a "great fire" in the part where she is passing. Snyder's mention of descent "from the third eye ... to the root" is exlained by the fact that in Buddhism, the secret force, having risen from the umbilical region to the CHAKRA at the top of the head, having "burned" everything in its path, is said to return to its source (Eliade, p. 246).[39] The "garland, / of consonants and vowels" is the "garland of letters" associated with the Goddess VAK. The significance of VAK as one manifestation of SHAKTI that I mentioned previously indicates her connection with the "she-serpent".

The image of KUNDALINI in this poem provides a way of representing the progression and transformation of energy in the family -- which is itself, as I have shown, an image for wider relationships. While, as the Buddhist - systems - ecological view assumes, individual survival may not

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39. This is mentioned here because of its difference from the Hindu version.

be crucial, continuation of the life cycles is.[40] Holding hands with his mother and his child, the speaker is defined in terms of being an essential link in the energy pathway that moves between them: "helping up the / path."

The title and concluding lines of the poem draw attention to a two-fold meaning, that is near the center of Snyder's sense of the world as sacramental:

> It all gathers,
> humming,
> in the egg. (TI p. 38)

This is at once both the mythic Cosmic Egg, and the infinitesimal beginnings of life, the "egg" in which the entire genetic story is microcosmically gathered. It is simultaneously the ancient source which precedes dualistic differentiation (masculine and feminine), and the germ of a process which leads to the unification of opposites: masculine and feminine.

This double meaning agrees with descriptions of the experience of KUNDALINI:

> Not only does the disciple identify himself with the cosmos; he also rediscovers the genesis and destruction of the universe in his own body.... tantric SADHANA comprises two stages: (1) cosmicisation of the human being and (2) transcendence of the cosmos -- that is, its destruction through the unification of opposites. (Eliade, p. 244)

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40. In an interview, Snyder remembers Nanao Sasaki saying: "No need to survive. No need to survive" (TRW p. 79). Compare Wilden on the ideologically problematic notion of the survival of the fittest, which biosocial imperialism assumes, namely: "that perception of the biosocial universe which describes the unit of survival as the individual (the individual organism, species, family line, system, and so on)." By contrast with this, nature selects the survival of the ecosystem, at all levels: "the unit of survival is the message-in-circuit in the ecosystem" (Wilden, p. 218).

In this way, while as SHAKTI, the movement of energy "through the body's flowers" tends to be associated with the feminine, the goddess, the final act of the KUNDALINI's ascent is her union with SHIVA, thereby transcending their oppositional relation.

Images like these illustrate the sort of relation towards dualism that Snyder means to achieve through the poetry, as well as pointing to his version of the "myth-making" that Altieri considers to be inevitable in assumption of the prophetic role. Altieri's main problem with this mode in Snyder is the reductive tendency towards generalisation that it seems to imply. While it should be clear that many of the poems involve more than attention to metonymic "minute particulars", my reading suggests that the tendency towards general statement is not necessarily problematic. As the "definition" quoted at the beginning of this chapter suggests, a feature of the "delight within" which the collection evokes is the transcendence of oppositional relations: "beyond all discrimination / or opposites". In "opposing" patriarchal/technocratic culture then, the poems may assert its contrary -- via "nature", the feminine, descent, etc. At their best, however, they do not fall into the "mirror image" trap that Wilden describes, nor the two-dimensional abstraction that Kern and Altieri identify. Rather, the oppositional form is used to evoke images, metaphors even, that are finally non-dualistic: "Turtle Island", the "Great Family", the interpenetrating network of wild systems and the Wilderness as metaphor of the Unconscious, the egg, the ouroboros with its tail in its mouth, and even, as the following chapter should make clear, the Goddess herself.

Chapter 4

CRAFT OF CULTURE: Gaia and the New Community

(1) THREE CENTRAL METAPHORS
(2) ENERGY POLITICS
(3) THE SENSE OF THE MAGIC SYSTEM

This chapter is made up of three main parts. Following some introductory remarks, part (1) outlines three central metaphors: "Loops", "Nets" and "Gaia". These correspond to the collection's three sections. Both in history and in the present, the "energy pathways" of Turtle Island are seen in Axe Handles to be the complicated "loops" and "networks" of life on the planet -- what Snyder calls Gaia. My treatment in this section is necessarily brief, its function being to establish what is understood by these terms in order to lay a foundation for the discussion that follows. In (2) I discuss what I call "energy politics", examining closely what the poems suggest about the significance of energy, work and technology, with respect to Gaia and the sacramental question. Part (3) is entitled "The Sense of the Magic System", and examines poems from the middle section, "Little Songs for Gaia."

> It is a committment to place, and to your neighbours, that -- with no loss of quality -- accomplishes the decentralisation of poetry. The decentralisation of "culture" is as important to our long-range ecological and social health as the decentralisation of agriculture, production, energy, and government. (TRW p. 169)

Gary Snyder makes no apology for holding "the most archaic values on earth" (M&T p. viii), and in Axe Handles his allegiance to certain traditions is indicated most explicitly. This point of view, together with the emphasis he places on "looping back" -- his term for the return to origins that he considers imperative for our culture -- are crucial to his response to the sacramental and the feminine. In the light of this, Thomas Parkinson's much-quoted comment can be misleading:

> He has effectively done something that for an individual is very difficult: he has created a new culture. (Parkinson, "The Poetry," p. 617)

The "culture" Snyder's work represents, if new, is formed "in the shell of the old", as the old "Wobblies" motto had it.[1] It should be clear that the particular blend of Oriental and other components to which Parkinson refers is his own. However, the view that the poems suggest (most explicitly so in AH), is that it is not merely "difficult", but really impossible for an "individual" to create such a thing.

Implicit in this is the "new-old" definition which the poetry gives to the idea of "culture". The word is understood here to be inclusive of all aspects of shared experience in a human community. This is significantly different from the more exclusive ("centralised") realm of "high culture" in which we are accustomed to find artists participating. AH suggests that transmission of culture involves precisely experiences such as a

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1. The appropriateness of this expression is related, as Mcleod points out, to the fact that Snyder's grandfather was an I.W.W. organiser.

father showing son how to throw a hatchet or how to make an axe handle and, as in the later poems, the names of mushrooms, how to fix trucks, and knowledge of the landscape. This, together with the notion of "decentralisation of culture" implies equally a decentralisation of the poet. Williamson draws attention to this, commenting that Snyder has "long held the now popular radical idea that the 'major poet' is a myth fostered by bourgeois competitiveness, and that future writers will be more tribal, i.e. write mainly for their friends" (Williamson, "Language Against Itself," p. 66).[2] According to this, "culture" indicates much more than the sorts of knowledge that it is generally the business of schools or poems to communicate. Critical assessment of this culture leads to study of the workings of other cultures, and being prepared to take seriously the claims of older, more "primitive" ways.

Important considerations here will include questions which relate to energy, work, and technology, as well as to the sense of timing that is inherent in these. These are all significant in the AH poems, as are the stylistic means by which they are conveyed. It should be noted, however, that to attend to "culture" in this way, tends to suggest something of its traditional opposition to "nature", which is the reverse of the intention. In Snyder's paradigm, human culture is accurately seen as a participant in a wider system, nature. As such, it is one part of Gaia, the whole earth, in terms of which specifically human endeavours are fairly small. Thus the opposition of nature and culture is a central example of the oppressive dichotomies the poems seek to reject.

In Chapters Two and Three I discussed the outward movement of energy

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2. This view of the role of the artist is outlined in some detail in John Lane's recent book, The Death and Resurrection of the Arts (London: The Green Alliance, 1982).

from self -- to sexual "merging" and marriage, and the reciprocity of the family. The poems in AH which I examine continue this movement, and show increased involvement in the wider community. They were written during the time that Snyder was working on the California Arts Council (1974-1980) and raising children: being a "spokesman for the Wilderness, my constituency" has literally meant entering the halls of the Capitol, participation in Government. In addition , the exploration of alternatives to the patriarchal nuclear family has implied working participation in a small ("decentralised") community, which is perceived as part of the Great Family.

The sort of interdependence this involves is suggested in the poem "Soy Sauce", where the speaker is helping friends with building a house. The smell of soy sauce in the wood, like Proust's famous madeleine, takes him "within", ("looping") back to the particularity of his own past -- a cold October night in Japan, eating miso radish pickles. But this is simultaneously a movement "outwards" -- to a closer sense of identification with the deer who lick the wood at night for the same taste: "But I know how it tastes / to lick those window frames / in the dark, / the deer" (AH pp. 30-31). These things are, as the title of another poem puts it, "All in the Family" (AH p. 23). Whereas the previous collections were dedicated to particular people, this one is, significantly, "for San Juan Ridge": in other words for Snyder's home, the place itself and its community of human and non-human beings.

In an article published a few years before AH appeared, McLeod comments on what he sees as the Confucian turn that Snyder's work has taken in recent years, what he calls the "movement from examination of the self to the exercise of social wisdom" (McLeod, "Images of China," p. 372). This development has informed the eco-political poetry, and has involved the

increased publication of prose writings about social issues. The recent work gives emphasis to the need for renewal of "the old ways", which is precisely the Confucian approach to maintaining social values. According to this, Snyder's work in his immediate community, and on the California Arts Council is seen as the exercising of his Confucian responsibilities as a poet in society (McLeod, "Images of China," p. 373). Quite clearly, AH records a period in his life where he assumes the role of teacher, able to look back and draw on his experience, and "pass it on."

In the nine years between the publication of TI and that of AH, Snyder seems to have evolved a style that is not as vulnerable to the kinds of critical objection which the earlier collection raised. Like RW, then, this collection is more obviously homogeneous than TI. However, in contrast with the high degree of metaphoric patterning that was evident in RW, many of the poems in AH recall, through the use of metonymy, Snyder's earliest poetry. They are to this extent, like those that Kern discussed, "focused metonymically on things contiguous in the world, and not on language in the poem" (Kern, "Open Form," p. 188). However, this tendency is not uniform, and the informing structure of the book as a whole is essentially metaphoric. The title, cover picture, and the very suggestive naming of the book's three sections make this clear: "Axe Handles", the Snow Goddess, "Loops", "Gaia", "Nets". These function as the controlling metaphors which define the context in which the "metonymic" poems are to be read. More importantly though, these are very explicit metaphors for a perception of the world and of history which is itself (in Jakobson's terms) metaphoric. Each of the key metaphors refers to patterns of correspondence and interrelatedness -- the sort of "mythic" thinking that Levi-Strauss identified with the metaphoric pole, and contrasted with the "metonymic" characteristics of the world-view of modern societies. In so

doing, these metaphors develop on those in TI, in an even more explicit attempt to go beyond dualistic thinking.

If the poems in TI communicated a "sense of place", of the buried energies within the land itself, then AH demonstrates a particular sense of time or timing and of tradition. This is contrasted with the pace and "ungroundedness" of contemporary American civilisation. The alternative modes are conveyed either syntactically, phonetically, or by means of the arrangement or "scoring" of the words on the page. Like some of the other poetry discussed, these poems do continue to make use of ellipsis, in particular the omission of the first person pronoun. As before, the syntactic ambiguity created by this attempt to avoid dominance by the subjective ego, and by the repeated use of participles, serves to blur an easy subject - object opposition. In addition, however, some of the most important poems show deviation from these syntactic trends: they are often less elliptical, and sentences tend to be completed, the sequence of the sentences mirroring the sequence of the action depicted. This serves to convey a state of mind in which there is time for discourse to be completed. In such cases, suppression of the "I" is no longer required in order to convey a reduction of the role of the subjective ego. Here, in contrast with some of the other work, the ordinariness of the syntax seems to accord with the relative ordinariness of the situations described.

(1) THREE CENTRAL METAPHORS

(i) Loops: History and the Life Cycles

TI's sense of "place" and of "the energy pathways that sustain life", is followed in AH by closer attention to the implications of these. Being "grounded" is shown here to imply a particular sense of history, of tradition, and of time. Snyder has frequently used the metaphor of "looping back" for the recursion this indicates. It involves at many levels a return to origins, to "the old ways", and a recognition of one's continuity with ancient tradition. This sense of being a participant in and bearer of culture or tradition is one consequence of the recognition described in previous chapters that the individual is necessarily a participant in a collective system. The view is intrinsic to Snyder's sense of role as a poet, as the title poem, and this collection more than his previous work, acknowledge. It includes for example the attempt to use poetry as a vehicle to "get back to the Pleistocene" (TRW p. 57), as a connecting "loop" to the roots of poetry in song and ritual observance -- an emphasis which is obviously linked in this case to the use of open forms, an interest in "ethnopoetics", and the intention Molesworth identified in TI to move beyond the art-lyric, and its assumption of the privatised reader.

In this context, Snyder, questionably perhaps, considers the American cultural movements of the 60's and 70's to be evidence of "the 40 000 year looping back that we seem to be involved in" (TOW p. 62). In this they represented the beginnings of a significant attempt to rediscover the modes of organisation of primitive societies, in response to the

recognition that "we are approaching the limits of something" (TOW p. 62):

> We once more know that we live in a system that is enclosed in a certain way; that it has its own kinds of limits, and that we are interdependent within it. (TOW p. 63)

In these terms, ecological sanity, and therefore political sense, require reassessment of our cultural roots, and attempting to relearn some of the "Old Ways" by which people lived for thousands of years before the comparatively recent accretion of high technology culture.

The spiritual implications of this reassessment are important, since a sense of history or of "loops" becomes crucial with respect to the sacramental sense that the poems evoke.[3] In his interview with Geneson, Snyder makes an important connection between "going beyond the self" and the activity of drawing on one's past:

> I think that poetry is a social and traditional art that is linked to its past and particularly its language, that loops and draws on its past and that serves as a vehicle for contact with the depths of our own unconscious.... (TRW p. 82)

So poetry is essentially not expression of "self", but rather, "a great poet does not express his or her self, he expresses all of our selves. And to express all of ourselves you have to go beyond your own self" (TRW p. 65). Quoting Dogen, the Zen master, he says, "We study the self to forget the self. And when you forget the self, you become one with all things" [my emphasis] (TRW p. 65).

Many of the poems (and not only in the "Loops" section) are concerned in different ways with "looping back": a return to Japan, to Piute

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3. This is similar to T. S. Eliot's notion of "the historical sense", although the two differ in terms of the sort of "culture" that this includes, as I will indicate later.

mountain where he worked twenty-five years before, the looping back of plant and animal life to their origins. The loops to Snyder's own past recall a time of relative solitude, in contrast with the family and other concerns in which he is now involved: "Today at Slide Peak in the Sawtooths / I look back at that mountain / twenty-five years. Those days / When I lived and thought all alone" (AH p. 29). The title poem, "Axe Handles", with which the collection begins, is a record of a significant epiphany or showing forth arising from a response to manual work. Its foregrounding here is important in several ways. As in TI and RW, the first poem in the collection informs the reading of the others, in this case introducing a powerful metaphor by which the interdependence of old and new may be perceived.

The poem "Axe Handles" describes an afternoon spent showing Kai how to throw a hatchet, and the conclusions to which reflection on this leads. As such, it shows a characteristic enjoyment in perceiving connections between apparently separate interests, such as shaping an axe handle, Ezra Pound, or Chinese literary criticism. Kai wants to make a hatchet of his own and Snyder shows him how -- by shaping the new handle from the old. This recalls to him what Pound and Lu Ji wrote about making a new axe handle from the old, and a sense of his own participation in the same process:

> And I see:
> Pound was an axe,
> Chen was an axe, I am an axe
> And my son a handle, soon
> To be shaping again, model
> And tool, craft of culture,
> How we go on. (AH p. 6)

The poem continues the concerns of a poem like "The Egg". In the earlier poem, the speaker acted as the connecting link in the energy pathway

between his mother and Kai. Here this role is given particular practical focus: the transmission of energy is now a passing on of knowledge about tools for shaping one's environment.

The metaphoric significance of the axe handle which the afternoon's work discovers, and the poem records, is shown to arise from a particular, fairly ordinary occasion. The first line locates it clearly and unexceptionally: "One afternoon the last week in April...." To call the axe handle a metaphor at this point may seem premature, but I will clarify what I mean. A semantic transfer of some kind is certainly taking place, although not quite in the sense that Kittay and Lehrer's model suggests. To use their terms, the process whereby a new handle is shaped from an existing one, works here as a semantic donor which is used to clarify something about the transmission of culture (here the recipient). In this poem however, the metaphor is one where the donor is not separable from the recipient field. This is because the shaping of the axe handle (and the father's communication of this to the son) is itself an example of the sort of process for which it is a metaphor: in this sense both "model and tool". This is different from the way the metaphors "loops" and "nets" function, but is rather similar to what happens in a number of the poems (compare, for example, "Wave" in RW, and other poems in that collection). The device seems to be a meaningful feature of the poetry, representing the attempt to avoid the dualistic split that other sorts of metaphor seem to imply, where the "donor" and "recipient" fields are clearly separable domains.

In TRW, Snyder describes the need for a poet to learn from existing traditions. This emphasises the idea that this poem conveys, namely that writing poems is a craft like any other, with its own tools and precedents, to be worked at like any other -- "That in a sense is true

craft: that one learns by seeing what the techniques of construction were from the past and saves himself the trouble of having to repeat things that others have done..." (TRW p. 38). The assertion "I am an axe" in the concluding lines makes explicit the speaker's own assumption of the "Confucian" role of teacher, and that of pupil. The next poem is "For/from Lew" in which he is called to "teach the children", and in the poems that follow, the speaker is frequently in a position of responsibility, answering his sons' questions, passing the knowledge on.

The metaphor suggests a way of reading the poems that follow in the collection -- as "axe handles". As such they are artefacts that may work as tools in their own right, as well as models for what is to follow. This is because they themselves have been "shaped" from numerous precedents. For this reason, and in the context of the title poem, naming a book of poems Axe Handles implies firstly, the redefinition of "culture" mentioned earlier, and secondly, a rather particular statement about how poems can be expected to work for the reader.

Firstly, the transmission of culture that the axe handle metaphor asserts may certainly be similar in many ways to, say, Eliot's idea of the relation of the "individual talent" to tradition. However, the understanding of what constitutes this "culture" is crucially different. In his discussion of the "dissociation of sensibility", Eliot is at pains to stress the problems that arise when the experience of falling in love or reading Spinoza is separated from the smell of cooking, or whatever might be happening at the time. However, his critical discussions of culture remain resolutely elitist: in other words, by contrast with Snyder's, Eliot's is essentially "high culture", and so somewhat

dissociated from everyday concerns.[4]

Secondly, to call poems "axe handles" means that their construction becomes an example of the process in which a tool is made. This draws attention not only to the high degree of "craft" in their construction (a point to which Snyder returns frequently in his prose), but also to their status as tools that are functional to the extent that they are instrumental in change. This relates to the attempt on Snyder's part to return poetry to something of the status that it had in primitive culture. In other words, the attempt to render it in some way functional, significant in people's lives, in the ways that songs and dance traditionally were (one of the examples of "the most archaic values on earth" to which he subscribes).

In the second poem, the returned spirit of Lew Welch says to the speaker:

> "What I came to say was,
> teach the children about the cycles.
> The life cycles. All the other cycles.
> That's what it's all about, and it's all forgot.
> (AH p. 7)

As the title poem's version of culture and tradition would suggest, a sense of cyclic process (and the interpenetration of old and new that this implies) is essential to the poems that follow. This process may refer to a sense of patterns of correspondence across history and/or to the cyclic interrelation (whether biological or not) of phenomena in the present. An example of this is in the poem "Among", an account of the slow, rare

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4. See T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," and "The Metaphysical Poets," in English Critical Texts, ed. D. J. Enright and E. De Chickera (1962; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 293-301, and pp. 302-311 respectively.

sprouting of a Douglas fir from one of the seedlings around the old tree. This is followed by "On Top", which describes the patient work of making compost:

> All this new stuff goes on top
> turn it over turn it over
> wait and water down. (AH p. 11)

In this process, the new must be covered by and mixed with the old, in order to make good food for things to grow in. Out of this rich mixture anything may sprout. The last line unobtrusively performs a crucial semantic transfer that is now familiar: "A mind like compost" (compare the endings in RW). Snyder has frequently described a poet's work as being like a mushroom's transformation of detritus (TRW pp. 173-4). This depiction of skilled preparation and cultivation of the soil of the mind is a powerful evocation of the sort of assimilation of old and new that mental activity requires. The poem proposes that once this primary activity has been done, growth will happen on its own: "Watch it sprout." Characteristically, the workings of the mind are described in terms of earth and descent, rather than the traditionally "mental" aspects of air and ascent.[5]

As these poems make clear, "Loops" represents the possibility of a cyclic sense of time which belongs to the metaphoric way of thinking -- as opposed to the linear abstraction that Levi-Strauss calls "historicism" (Altieri, "Objective Image," p. 104). This is clearly in agreement with the Buddhist understanding of the Wheel of DHARMA, according to which

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5. A similar effect is achieved in the concluding lines of "The Cool around the Fire" (TRW pp. 16-17). As before, the skilled, thoughtful preparation this involves refers at once to the necessary work of burning the tangled brush-cut ("bring an end / to this drouth"), and simultaneously to an inner purgation which the annual ritual effects: "and fires clear the tangle. // the tangle of the heart."

certain experiences must be repeated until the necessary conditions have been fulfilled.[6]

(ii) Nets: Everything is

> I find it always exciting to me, beautiful, to experience the interdependencies of things, the complex webs and networks by which everything moves, which I think are the most beautiful awarenesses that we can have of ourselves and of our planet. (TRW p. 35)

Even more so than "Loops", the metaphor "Nets" is a multivalent word for Snyder, and for the subculture by whom his work has been received. In her book The Aquarian Conspiracy, Marilyn Ferguson describes the increased use in the last decade or so by this subculture of the word "networks" to denote the remarkable burgeoning of interrelated "underground" social formations. One consequence is the emergence of "networking" as a verb. The "Conspiracy" is the name she gives to this leaderless network of networks:

> A great shuddering, irrevocable shift is overtaking us. It is not a new political, religious, or economic system. It is a new mind -- a turnabout in consciousness in critical numbers of individuals, a network strong enough to bring about radical change in our culture.[7]

Snyder uses "network" in a similar sense in the essay "Poetry, Community & Climax" (first published in 1979) (TRW pp. 165-167), but the concept appears in his work as early as EHH, where the AVATAMSAKA "jewelled net"

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6. In addition, Snyder is likely to be familiar with the use of "loop" in computer terminology, where it refers to the comparable process of recursion: a particular function is repeated until certain conditions have been fulfilled, at which point the program breaks out of the loop.

7. Marilyn Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's (1981; rpt. London: Granada, 1982). Acting from a similar incentive, some forms of eco-feminism have adopted the web as their identifying symbol -- another expression of the conviction that, as one lapel button has it, "everything is connected": a conviction which, for these groups, is both personal and political.

of INDRA is used as a metaphor for the mythic or metaphoric notion of "interbirth" or "Communionism".

AH resumes the explicit attention to this perception of things that RW initiated. "Nets" as it is used in AH, recalls the central metaphor in "Shark Meat", where the shark that had fouled the fishermen's nets is eaten by the islanders:

> Miles of water, Black current,
> Thousands of days
> re-crossing his own paths
> to tangle our net
> to be part of
> this loom. (RW p. 39)

In this context, given the appropriate rituals -- enough time, attention, reverence -- activities like hunting, fishing and eating other animals are not problematic. If "the real work is eating each other", then the meaning of "net" as that by which animals are trapped, is clearly significant. The relation it implies between man and animal is shown to be one instance of the phenomenon of interdependence, the web of reciprocity.

This is illustrated in the poem "Geese Gone Beyond" in "Nets". The geese are described metaphorically: a "carpet" of geese, who "talk", then "murmur". This sort of personification is a measure of the significance they are accorded. It is not intended to suggest that the geese are like humans, but rather the now familiar idea that all animals, human and non-human, deserve the respect to be considered as "persons". Although this is a hunting trip, there is time, it seems, to look closely, appreciatively, at the geese (in fact this is essential), and at the natural surroundings -- "yellow larch on the shore / morning chill, mist off the / cold gentle mountains beyond" (AH pp. 65-66). The absence of

the first person pronoun suggests that these things are simply there, and not dependent on the poet's perception of them for existence. As in TI, hunting is accompanied by ritual behaviour, recalling ancient practice: "I kneel in the bow / in seiza, like tea-ceremony / or watching a No play". This prepares the reader for the shooting itself, in which there is no sense of violation, or personal animosity -- "A touch across, / the trigger...." The function of these lines is to diminish the sense of personal responsibility: the syntax works to give the action a very different status from what it would have had in, say, "I pull the trigger". It seems too as though the first bird is in some sense a conscious participant in what happens. The bird flies up, as though acknowledging what is to happen: "The one who is the first to feel to go." This interpretation is reinforced by the poem's title, "Geese Gone Beyond" which alludes to an idea of "Gone Beyond Wisdom" introduced in RW. Its use here suggests that in shooting the geese the narrator is acting as a vehicle for their transcendence, and thereby (to the extent that he has "become one" with them), for his own as well. As in "Shark Meat", and "The Hudsonian Curlew", the human is understood to be a necessary agent in the animals' cycle of birth and death: killing in this way for food is an acknowledgement of our interdependence, human and non-human, in the living web.

In addition to this, the hunting experience is a recurrent metaphor in Snyder's work for writing poetry. This connection is not made explicit in AH, but it seems worth pointing out that the poet Lu Ji from whom he borrows the axe handle metaphor (and the sense of tradition that it implies), uses the idea of the poet as hunter and trapper, elsewhere in the same text. According to this, the poet is one who "traps Heaven and Earth in a cage of form". He writes:

We poets struggle with Non-being to force it to
yield Being:
We knock upon silence for an answering music.

We enclose boundless space in a square foot of paper:
We pour out deluge from the inch space of the heart.[8]

Naming a section "Nets" means that there is a sense in which the poems may be read as "nets" as well as "axe handles": forms in which to catch elusive experience, and to inter-connect experience. The idea is reminiscent of Romantic aesthetics, for example, Blake's stress on the value of "the bounding line", and his depiction of Los, the Eternal Prophet, as he who informs experience.[9]

Becoming one (or epiphany), in hunting is of course only one way of access to the jewelled net as Snyder presents it. Another is the attentive seeing recorded in a poem like "Walked Two Days in Snow, Then It Cleared for Five" (AH pp. 63-64), or the simultaneous, imagistic sense of the interrelated experiences which together give character to a particular day, as in "I:VI:40077" (AH p. 72). This formulation of the date ("reckoning from the earliest cave paintings") indicates the speaker's perception of his placement in time which the momentary experience evokes: while this day is certainly significant, its context is vast -- ultimately many millions of other days.

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8. Lu Ji, quoted in Archibald Macleish, Poetry and Experience (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), pp. 16-17.

9. But this might be misleading: Snyder's use of "net" is not as ambiguous as it is in Blake. In the latter, religion is described as a terrible, sickly net, and it is the agents of Urizen who use "nets and gins and traps" to capture the infinite joy. The activity of "binding to oneself a joy" which this denotes is equivalent to the mode of false consciousness Snyder would call "attachment", the outcome of which is exploitation and repression of all kinds.

(iii) Gaia: The Whole Network

> ah, this slow paced
> system of systems, whirling and turning (AH p. 49)

> Someday there will be girls and women whose name will no longer signify merely an opposite of the masculine, but something in itself, something that makes one think, not of any complement or limit, but only of life and existence: the feminine human being.[10]

As early as his B.A. thesis in 1951, with its fascination with the Muse and the Mother Goddess, Snyder gives emphasis to a theme which has been continuous in his work, and has gradually acquired solidity. This theme is the mythic significance of Woman as "the totality of what can be known"[my emphasis] (HM p. 71). An important poem in M&T depicts the mythic mother in this way — as the originating source, who contains within her own body the whole universe and its polar energies:

> The Mother whose body is the Universe
> Whose breasts are Sun and Moon,
> the statue of Prajna
> From Java: the quiet smile,
> The naked breasts. (M&T p. 81)

PRAJNA is wisdom or incisive knowledge, and central to this view of the Goddess is the idea of a wisdom that has "gone beyond". The phrase "Gone Beyond Wisdom" recalls the words of the crucial concluding mantra in the PRAJNAPARAMITA-HRIDAYA (or "Heart") SUTRA. The words are: OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA — "gone, gone, gone beyond, completely gone...."[11]

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10. Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet, quoted in Nor Hall, p. 68

11. The mantra is announced as follows: "Therefore the mantra of transcendent knowledge, the mantra of deep insight, the unsurpassed mantra, the unequalled mantra, the mantra which calms all suffering, should be known as truth, for there is no deception..." (Trungpa, p. 198). I refer the reader to Trungpa's useful commentary (Trungpa, pp. 187-206).

In response to my questions about dualisms, "Gone Beyond Wisdom" and the Goddess, Snyder commented that in addition to sometimes being "a pretty anthropomorphic goddess-archetype", the goddess is also used as a metaphor in his work. In the terms I have used in this thesis, the metaphor represents a crucial metaperspective on oppositional or dualistic epistemology:

> We only divide the world up into two sets -- such as essential and karmic, or noumenal and phenomenal, or wisdom and compassion, temporarily for arriving at certain kinds of clarity. But in the uncompromisingly non-dualistic Buddhist view which is an experiential view, not merely abstract and philosophical, these divisions are really just means and the world is one. Or as Yamada Roshi says, "not even one." There are such terms in esoteric Buddhism as the garbha (womb) realm and the vajra (thunderbolt) realm. But all of these are studied to the point of dissolving the dualism, even while maintaining a healthy understanding of the multiplicities by which things function. Prajna paramita is the "perfection" of a kind of wisdom that goes beyond such distinctions as being/non-being yin/yang essential/phenomenal or even wise/ignorant, or even enlightened/unenlightened. The wisdom that has done this is the wisdom that has "gone beyond".... But to make the circle interesting, the esoteric Buddhist tradition represents the wisdom that goes beyond all dualisms as ... a goddess. I find this charming. For "wisdom that has gone beyond", "illusion and wisdom both have been left behind." (Letter 20/8/84)

This sense of "woman" or the goddess as symbolic of totality needs to be spelt out in this way because it is confusing for obvious reasons. A similar difficulty arises with his use of "nature" to signify, not an alternative to "culture", but the whole biosphere, the whole earth. In Gaia, "the great biosphere being", both "woman" and "nature" as <u>totality</u> are simultaneously evoked. As metaphor, then, Gaia represents a perspective that is clearly of a higher logical type than those which either welcome or bemoan an identification of the "feminine" with "nature", and represent the goddess as the reverse image of the

"masculine", "patriarchal" god.[12] This image of the feminine achieves its clearest expression in AH, with its celebration of Gaia, and of the world in which she is perceived.

The metaperspective this represents is wholly appropriate to the character of this ancient divinity. In Greek mythology, Gaia is the primal Earth Goddess, the Great Mother. In the beginning there was Chaos. Then Gaia appeared, the deep breasted earth. She gave birth to her consort Uranus, the starry sky, and their children were the Titans, the Cyclopes, and the Hecatoncheires. She was also the mother of the human race, and there is evidence that she was the great deity of the primitive Greeks, long before the Olympian pantheon.[13] In terms of the idea of "looping back", Gaia is clearly appropriate in Snyder's symbolic system. As the oldest Greek deity, both in mythic and probably in historical terms, she stands firstly for the earth, and for values contrary to those associated with patriarchal religion and culture. Secondly, however, as mother of Uranus, existing before the discrimination into sexes, she is, symbolically, the mother out of whom these contrary values are born.

In addition to this, the name of Gaia has come to be associated with the concept of the "network" in recent years. Environmental scientists, James Lovelock and Sydney Epton, have in the last ten years, evolved a fairly influential model which they call The Gaia Hypothesis. The model (from which Snyder borrowed the name Gaia) considers the totality of our

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12. See, for example, work by Mary Daly and others in the women's spirituality movement, noted in Chapter Two. See also Anne Dickason, "The Feminine As a Universal", in Feminism and Philosophy, ed. M. Vetterling-Braggin et al., (1977; rpt. Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1978), pp. 79-100.

13. "Greek Mythology," New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, 1968 ed., p. 89.

planet, the entire system, to function rather like a single homeostatic organism, "a living creature even", which is itself in the process of evolution (TOW pp. 38-40; Letter 20/8/84). According to this, "Gaia" is the name for:

> a complex entity involving the earth's biosphere, atmosphere, oceans and soil; the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet.[14]

As this makes clear, in whatever sense she is understood, Gaia represents both "the whole network", and the originating source of its life. As Woodroffe's "generating stress or constituting forces" of a thing, the energy or SHAKTI she embodies is both primarily undifferentiated, and an image of the transcendence of oppositional relations.

"Little Songs for Gaia" is centred between "Loops" and "Nets", serving to emphasise the role of Gaia as the one who binds these elements together: a net is made of loops, while (as I suggested in the previous chapter) it is primarily the work of the goddess to weave the disparate threads of the net or web together. The songs in this central section, rather like those in "Target Practice" (RW), evoke the simplicity of a state of consciousness "beyond transcendence." This explanation from Trungpa nicely describes the loving enjoyment of what Snyder calls "the preciousness of mice and weeds" that characterises the wisdom that has gone beyond:

> We have to actually feel things as they are, the qualities of the garbage heapness and the quality of the maple leafness, the isness of things. We have to feel them properly, not just trying to put a veil of emptiness over them. That does not help at all. We have to see the "isness" of what is there,

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14. James. E. Lovelock, Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth (New York, 1979; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p. 11.

> the raw and rugged qualities of things precisely as they are. This is a very accurate way of seeing the world..... Finally we come down to earth, we see things as they are. This does not mean having an inspired mystical vision with archangels, cherubs and sweet music playing. But things are seen as they are, in their own qualities. (Trungpa, pp. 189-190)

The "Little Songs for Gaia" are very much an expression of this order of simplicity, of the sacramental perception of the world in its thusness.

The following poem is a good illustration of the sense of correspondence this characteristically involves for Snyder. It appeared originally in Songs for Gaia and is now in the "Nets" section of AH.[15]

24.IV.40075, 3.30 PM,
n. of coaldale, Nevada,
A Glimpse through a Break
in the Storm of the Summit
of the White Mountains

O Mother Gaia

sky cloud gate milk snow

wind-void-word

I bow in roadside gravel (AH p. 71)

The moment of its occurence carefully documented, the epiphany which this poem records is an intense recognition that, as Snyder put it in a comment noted in Chapter One, "at one level there are no hierarchies of qualities in life" (TRW p. 17). For this reason the monosyllabic elements in the second line are equally weighted, evenly paced with equal spaces between. This is followed by a characteristic hyphenating together of words, conveying a paradoxical interrelation of "wind", "void", and "word", that is reminiscent of Eliot. Contrary to what might have been expected,

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15. SFG is a small collection of eleven poems and woodcuts. All of the poems, with the exception of "Arktos" and the poem beginning "The delicacy of the mountains", appear in AH.

neither the first line (invocation) nor the last (ritualised response) are separated from the rest: weaver of the net of correspondences, "Mother Gaia" is wholly immanent in the world of interpenetrating phenomena -- in fact it is her. At the same time she represents that which transcends and is beyond the particular scene. Similarly, the human perceiver's awed response is to a world in which he is participant as well as observer: the ritual bow "in roadside gravel" is an indication at once of a delighted recognition of the goddess "out there", and at the same time of his own part in the magic system. In TOW Snyder alludes to this order of experience, with regard to its scarcity in contemporary "civilisation":

> Not that special, intriguing knowledges are the real point: its the sense of the magic system; the capacity to hear the song of Gaia at that spot, that's lost. (TOW p. 65)

The body of Snyder's work suggests that momentary epiphanies of the kind the poem presents are valuable to the extent that they are perceived to be surrounded not, as in Eliot or Stevens, by "waste sad time" or its equivalent, but by an everyday context in which the Goddess, and the sacramental metaperspective she represents, continue to be accessible in the rhythm of the most ordinary activities.

(2) ENERGY POLITICS

> Everything is going to be new politics now. It's all going to be energy politics. Everything is going to be redrawn. (TRW p. 51)

In the context of world recognition that wealth is no longer located in money, so much as in energy, Snyder claims that the actual "real wealth" is "knowing how to get along without" (TRW p. 51). Access to this must involve creative research into the possibilities of energy

decentralisation, a "people's technology" (TRW p. 147), as well as careful reassessment of our daily energy needs, and a consequent scaling down of high-energy consumption. The implications should be clear: the "real wealth" is, as TI suggested, essentially human energy, the "power within" that is Eternal Delight, and that is expressed in the songs and poems of the world (TI pp. 113-4). AH considers some aspects of both high technology culture, and a number of alternatives, attempting to convey through both "form" and "content" a sense of the difference between the states of mind these represent. At every point, the issues may be read to have both political and spiritual significance. As before however, this does not mean that there is in this relation a metaphoric transfer at work, a transfer of meaning from one semantic domain to another: rather, these areas of experience must be inseparable, and mutually defining.

The poems implicitly raise several questions, including: What forms of energy do you recognise, use and require for your functioning? (as in TI). And then, because a sense of timing is implied in the understanding of history, or time, that "Loops" suggests, the question How do you pace yourself? becomes a crucial one that is intrinsic to Snyder's view of epiphany. While Gaia is described as "slow paced", a great deal of human activity is shown to be absurdly rushed. In contrast to this, many of the poems convey a measured, slow-paced timing of activity and perception that is an important aspect of the alternatives suggested. Related to these questions of fuel and timing is one which asks: What road do you take?, and What means do you use to proceed on your journey? The correspondence between roads and spiritual Ways is an old one.

(i) The Twentieth Century: Owning the Source

"Reinhabitation", as described in TOW and TI, indicated a return to the land -- "living as though your grandchildren would also be alive, in this land" (TOW p. 65) -- and to a recognition of one's place in the life cycles and in human tradition. By contrast, many of the poems show "the twentieth century" (corresponding largely to "Amerika" in the previous collection) to represent the opposite tendency: a culture which stresses "growth" and "progress" at all costs, raises to almost ethical status the personal accumulation of "things", and involves the colonisation of whoever is outside the fold. AH extends the treatment of these issues in RW and TI.

In the poem "Glamor", the act of colonisation is shown to result in the gradual adoption of the ideology of the colonisers -- that is, primarily, of their possessions. The poem tells a ballad-type story of a man who went out "seeking power", and found white people, where he was "infected with greed". He returns to his own people with trade goods and they see that he is crazy. The first four stanzas give an account of what happened, as though in imitation of how the people themselves might tell it. In contrast, the concluding lines offer a more sophisticated ("educated") reflection on the situation, generalising, suggesting comparisons and ironic contradictions. In this, regular two-line stanzas and completed sentences are replaced by an irregular structure and incomplete sentences, concluding on a single, ambiguous word:

> Crazy and greedy, he lives on. To the damage
> of his people.
> Civilisation spreads: among people who are generous,
> who know nothing of "ownership",
> like a disease. Like taking poison.

A glamorous disease
a dazzling poison.

"overkill." (AH p. 94)

The issue of "ownership" reappears in "Money Goes Upstream", which describes "some odd force" in the world "that seeks to own the source" [my emphasis] (AH p. 102). In contrast with what is called "my power" ("I can smell the grass, feel the stones with bare feet / though I sit here shod and clothed / with all the people"), this force is emphatically "Not a power". It is the poisonous greed of the previous poem writ large, since money is the means by which the artefacts of civilisation are acquired. Owning the source must, in Snyder's terms, be an impossible delusion since, as RW and TI showed, the generating energies or beginnings of things are essentially transpersonal.[16] Yet the delusion is fundamental to the dream of centralised control according to which Snyder's "twentieth century" operates: state ownership of the source of energy technology is obviously a crucial political tool in centralised economies (the most extreme and obvious example being the nuclear state). This is why there is comparatively little sponsorship of, say, solar technologies -- clearly, nobody can own the sun.

Owning the source does however appear possible in a fossil-fuel economy. For a while at least. Several of the poems are concerned with the implications of such a situation, in which speed, power, ownership, etc., are valued, quite literally at the expense of the land itself. One of the "Little Songs for Gaia" depicts it like this:

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16. Compare "River in the Valley" (AH, p. 8), where the response to his son's question "Where do rivers start?" is finally that "the river / is all of it everywhere, / all flowing at once, / all one place."

Log trucks go by at four in the morning
as we roll in our sleeping bags
dreaming of health.
The log trucks remind us,
as we think, dream and play

of the world that is carried away. (AH p. 55)

Indiscriminate logging of this kind has been emblematic for Snyder of patriarchal culture's indifference to nature,[17] but drilling for oil is rather more serious, involving as it does the consumption of millions of years of stored life that is desperately finite. "Dillingham, Alaska, the Willow Tree Bar", describes the "new songs" heard in all the working bars of the world: songs to accompany the workers' participation in "the pain / of the work / of wrecking the world" (AH p. 92).

The pace of the society fuelled by this oil is such that establishing continuity with one's "roots", or being in any sense of the word "grounded" is nearly impossible. The poem "Fishing Catching Nothing off the Breakwater near the Airport, Naha Harbour, Okinawa" observes the display of jets, images of a civilisation that is, like the Americans in TI, to a large extent up in the air:

Self-defense-force jets in pairs
scream out over the bay
lay a track of smoke and whine
on the Kume islands. (AH p. 35)

The questions "Who's weak? who's strong?" that a display of this kind is set up to answer, remain ironically unanswered in the poem, but are followed by the simple concluding observation: "Burning millions of gallons of kerosene / / Screaming along." The implication is that any country whose strength depends on fundamental exploitation of people and

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17. See, for example, "Logging" 14 in M&T: " the groves are down / cut down" (M&T p. 46).

the environment, is both diseased and short-sighted. In this context, the outcome of any particular display is irrelevant. Given the noise, the pollution, the disturbance of the environment, it seems appropriate that the speaker's ancient activity of fishing should be fruitless, personal attempts to re-establish one's place as part of the "network" being vulnerable as they are to disruption.

The poem for Jerry Brown, then Governor of California, "Talking Late with the Governor about the Budget", gives an interesting perspective on Snyder's encounter with the "source" of political power. Brown himself attempted to apply Schumacher's ("Buddhist") principles to his work, his belief being that institutions created to take charge of people's lives generate dependency, powerlessness and resentment (Quoted in Gorz, p. 204). His slogan is "expect less from Government and more from yourself", and yet ironically, the poem suggests an inevitable participation in the bureaucratic machinery:

> Entering the midnight
> Halls of the capitol,
> Iron carts full of printed bills
> Filling life with rules,
>
> At the end of many chambers
> Alone in a large tan room
> The Governor sits, without dinner.
> Scanning the hills of laws--budgets--codes--
> In this land of twenty million
> From desert to ocean.
>
> Till the oil runs out
> There's no end in sight.
> Outside, his car waits with driver
> Alone, engine idling.
> The great pines on the Capitol grounds
> Are less than a century old.
>
> Two A.M.,
> We walk to the street
> Tired of the effort
> Of thinking about "the People."
> The half-moon travels west
> In the elegant company

Of Jupiter and Aldebaran,

And east, over the Sierra,
Far flashes of lightning--
Is it raining tonight at home?" (AH pp. 81-2)

However unprecedented consultation with a poet about the budget may be, the nature of their meeting here is emblematic of the bizarre way decisions tend to be made in the existing social structure: a solitary man "at the end of many chambers", thinking about a land of twenty million. From this vantage point, real humans must be abstracted to the anonymous "the People", just as the Governor's political role seems to require some disregard for his ordinary human needs (for example, no dinner, the lateness of the hour, etc.). The whole structure is shown to be immensely wearying and apparently unavoidable: "Till the oil runs out / There's no end in sight." This sense of the finiteness of the essential fuel is emphasised by the mention of the waiting car, engine wastefully idling. Appropriately, the syntax gives attention to the car, in relation to which the person is merely an ancilliary "driver". Even the trees, like the civilisation, are a fairly recent growth.

Once out of the building, however, they can see the night sky: immediately the field of vision is expanded. Description of the elegant journey of moon and planets recalls those ancient cultures for whom they were celestial rulers, and whose mythic names for them we retain. Looking up at the sky suggests a perspective on human concerns which recognises that even Gaia herself is but one participant in a vaster system of systems. The lengthy abstractions that Government work requires clearly cannot be sustained for long, and so the last line is wholly appropriate and poignant: it returns the attention to practical detail, wistfully wondered -- "is it raining tonight at home?"

"Strategic Air Command" is also about looking up at the night sky, and

seeing the intrusion of air-borne technology into natural process: "the hiss and flashing lights of a jet / Pass near Jupiter in Virgo." But of course this is only what seems to be happening, since the sublunary realm which the jets occupy is tiny in planetary terms:

> These cliffs and stars
> Belong to the same universe.
> This little air in between
> Belongs to the twentieth century and its wars. (AH p. 37)

The measured syntax and comparative parallelisms help to convey a perspective of relative serenity. This view is perhaps due to the fact that the poem dates from a trip in the mountains, from a situation where the speaker is giving careful attention to simple minutiae in which he is involved (sleeping bags, one more cup of tea, etc.), and which are relatively unaffected by the jets overhead. From this vantage point, then, the twentieth century aberration, while significant, is ultimately placed and bounded: somewhere between the familiar particularity of the earth itself, and the unknown immensity of the stars.

(ii) Alternatives: Old Ways, Roads, Means of Connection

> It was some years ago that my wife and I first began to catch on to these roads. We took them in a while for variety or for a shortcut to another main highway, and each time the scenery was grand and we left the road with a feeling of relaxation and enjoyment. We did this time after time before realising what should have been obvious: these roads are truly different from the main ones. The whole pace of life and personality of the people who live along them are different. They're not going anywhere. They're not too busy to be courteous. The hereness and nowness of things is something they know all about.... We have learned how to spot the good ones on a map, for example. If the line wiggles, that's good. That means hills. If it appears to be the main route from a town to a city, that's bad. The best ones always connect nowhere with nowhere and have an alternative that gets you there quicker.[18]

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18. Robert M. Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (London: Bodley Head, 1974), pp. 13-14.

The opening poem in AH makes it clear that, as before, Snyder wishes to align himself with traditions other than mainline Western ones, one response to the fact that the world is becoming "cosmopolitan." Consequently, the "culture" in which the poems seek to participate owes its roots to Chinese literature, Zen Buddhism, etc., as well as to masters like Pound. This means that in contrast to the fast-lane highways and jet routes of contemporary civilisation, and the ethic of speed and progress these imply, many of the poems convey a state of mind in which there is time to make the sometimes circuitous "looping back" to the Old Ways: old routes, paths, means of connection. In this context, the journey is essentially not a means to some predetermined goal, but is rather itself the destination -- what in Buddhism is called "the pathless path", or as in RW, the Taoist Way which "is not a Way".

The poem "So Old" describes a day spent travelling along such a road. The difference between this and the new roads is quite explicit:

> Old roads twist deep into canyons,
> hours from one ridge to the next
> The new road goes straight on the side of the mountain,
> high, and with the curves ironed out. (AH p. 26)

The metonymic sequence of detail seen on the way raises the expectation of some sort of narrative climax, the "point" to which all this has been tending. But it does not come. The village at the end of the road is small and old, the tempo of its unexceptional life a continuation of the leisurely pace that the road requires of the journey. It is essentially the sort of place where nothing special or remarkable is likely to happen, and so, appropriately, it is not foregrounded in the poem. Description takes the form of attention to a few particulars, metonymies for the whole. If anything, the poem focuses on the prevalent sense of age, and

the connections this suggests: "It's all so old --the hawk, the houses, the trucks, / the view of the fog-- ".

This "nothing special" is, however, precisely the character of the Zen epiphany: for simple reasons this has been "a good day", but its enjoyment need not imply lingering over the experience, trying to hold on to it. So the description of the destination itself has passed over soon after it is begun, and the reflection on what has been "achieved" during the day does not bring the poem to a sonorous conclusion. Instead, it is followed by the anticipated return home, with its own pattern of daily activity: "Back to our own dirt road, iron stove, / and the chickens to close in the dusk. / And the nightly stroll of raccoons." In avoiding closure and metaphoric cohesion, the poem fails to accord to the journey the special status that we might expect for such a day. The point of course is that this day, while enjoyable, is to be followed by many others. Experiences like these, the poem suggests, are significant to the extent that they are attended to while they are taking place, and then allowed to give place to whatever happens next. Epiphany, in these terms, occurs in precisely that orientation towards experience which is not dependent on isolated moments of intense illumination, and which, recognising the "nothing special" that takes place every day, does not cling to moments that have passed. At the formal level, stylistic features have a similar effect on the verbal "showing forth", serving to draw attention away from the poem itself, it's use of language, and towards the journey and the perceptions decribed.

Four poems in "Loops" record a visit to Japan in 1981. While Snyder frequently acknowledges the Japanese participation in high technology exploitation, the mode of living that he chooses to consider here is (with the exception of the poem about the "screaming jets" already discussed) rather different. The poems describe a looping back along old roads -- to

the childhood land of his wife, Masa, and the ancestors of their sons; to the place where he spent years working in a Buddhist monastery; to what is left of the ancient culture of Japan.

In "Delicate Criss-crossing Beetle Trails Left in the Sand", the bus takes them through the precisely ordered pattern of Masa's childhood village, where the "perfectly straight lines of rice plants / glittering orderly mirrors of water" (AH p. 32), are evidence of continuity with ancient tradition. The appropriateness of the title is only realised in the last lines, which suggest a correspondence between beetle trails and the activity of the human residents. The apparently random, essentially ephemeral beetle patterns become interesting on further attention: all trails or roads are a record of intention and connection, and the criss-crossings these make are not insignificant.

> And watch bugs in their own tiny dunes.
>
> from memory to memory,
> bed to bed and meal to meal,
> all on this road in the sand (AH pp. 32-3)

This metaphoric connection of bug and human is first made in Snyder's translation of the Cold Mountain poems, whose sentiments he identified with strongly. It appears in that collection as Han Shan's metaphorical reference to himself: "There's a naked bug at Cold Mountain / With a white body and a black head" (RP p. 30). The metaphor is repeated with very little alteration in "Old Pond" ("Nets"):

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

This insect-like person reappears in the last line of the first of the Gaia songs: "Grasshopper man in his car / driving through". In each case, the effect is a humorous diminution of the human, an attempt to accord to him a more appropriate scale than is generally the case in anthropocentric thinking. This scaling-down is suggestive of the way people tend to appear in Chinese landscape paintings -- as small journeyers in a vast environment. In the first examples, the human is perceived as a real (if small and sometimes ridiculous) member of the natural community: the naked bug climbs the mountain, dives into the pool, makes trails in the sand. However, the tarmac track which the grasshopper man follows takes him through rather than into the world. The tiny human is set on a straight new road, and insulated in his vehicle. He travels through the "slow paced system of systems", as though he is separable from it, unable or unwilling to participate in its "whirling and turning". And of course the car is running on fossil fuel.

The other two Japan poems are also about alternative routes. In "Walking Through Myoshin-ji", the walk is exploratory, a way back to what is ancient. Unlike those at the capitol, the pine trees that surrounded the city here were ancient and anonymous: in the context of the great cycle from green needles to ash, personal names are irrelevant (AH p. 34). The fourth poem about Japan is a quiet, simple recollection of returning to Masa's family tomb, where they drink and sing together. It describes the ritual reverence for the dead ("washed bones within / ranked in urns"), and a sense of their continued existence, in the reciprocity of past and present: "Drinking with the ancestors / singing with their sons" (AH p. 36).

Singing is important in another journey poem, "Uhuru Wild Fig Song". In

his Schumacher lecture, Snyder describes the visit to Australia to which the poem refers. This involved travelling with Aboriginal people, and hearing traditional stories and cycles of journey songs on the way:

> So remember a time when you journeyed on foot over hundreds of miles, walking fast and often travelling at night, travelling night-long and napping in the acacia shade during the day, and these stories were told to you as you went. In your travels with an older person you were given a map you could memorize, full of the lore and song, and also practical information. Off by yourself you could sing those songs to bring yourself back. And you could travel to a place that you'd never been, carrying only songs you had learned. (SCHUM p. 11)

As in the Japan poems, taking a different road here means entering a different group of cultural assumptions. In this case the journey is on foot, and leads them to the wilder parts of the land, (and thereby to a sense of the land as "sacred") that is not as easily accessible by car.[19] The poem is a song about these songs, describing the walk, things seen, rests along the way, and the wild fig tree where they stop for lunch:

> women singing over there--
> men clapping sticks and singing here
>
> ....
>
> clacking the boomerang beat,
> a long walk
> singing the land. (AH p. 96)

At the same time, however, the poem is itself a journey song: "Hard wild fig on the tongue. / this wild fig song."

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19. A similar effect is achieved in "The Canyon Wren" (AH pp. 110-112), which records a journey down the twists and turns of the Stanislaus River. This was the last trip of its kind before the route was to be flooded out by the new Mellones Dam.

(iii) Hard Pleasant Tasks: The Proper Use for Several Tools

> I've just recently [1959] come to realise 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.[20]

Energy may be defined as the ability to do work. In AH, the connection is a meaningful one, since what I call the "epiphany in work", an experience of unalienated labour, is central. Implicit in this epiphany is a clear rejection of the familiar divisions of "work" and "leisure", since the quality of "becoming one" derives here in giving full attention to ordinary tasks. Alienation or dislocation would consist in trying to think about other things while doing the work. Snyder has often described how he loves doing hard work, and has given the word "work" itself particular meaning. For example, his latest collection of prose writings is titled The Real Work.[21] So there are poems in AH about working the land, building a fence, fixing a truck and a roof, felling trees, as well as changing diapers, painting a school, and his work on the California Arts Council.

In an interview in TRW, he describes the value of ordinary daily activities which are pervaded by "mindfulness", and the need for "the act and the thought being together":

> there is a body-mind 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. And that is not trivial, nor is the sensation of it trivial. Sweeping the floor becomes, then, the most important thing in the world. Which it is. (TRW p. 7)

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20. Snyder in Donald Allen, ed., The New American Poetry (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 420. See Molesworth on this statement, p. 47.

21. "And if we can live the work we have to do, knowing that we are real and that the world is real, then it becomes right. And that's the real work: to make the world as real as it is, and to find ourselves as real as we are..." (GEN p. 105).

In the same interview he describes his first realisation of this while working for a trail crew. The attempt to carry on an interior intellectual life while doing long, hard physical work became frustrating, and he decided to "just work":

> By just working, I found myself being completely there, having the whole mountain inside of me, and finally having a whole language inside of me that was one with the rocks and with the trees. And that was where I first learned the possibility of being one with what you were doing, and not losing anything of the mind thereby. (TRW p. 8)

The poems about work are mostly in the "Loops" section. There is a sense in which they seem to function as "loops" even more effectively than those which attempt to do so by memory recall. This is because doing the kinds of work that Snyder describes is shown to be in itself a way of re-establishing connection with the old ways: "I fix truck and lock eyebrows / With tough-handed men of the past" (AH p. 40).

The example given in the interview as illustration of mindfulness in work is the poem "February" in The Back Country. It describes a morning spent doing household chores, and takes the form of a metonymic listing: no metaphor in the sense of a semantic transfer, no metaphoric patterning in Jakobson's sense. This is wholly appropriate if it is felt that the use of metaphor implies a dualism of some kind. Metonymy is functional in a similar way in several poems in AH. Here are two in particular:

Firstly, "Fence Posts": a poem like this is unusual in English. Using none of the devices one would expect from the traditional lyric, Snyder spends forty-five lines describing a deliberation about what wood to use for making a fence. But to put it this way is misleading. The poem is not so much a description of this mental process, as an attempt to convey the process itself, often to audaciously banal effect:

So, soaking six posts a week at a time
The soaked pile getting bigger week by week,
But the oil only comes up one and a half feet.
I could add kerosene in
At seventy cents a gallon
Which is what it costs when you buy it by the drum
And that's 3.50 to raise the soaking level up
Plus half a can of penta more, six dollars,
For a hundred and twenty fence posts
On which I saved thirty dollars by getting the sapwood,
But still you have to count your time (AH p. 25)

There seem to be at least traces of humour in a structure that so thoroughly confounds and thereby draws attention to one's expectations: not only is the subject-matter peculiar, but the account leads to nothing more climactic than the aphoristic last three lines. And the fence-building reveals to the closest scrutiny, nothing more significant than itself -- no extended metaphor, no symbolic sub-stratum.

The lines succeed each other in a way that mirrors the order and timing in which the thoughts occur, which helps to suggest the deliberate timing of thought and action that work of this kind requires. The structure created by this metonymic "thinking aloud", and by the absence of metaphoric patterning, serves to make the poem itself almost invisible: the reader's attention is not prompted to linger on its structural features, but is rather drawn beyond this, to the fence-making, and to the act of attentive perception by which it becomes significant. If there can be said to be any "deeper meaning" to all this, this is clearly it: the enactment of a state of mind in which it is meaningful to give detailed and undivided attention to dilemmas such as these. And this means giving time -- not only the time spent making the fence, (rather than having someone else make it, or buying a ready-made one) -- but also the time required to consider these things carefully.

In contrast with many poems where Snyder uses blank spaces to indicate

how the words are to be timed, the format here is very regular. All lines begin flush with the left margin, words are evenly spaced, sentences are completed, and the "I" is neither foregrounded nor deleted. This suggests that the syntax and ordinary line structure are sufficient indicators of timing. Consider, for example, the effect of this circumlocutionary, unpunctuated sentence, which is more like a lengthy and thoughtful oral explanation than a written one :

> I could have bought all heartwood from the start
> But then I thought how it doesn't work
> To always make a point of getting the best which is why
> I sometimes pick out the worse and damaged looking fruit
> And vegetables at the market because I know
> I actually will enjoy them in any case but
> Some people might take them as second choice
> And feel sour about it all evening. (AH pp. 24-25)

The quality of unhurried attention that is given here to practical things recalls a time when fences were worth making well, slowly, thoughtfully, without thinking about anything else.

The second poem is very different. It appears in "Nets", following, and contrasting with the "new" working songs, with their "pain / of the work / of wrecking the world"(AH pp. 91-92):

> Removing the Plate of the Pump
> on the Hydraulic System
> of the Backhoe
>
> Through mud, fouled nuts, black grime
> it opens, a gleam of spotless steel
> machined-fit perfect
> swirl of intake and output
> relentless clarity
> at the heart
> of work. (AH p. 93)

Given the informed and thorough attention that it requires, and the poem records, removing the plate of the pump reveals more than just another mechanism. It shows instead the delight within a perfectly

interlocking system that is a source of power. The final line to which the others focus is crucial, as the shape of the lines on the page suggest. The poem's downward movement towards the centre directs the eye to the "relentless clarity" and meaning at the heart of the most messy and apparently unholy activities, and equally to the core "point" to which it all tends.

"Bows To Drouth" describes the work of pumping water to feed the apple trees at a time of severe drought. As the title indicates, the "bows" which working the pump requires are transformed by the attention which they are accorded into an absorbing and meaningful, almost ritual response to this driest summer, revealing new perceptions at every turn:

> Legs planted,
> both hands on the handle,
> whole body bending,
> I gaze through the trees and
> see different birds,
> different leaves,
> with each bow. (AH p. 14)[22]

Poems like these raise the question of the significance of technology in sacramental work. While the system Roszack calls "the technocracy" is certainly anathema to him, Snyder's work suggests that it is not "technology" per se that is at fault: humans have always had tools and special knowledge.[23] It would be as naive to imagine a way of being human without such tools at all as it is to think of science and

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22. Similarly, in "Changing Diapers", the wiping-up operation involves delighted enjoyment of the baby's form -- "Baby legs and knees / toes like little peas / little wrinkles, good to eat" (AH p. 18) -- and the recognition of connection between the speaker, the baby, and a poster of Geronimo. Other poems about work in this collection include "Beating the Average", "Painting the North San Juan School", "Getting in the Wood", "Under the Sign of Toki's", and "Old Rotting Tree Trunk Down."

23. Compare the remarks in an interview in TRW about this: "I love technology..." (TRW pp. 87-8).

technology as being ideologically neutral. Essentially, the question of whether these are "appropriate" or not is answered by looking at who is being served by them, whether, in Snyder's words we are "masters" of technology or it of us (TRW p. 87, and pp. 146-7). In the same interview he remarks that "Knowing how to prune a fruit tree is technology. Knowing how to plant in is also, in a sense, technology" (TRW p. 87). The transmission of this knowledge is transmission of culture: as "axe handles", the poems are often about the "appropriate" use of this technology, both special knowledge and the actual tools.

The poem, "What Have I Learned" concerns the centrality of such tools in the speaker's experience, and while the word is being used metaphorically, it is clear that the tools are real ones too. They are the tools used for doing the "hard pleasant tasks" which many of the poems describe, and which are shown to be so different from the sort of essentially frustrating, unfulfilling work that city bureaucrats including the Buddhist Governor Brown are doing. In focusing on tools in this way, the poem draws attention to connections between the relation of special knowledge to sacramental work, and the definition of culture which this implies:

> What have I learned but
> the proper use for several tools?
>
> The moments
> between hard pleasant tasks
>
> To sit silent, drink wine,
> and think my own kind of
> dry crusty thoughts.
>
> --the first Calochortus flowers
> and in all the land,
> it's spring.
> I point them out:
> the yellow petals, the golden hairs,
> to Gen.

Seeing in silence:
never the same twice,
but when you get it right,
you pass it on. (AH p. 85)

(3) THE SENSE OF THE MAGIC SYSTEM

"Beyond the ultimate void is this" (TRW p. 21)

it's the sense of the magic system, the capacity to hear the song of Gaia at that spot, that's lost.... (TOW p. 65)

The implications of the Gaia Hypothesis are, its authors assert, moral as well as scientific. They conclude an article in New Scientist (Feb. 6, 1975) with the words: "Let us make peace with Gaia on her own terms and return to peaceful co-existence with our fellow creatures" (Lovelock, quoted in Theodore Roszack, Person/Planet, p. 39). Snyder stretches the point further, stressing the spiritual significance of this way of seeing:

> The biological-ecological sciences have been laying out (implicitly) a spiritual dimension. We must find our way to seeing the mineral cycles, the water cycles, air cycles, nutrient cycles, as sacramental. (TOW p. 63)

As this suggests, seeing the world "in its thusness" means recognition of one's own participation in cyclic process. The "self realisation" this involves coincides with that in the idea of "looping back", its central idea deriving from what Snyder calls "The Avatamsaka ("Flower Wreath") jewelled - net - interpenetration - ecological - systems - emptiness - consciousness". According to this, there is: "no self realisation without the Whole Self, and the whole self is the whole thing" [my emphasis] (TOW p. 64).

In the earlier publication, Songs for Gaia, the poems and woodcuts

appear singly on a page. However in "Little Songs for Gaia", they are formatted closely together, as though to suggest that the cycle is to be read as a single whole. Instead of a linear sequence, the form this takes involves, rather as in RW, repetitions and variations on interrelated themes. In this case, these play around a particular sense of time -- "kairos" as opposed to "chronos" -- that is a corollary of the mythic or "metaphoric" understanding of correspondence and cyclic process in history. This seems to correspond closely with the idea of the "Dreamtime" that Snyder describes in his Schumacher lecture, in relation to his experiences with Australian Aborigines:

> "Dreaming" or "Dreamtime" refers to a time of creation which is not in the past but which is right now. It's the mode of eternally creative nowness, as contrasted with the mode of cause and effect in time, the main place that modern people live, and within which we imagine history, progress, and evolution to take place. (SCHUM p. 12)

While only three of the "songs" are clearly records of dreams, the mode of "eternally creative nowness" is precisely that which the poems evoke.[24]

In the first dream poem, the speaker is awakened ("by the clock") to the world of linear chronology. He can still see the dream images of Corn Maidens in green. The description of this attends to the problem involved in telling a dream, or writing it down -- namely, the loss of quality that translation from dreamtime imagery to the linear verbal discourse tends to involve. The problem is the familiar one that recurs in any attempt to speak of numinous experience, and is dealt with here using a curiously evocative variation on the "via negativa": while the poem does briefly mention "Green leaves, skirt, sleeves...", it explicitly resists the temptation to "write it down." Rather than the content of the dream, the

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24. The third is the final poem, "I'm sorry I disturbed you."

poem's subject consists in the speaker's response to the dream, namely, his refusal to cling too hard to the necessarily elusive visions, either in the dream itself, or by translating the experience into "the mode of cause and effect":

> But then I'm glad for once I knew
> Not to look too much when
> Really there
>
> Or try to write it down. (AH p. 51)

Snyder's stylistic preferences suggest that trying to write it down is likely to be more successful if is recognised that poetic discourse or "singing" may be one expression of the omnipresent song of the goddess -- hence the metaphor of "the swallow's dip and swoop" noted in Chapter One. This mode of expression is described in a poem that appeared in SFG with the title "Notes on Natural Style", appropriately so for attention to a patterning that is at once the form of the phenomenal world, and the sort of "stylishness" which the poetry attempts to embody. The reference to "winds and waves" in the poem recalls the centrality of their interaction in RW, as does the poem's subject. In this case (as in "Wave") watching the fluid, interpenetrating networks of light in water reveals the unregimented pattern of natural phenomena, which is the basis of their interdependence:

> The stylishness of winds and waves--
> nets over nets of light
> reflected off the bottom (AH p. 52)

A similar mode of being appears in the first poem in "Little songs for Gaia", with the hawk's "dipping and circling". This movement is shown to be one expression of the "whirling and turning" of the biosphere itself, from which the "grasshopper man" was clearly alienated. The relative placing of that human, bent on his linear track through the world, within

this "slow-paced / system of systems", is implicit in the poems that follow. While 5 000 years may be all that a human (including, presumably, the poet) can figure, the perspective which the cycle represents seeks at once the totality that Gaia embodies, and thereby, simultaneously, a sense of the transcient beauty of the human in a context of the evolving biosphere:

> As the crickets' soft autumn hum
> is to us,
> so are we to the trees
>
> as are they
>
> to the rocks and the hills. (AH p. 51)

"Beyond the ultimate void is this": although many of the poems present what might be called an immanent epiphany, images of transcendence are recurrent in this cycle. The second poem directs the reader to "Look out over / this great world", and the hawk reappears in a description of hawks, eagles, and swallows:

> Life of,
> sailing out over worlds up and down.
> blue mountain desert,
> cliff by a blue-green lake. (AH p. 56)

Another such bird is the "trout-of-the-air, ouzel, / bouncing, dipping on a round rock" (AH p. 50). As this suggests, the transcendent flight includes in its dip and swoop an element of play that is crucial in the alternatives Snyder proposes: "Hear bucks skirmishing in the night-- / / the light, playful rattle of antlers / in a circle of moonlight" (AH p. 53). As in poems in "Target Practice", the experience of "Great Play" implies a delighted enjoyment of the "nothing special" of daily encounters. The poem for red hens evokes precisely this quality of attention:"World made for Red Hens" (AH p. 53).

However in describing the state of consciousness terms such as "transcendence" and "immanence" are no longer very helpful, since it is by definition something that has "gone beyond" their polar opposition. The following poem, which I quote in full, makes this clear, presenting a sacramental metaperspective that is of a higher logical type than either term:

Deep blue sea baby,
Deep blue sea.
Ge, Gaia
Seed syllable, "ah!"

Whirl of the white clouds over blue-green land and seas
bluegreen of bios bow--curve--

Chuang-tzu says the Great Bird looking down,
all he sees is blue ...

Sand hills. blue of the land, green of the sky.
looking outward
half-moon in cloud;

Red soil--blue sky--white cloud--grainy granite,
and
Twenty thousand mountain miles of manzanita.
Some beautiful tiny manzanita
I saw a single, perfect, lovely,
manzanita

Ha.
(AH p. 54)

This is reminiscent of "The Blue Sky" in Six Sections from Mountains and Rivers Without End, Plus one. In the last section, blueness (and in particular "blue sky"), evokes transcendent healing, making whole, Old Man Medicine Buddha, and consequently the work of the poet as shamanistic medicine man. Similarly, the appearance of "blue sky" in this poem suggests an understanding of the goddess as healer of divisions -- whether conceptual, epistemological, or otherwise -- and implicitly of the shaman-poet as her mediator. Here, however, both the sea and the sky are blue, this simultaneous perception of polar contraries (above and below)

implying a vision of our world as a totality. The whirling pattern of white and blue-green which this reveals is that view of the planet, as the whole earth which Stewart Brand identified as a crucial landmark for human consciousness, and to which Snyder refers in TOW (p. 63).

At the same time, Gaia as "seed syllable" draws attention to her identity with the goddess VAK, and the originating source of things. In moving the reader's attention in this way from a cosmic to a miniscule perspective, looking "down" on the earth with the Great Bird, and "outward" to the half moon, the poem embodies the easy movement in time and dimension that is an important characteristic of the sacramental consciousness which the poetry presents. This movement is completed by the return in the last lines to the "single, perfect, lovely manzanita" in which the interpenetrating energies are as clearly present. If vision of the goddess Gaia, the whole earth, directs the mind towards a totality that transcends oppositional relations, then living in the world as sacramental means a return to the particularity of the given reality: to mice and weeds, local politics, the pleasures of ordinary work, parents and children, the red hens' joyful scrabble, and the tiny manzanita:

THE FLICKERS

sharp clear call

THIS!

THIS!

THIS!

in the cool pine breeze
(AH p. 57)[25]

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25. This is a reminder of Huxley's birds with their repeated call of "Attention", in Island (1962; rpt. London: Granada, 1979), pp. 23-4.

Chapter 5

TO SEE THE WORLD: Gaia, VAK and the Sacramental

(1) SELF - OTHER: An Epistemology of Oppositional Relations
(2) TRUE COMMUNIONISM: Encountering the Goddess
(3) NOTHING SPECIAL: Mice and Weeds
(4) ABOUT FORM: Metaphor, Open Forms and Syntax
(5) FURTHER WORK: Problems and Questions
(6) CONCLUSION: To See the World in its Thusness

The first four parts of this chapter are a brief account of my findings in the thesis -- namely, how does the later poetry respond to the sacramental question. The four-part division recalls my original four questions at the end of Chapter One. Part (5) gives a brief indication of some directions that further work might take, with particular reference to the sorts of problems that Snyder's work raises, problems that I have not been able to consider. This is followed by some concluding remarks (6), and an extract from a poem by Robert Duncan that seems to be appropriate.

> This small blue-green planet is the only one with comfortable temperatures, good air and water, a wealth of animals and plants, for millions (or quadrillions) of miles. A little waterhole in Vast Space, a nesting place, a place of singing and practice, a place of dreaming. It's on the verge of being totally trashed -- there's a slow way and a fast way. We are all natives here, and this is our only sacred spot. We must know that we've been jumped, and fight like a raccoon in a pack of hounds, for our own and all other lives. (SCHUM p. 15)

A fundamental point to emerge from my work is the urgency and seriousness with which Snyder views what I have called the sacramental question. This appeal from his recent Schumacher lecture emphasises this urgency, and indicates once again why attention to such questions is imperative -- not only "spiritually", but also politically and in every other way that concerns us most deeply. This is because the felt recognition that "this is our only sacred spot" may be the crucial one in saving the biosphere: Nathan Scott's question about what can be counted on to "sanctify" human existence appears in the poetry to be the same as one about what is going to make continued human existence possible at all.

In these terms it is clear that for Snyder a radical transformation in the way we see the world is required, and my thesis set out to examine the poetry for evidence of what this may involve.

In response to the question "What is it in the nature of reality that can be counted on finally to sanctify human existence?" Snyder's work offers at one level a teasing, (characteristically Zen) refusal to articulate a prescriptive spiritual path. This can be seen as an extension of the mystic's attitude towards language described in Chapter One, and results in paradoxical formulations such as "The Way is not a way." From this point of view the way to the sacramental remains essentially incommunicable, ineffable, the function of poetry being, as Altieri puts it, to articulate an emotional consciousness of what it feels

like to know oneself as part of such a system (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 144). This may involve epiphany, but epiphanies which are in one sense, "nothing special."

At the same time, however, the writing is not all as evasive as this suggests. For example, Snyder is fairly explicit with respect to his ideological position. While holding "the most archaic values on earth", he indicates at the same time the ways in which these may be politically radical. Given this, many of the poems take the form of critical assessment of the dominant culture, the recurrent implied question being: "What is it about 'civilisation' that functions as a barrier to real seeing, and has as its consequences exploitation of the natural world and other people?" As his early diary entry about epiphany suggested (Chapter One), the experience of any particular person appears here in the context of the culture's assumptions about itself.

With respect to the sacramental question, images of the feminine (and ultimately what Snyder calls the Goddess) have proved to be fundamental: both as the focus of the alternatives to the dominant ideology of patriarchal-technological culture, and as a pointer to the non-dualistic state of consciousness on which "real seeing" is shown to depend.

In this context, the later work indicates an interest in language and linguistic patterns that is very different from the impatience with language, particularly metaphor, that critics such as Kern identified in the earlier work. In every case, Snyder's response to the "sacramental question" is first to make explicit -- and so extricate himself from -- the assumptions embedded in the (Judaeo-Christian) context in which the question has tended to be posed, and then to propose a transvaluation of the traditional terminology: sacrament, Communion, God.

(1) SELF - OTHER: an epistemology of oppositional relations

> I begin, then, with the assumption that perhaps the great disaster of human history is one that happened to or within religion: that is the conceptual division between the holy and the world, the exerpting of the Creator from the Creation. (Berry, p. 403)

Snyder's work shows that an important consequence of the way of seeing that Berry identifies is a view that the sacramental may only be encountered in rare, transcendent moments of "otherwordly experience". In addition, he is unambiguous in assuming the interdependence of religious and political models, and consequently the political significance of spiritual vision -- a position that he shares with members of the Counterculture, people such as Thomas Merton, Eckhart, Blake, and the dissident underground of mystics and others with whom he identifies. Because of this, the work also draws attention to the ideological consequences of the "bad metaphysics" inherent in our habitual epistemological assumptions.

In discussing these conceptual divisions, I have made use of Wilden's term "biosocial imperialism". The term denotes in particular a conceptual boundary which separates "organism" and "environment". The model, most explicitly identified in Descartes' emphasis on the "clear and distinct", implies a belief in the "individual" as unit of survival, and consequently the setting up of an illusory opposition between this individual and the environment. A clear example of this is the (historically understandable) confusion between a person's skin-bound biological individuality, and the notion of a separable psychic "self" or social "role". Much of Snyder's work can be seen as an attempt to reveal the relativity of these

boundaries -- whether from a ecological-systems or a Buddhist perspective.

Part of this work involves a revaluation of the categories by which personal and social issues tend to be understood. The attention given in the poems to transformation of consciousness, and of conceptual schemes, might seem to suggest an idealist as opposed to a materialist point of view. But this would be inaccurate. The familiar debate between the two positions involves a dilemma with respect to social transformation: whether life is determined by consciousness, or vice-versa, whether the individual or the collective is the focus of attention, etc. However, according to Snyder's ecological-systems paradigm, this very either-or dilemma is itself misleading, since the opposition which it implies may be seen as a function of dualistic epistemology. Snyder's position here is closer to a current eco-political/personalist model described by Theodore Roszack in Person/Planet. According to this, the needs of the planet accord with those of the person, and the danger arises from thinking of these as separable issues:

> Until we can respect the personhood of the Earth, we will never have a world in which the personhood of all people is safe. (Roszack, Person/Planet, p. 317)

In Snyder's terms this means that the concerns of Gaia are those of the person, and vice-versa. Given this view, his range of spiritual-political concerns need not be contradictory.

His critique of Western technological culture (briefly identified as "Amerika") is extensive. The poetry returns again and again to aspects of this such as alienation, ecological crisis, consumerism, colonialism, exploitation of all kinds, and an emphasis on "progress" at all costs. These are understood to be a function of the sort of conceptual divisions

that Berry identifies, and are shown to have as a simple and terrifying consequence the destruction of "Mother Earth", and of ourselves: "The more we conquer Nature, the weaker we get..." (EHH p. 131). Implicit in a statement like this is Snyder's central concern with "energy politics", and the paradoxically debilitating consequences of high energy consumption.

The allusion to the Earth as "Mother" is important, because it points to a crucial emphasis in Snyder's analysis -- namely, association of the "feminine" with "nature." According to this, Western civilisation is described as "patriarchal" and "technological" in that its culture is defined as something antagonistic, or in opposition to nature and the feminine. In this case, one consequence of dualistic epistemology is the culture's overvaluation of (for example) the human, the masculine, the civilised, reason and the rational consciousness, the spirit, etc. In response to this, Snyder gives value and emphasis to their "contraries": nature and the non-human, the feminine, the primitive and the wilderness, feelings and the unconscious, the body and the senses. And if the corresponding notion of epiphany in this culture is (to the extent that it exists at all) that of rare transcendent "otherworldly" experiences, then Snyder would seem to emphasise immanence and descent.[1]

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1. The terms "transcendent" and "immanent" are used here as approximations, in the knowledge that, as I have indicated earlier, they tend to be misleading.

(2) TRUE COMMUNIONISM: Encountering the Goddess

> We must find psychological techniques for creating a sense of self which includes the social and natural environment.(TRW p. 101)

As I suggested above, Snyder's work in this context represents a search for images that are a counter to the patriarchal emphasis. At the same time, however, these must in some way transcend the oppositional relation which this suggests. Clearly, something non-dualistic is required -- "woman as nature" becomes the key image, and epiphany the means of access to the sacramental system she embodies.

Snyder's description of epiphany as "that moment when you become one with something" is echoed in his interview with Geneson where he claims that authentic poetry flows from "a delicate entrance into the life of another object" (TRW p. 84). As this, together with his critique of "civilisation", suggests, a sacramental experience of the world has to do with a particular sort of encounter with "those things we consider to be outside ourselves." This is part of what he calls "the real work" -- that is (according to one definition) the "exploration of the outer limits of the mind" -- and implies a dissolution of the rigid boundaries between mind and nature, self and other, in an act of perception.

In the poetry I have studied, the epiphany or "becoming one" of self and other appears in many forms. RW, for example, centers on the sexual union of a man and a woman. This is simultaneously an image of the intrapsychic union of SHIVA and SHAKTI, "conscious" and "unconscious", the androgynous union with one's own "other," and an epiphany of mind and object in an act of perception. A similar interaction is indicated in the

relation of human and non-human (and those aspects of ourselves with which the non-human is associated -- body, emotions, etc.) which recurs throughout his work. Thus from the reciprocity that activities like hunting and eating are shown to involve, Snyder articulates firstly a celebration of "wilderness," and secondly a sense of "animals as persons" that is explicitly different from the status they are generally allowed in civilised culture. In TI the self is experienced as a participant in the family, which is extended in AH to include the local community. This relation in turn suggests a participation in Gaia's "Great Family" of beings. From this emerges an emphasis on "a sense of place," of the "40 000 year time scale," and a sense of one's own continuity with ancient ("primitive") tradition. The corresponding redefinition of "culture" rejects its "civilised" opposition to "nature," and proposes that culture is properly inclusive of all aspects of shared experience in a human community.

This may be illustrated, tentatively, as follows, recalling and contrasting with Wilden's table of oppositional relations (my Chapter One). The dotted arrows are used as an attempt to counteract the linear, oppositional quality imposed by the form:

A PARTICIPATORY UNIVERSE

"SELF"		"OTHER"
Man	<----->	Woman
Conscious	<----->	Unconscious
Mind	<----->	Object
Mind	<----->	Body, emotions
Human	<----->	Non-human: Wilderness, animals
Self	<----->	Family, Community
Self	<----->	The Great Family: a sense of place
Civilisation	<----->	The 40 000 year time scale: history, tradition
Culture	<----->	Nature[2]

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2. The list is framed by the pairs "Man - Woman" and "Culture - Nature", the parallel terms within which much of the work may be read.

In each case the experience of sacramental interpenetration or epiphany, as it appears in the poetry, involves a healing disruption of the division of self and other, organism and environment. This epiphany is "healing" in that it implies a recognition of the self's participation in a larger system: "No self realisation without the Whole Self, and the whole self is the whole thing" (TOW p. 64). Snyder's work as shaman-poet involves making this healing of division explicit. In each case, the self is known through its interaction with the Self, mind with Mind, voice with Voice, and this develops what I have called a sense of a "participatory universe", and the metaphoric or mythic world-view. It is explicit in the account of the "jewelled net" in EHH. As a metaphor for "interbirth", primarily derived from the AVATAMSAKA SUTRA, the concept is developed in the later work with terms such as "VAK", "Wave", "Web", "Loops", "Nets," and "Gaia" representing the sense of correspondence and interdependence it implies.

Perhaps Snyder's most revealing name for an experience of interdependence is "True Communionism". The sacrament of Communion is clearly central to Christian ritual and doctrine. Its appearance here indicates a characteristic transvaluation of both religious and political terminology ("Communion" and "Communism") which acknowledges the political meaning of "spiritual" solutions, and vice-versa. This involves, firstly, an attempt to return our expectations of what the sacramental involves to the literal bread and wine of the most ordinary (and "material") experience. Secondly, in the poem "Revolution in the Revolution in the Revolution" (RW p. 49), it is clear that "True Communionism" also implies an extension of the definition of the political: to include one's response to "non-human" realms (animals, trees, water, air grasses), since liberation depends on the revolutionary recognition of one's community, or

communion, with these.

By contrast with the exploitative use of energy that characterises "Amerika", Snyder's sacramental view embodies a sense of the energy interdependence of all phenomena, the "shimmering food chain", an energy "within" that Snyder, with Blake, calls "eternal delight". In this, the "feminine" emerges as the primary image of the energising source of sacramental transformation: as wife (RW), mother (TI), and as goddess (AH). In one sense this represents a counter to the predominant emphasis of "civilised" culture. However, the image is also much more than a polar contrary of its patriarchal God. One finds (increasingly in the later poems) that the very elements that are used to counterbalance exploitative ideology can become suggestive of a metaperspective on the oppositional relation on which this exploitation is based. So the Goddess, represented as the embodiment of the "feminine" (and also of the symbolically related natural world), becomes in the later work a name for the Biosphere itself, "Gaia".[3] This agrees with Wilden's proposal for dealing with biosocial imperialism. According to this, in order to destroy exploitative mastery it is not sufficient to define oneself as the negative complement, or mirror image, of the master. The aim is rather to transcend the oppositional relationship in which we find ourselves in a negative identification with him (Wilden, p. 30).

Thus, although she is identified with those aspects of experience the dominant culture has tended to reject, Snyder's goddess is not merely the reverse image of patriarchy. She appears as both the ouroboric primary

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3. Similarly, Snyder's (essentially Jungian, I think) notion of the Unconscious, is augmented by the much more all encompassing Buddhist understanding of Mind; and the attention that he gives to animals gives rise to ideas about hunting that again suggest a systems-oriented view of things.

source that precedes differentiation into polar opposites, and a representation of a wisdom that has "gone beyond" these. As VAK, the "Voice through all", she is the originating Word. As Mother Gaia, she is the whole earth, the small blue-green planet, perceived as one system: "woman as the totality of what can be known":

> Sometime in the last ten years the best brains of the Occident discovered to their amazement that we live in an Environment. This discovery has been forced on us by the realisation that we are approaching the limits of something. Stewart Brand said that the photograph of the earth (taken from outer space by a satellite) that shows the whole blue orb with spirals and whorls of cloud, was a great landmark for human consciousness. We see that it has a shape, and it has limits. We are back again, now, in the position of our Mesolithic forebears ... learning how to live by the sun and the green at that spot. We once more know that we live in a system that is enclosed in a certain way; that it has its own kinds of limits, and that we are interdependent within it. (TOW, pp. 62-63)

(3)NOTHING SPECIAL: Mice and Weeds

> Mystical traditions within the great religions of civilised times have taught a doctrine of Great Effort for the achievement of Transcendence.... The archaic, the esoteric, and the primitive traditions alike all teach that beyond transcendence is Great Play, and Transformation. After the mind-breaking Void, the emptiness of a million universes appearing and disappearing ... is a loving, simple awareness of the absolute beauty and preciousness of mice and weeds. (EHH, p. 128)

It should be clear that Snyder's representation of epiphany implies a counter to the assumptions of "otherworldly" religions -- for example, delight in the body, the earth, and emphasis on "going down" rather than ascent. At the same time, many of the poems point to an order of experience "beyond transcendence." He calls this state of consciousness "Gone Beyond Wisdom," in allusion to the MAHAYANA Buddhist doctrine of SHUNYATA, emptiness. A central example is what I have called the epiphany

in work, where work and "Great Play" are not mutually exclusive, and the Goddess may be perceived in mindful attention to everyday phenomena. In this, the experience of "becoming one" tends to be, as Zen would have it, "nothing special", while at the same time involving a recognition that these things are sacred and precious.

In this context, the traditional theological distinction between "immanence" and "transcendence" tends to be misleading: Great Play "beyond transcendence" is shown to imply an easy, playful movement between points of view, and apparent boundaries (spatial and temporal) where the "self" may be located. This might involve, for example, the ability to change scale or shift perspective from attention to minute particulars (the "tiny manzanita") to the recognition of the relation between "voice" as tiny "seed syllable", and the "Voice through all" that is the Goddess VAK. Similarly, it might involve a sense of the relation of "mind" and "Mind", "wave" and "Wave", "egg" and "Egg", "wife" and "Wife", etc. In each case the first term is experienced as being simultaneously both an image of, and a participant in, the second.[4]

(4) ABOUT FORM: Metaphor, Open Forms and Syntax

The linguistic expression of alternatives to dualism is tricky and important. On the whole, form in the later poems is appropriate to both the sacramental state of mind which Snyder articulates, and the ideological position which this implies.

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4. I have suggested, tentatively, that one might call this relation "holographic", using this term metaphorically.

(i) Metaphor and Metonymy

Seeing the world "in its thusness" suggests seeing things as they are, without the distancing function of what Wallace Stevens called "the evading metaphor." For this reason, sensual experience of the phenomenal world is celebrated in the poetry, not as a metaphor for the "supersensual" (as one might find in, say, the language of traditional Christian mystics), but as a sacramental experience in itself.

The situation seems, however, to be more complex than this. Unlike what is often suggested, metaphor is clearly used in each of the collections. At the same time, though, there seem to be important instances which call for another term for the sort of relation found in the poems: "metaphor" as defined by Kittay and Lehrer seems here to belong to the sort of dualisitic thinking that the poetry rejects, since the implication is that "donor" and "recipient" are separable domains. In addition to this, "metaphor" in the sense of Jakobsonian patterning is an important feature of both individual poems, and the ordering of whole collections. The function of this seems to be, firstly, to represent a "mythic" consciousness of history and the present. Secondly, metaphoric patterning works to signify the participation of the poetic discourse itself in the energy patterns of the biosphere, the omnipresent song of the Goddess. In this respect, the use of metaphor can be seen as part of Snyder's attempt to return poetry to its roots in song.

It has been suggested that Snyder's best poetry (not being metaphoric) is essentially metonymic. I find that, while at the level of individual poems, details may often be metonymically combined to good effect, they are almost always part of a larger metaphoric structure. This is clearly appropriate to the philosophic position the poems represent, where the

individual object or organism is understood with reference to the patterns of correspondence by which it is linked to others.

In general while both metaphor and and metonymy are crucial to Snyder's articulation of a sacramental view, their use is often more complex than tends to be recognised. The later collections use certain key metaphors that are far more interesting than abstract generalisation, and which define the context in which the poems (whether "metonymic" or "metaphoric") are to read. Similarly, a poem that is metonymically put together may work as a total metaphor, or a collection of largely metonymic poems exhibit as a whole a great deal of metaphoric patterning, by virtue of the way the poems are combined. This is wholly appropriate to the ecological or systems view that the work proposes: Snyder's metaphors point to a perception of the world and of history which is itself (in Jakobson's terms) metaphoric. Each of the key metaphors describes patterns of correspondence and interrelatedness -- the sort of "mythic" thinking that Levi-Strauss identified with the metaphoric pole, as opposed to the "metonymic" characteristics of the world-view of modern societies. For Snyder, this reassertion of the metaphoric consciousness is informed by research into the organisation of primitive cultures, by his Buddhism, his interest in Jungian theory, and rendered suitably contemporary by recent work in ecology and systems theory. Given this, he seems more appropriately desribed as a "myth-handler" than a "mythmaker": unlike the myths and metaphors of Blake or the post-romantics who "must Create a System, or be enslaved by another Man's..." [my emphasis],[5] Snyder's metaphoric system is proposed both as an imaginative construct, and the "self-informing" natural ecosystem itself. This context no longer

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5. Blake, Jerusalem, 10, in Complete Writings, p. 629.

demands a choice between either constructing imaginative universals, or being satisfied with metonymic red wheelbarrows. The poet's work is rather to alert the mind to the pattern and flow within and connecting our fragmentary experience of things (see Altieri, "Objective Image," pp. 101-114).

These observations suggest that while Jakobson's model of binary oppositions may be a useful descriptive tool, it is at times misleading. Used rigidly it must be too simplistic, since any piece of discourse will tend to contain both elements.[6]

(ii) Open Forms and Syntax

By contrast with the orientation that Snyder considers to have produced "formal poetry", the use of open forms (an alternative to the view of the poem as Kern's "isolated enclosure") is one fairly clear expression of the jewelled - net - systems view of things. This is implied in an interview in TRW in which he describes a poem as being like a knot in a continuing grain: "an intensification of the flow at a certain point that creates a turbulence of its own which then as now sends out an energy of its own, but then the flow continues again" (TRW, pp. 44-5). In agreement with the intentions of open form poetics and "ethnopoetics", many of the poems are clearly a "scoring" for a voiced performance. This is again appropriate to the understanding of poetry as song, the stress on the breath, and the resistance to rigid boundaries.

Similarly, the syntactic features that others have identified in the

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6. David Lodge hints at this · The Modes of Modern Writing: "although the metonymic text retards and resists the act of interpretation that will convert it into a total metaphor, it cannot postpone this act indefinitely..." (Lodge, p. 110).

earlier poetry remain significant in the later work. The most important is syntactic ambiguity, which suggests a reassessment of boundaries between subject and object. This is crucial to the epistemological alternatives the poems represent, as is the diminution of the subjective (lyrical) ego which the characteristic use of ellipsis suggests.

There are, however, several poems where the form is more "closed", the images generalised, and the syntax very like that of ordinary speech. While there are cases where I must agree with both Altieri's and Kern's criticism of this aspect of the later work, the problems, where they arise, do not seem as extensive as they suggest. My reading of these aspects of TI agrees largely with Molesworth's account of Snyder's experiment with the lyric form. In AH, for example, the syntax is particularly significant. Its ordinariness works to suggest the deliberate pacing of thought and action that is proposed in this collection as an appropriate expression of the "slow-paced system of systems" that is Gaia.

(5) FURTHER WORK: Problems and questions

Several further issues emerge from my study of epiphany and the sacramental, and the Buddhist - ecological - systems view by which the poetry and prose are informed. The most obvious question that I have left unanswered is: "What was it about mid-twentieth century America that contributed in producing this particular emphasis?" As I suggested in Chapter One, I am not equipped to make the historical analysis that an answer to this would require, although I consider it to be fascinating and important. In this section I will indicate briefly two other main areas

that I have not dealt with in sufficient detail: firstly, some problems inherent in Snyder's program for poetry, and secondly, some more general questions that I have raised briefly in the course of the thesis, and which might do with more attention.

(i) Problems

By contrast with the conservatism that Snyder's stress on "archaic values" and interest in spiritual transformation might seem to suggest, it should be clear that his response to the sacramental question is a radical attempt to reformulate the terms in which both spiritual and political vision are discussed. Further, as his involvement in bioregionalism, deep ecology and fourth world politics confirms, poetry is defined in this context as being only one part of the "real work": the tools of language are only some of those which humans thought to know how to use. This viewpoint is articulated in the poetry itself, with its frequent accounts of the value of shared participation in the ordinary activities in the life of a community:

> I am more interested in encouraging people settling down in a place wherever they are and working with the ordinary people. Too much talking back and forth between people who agree with each other is not healthy without actually doing something. And to do something you have to be specific to a place.... I encourage people to become part of the rural community, not a utopian or intentional community, but the real people who happened to live in a given place, and to get to know what has to be done there.[7]

This orientation means, as Altieri and others have usefully pointed out, that for the critic to concentrate merely on his treatment of epistemological and metaphysical themes and strategies is not enough (Altieri, "Process as Plenitude," p. 150). Snyder's own terms seem to

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7. Snyder, interviewed by Satish Kumar, "Thoughts from America," Resurgence, No. 98 (1983), p. 8.

demand some response to the sort of question which Folsom phrases as follows: "Is this vision practical, usable, or only a romance, a sentimental fiction?" (Folsom, p. 118). In the context of this thesis I cannot assess whether the poetry may be functional in promoting social change. However, laying personal preferences and hopes aside, I would tend to agree with Williamson's view: "It is a dark saying, but in some ways I have more hope for Snyder as a source of cultural continuity and human worth after the world has been changed against its will, than a voice persuasive enough to prevent disaster" (Williamson, "Appreciation," p. 28).

Kern and Altieri have indicated some of the formal problems implicit in the role which Snyder adopts. In addition to these one might examine several others. Firstly, what are the consequences of Snyder's use of his own life as a model for behaviour? Could this not contribute to the the sort of un-reasoned hero attachment and copying that much of the work would seek to counteract? This makes it sound cruder than the way it appears in the poems. The problem seems however almost inevitable, given that in order to present the "nothing special" epiphany in the everyday it is necessary to describe the minute detail of his own experience.

Secondly, and more importantly from an academic point of view: is there a sense in which Snyder's repeated stress on poetry as voiced and even sung (and often communal) performance and his frequent public readings may be effective in any way to question and help to redefine the critical context in which the poetry is studied? In other words, both form and content seek to reassess the notion of the separable, "privatised" individual, and consequently to redefine both the poetic form, and the understanding of the poet with which this has been associated. Given this, it would seem that critical assumptions and methods should find a

way of discussing the poetry that is appropriate to this development. I am not clear about what this would involve (apart from, perhaps, the study of taped performances), but it seems to be worth some attention. The Appendix which follows this chapter is a tentative example of how one might take seriously the idea of the poem as a "scoring."

Thirdly, the eclectic, cosmopolitan synthesis which the poetry proposes presupposes a range of possible choices that is simply not available to most people, and which is, in Snyder's case, ironically made possible by the very civilisation which it rejects. Molesworth makes a similar point in suggesting that "his vision is made possible by the very conditions it criticises" (Molesworth, Vision, p. 9).

Snyder's eclectic use of different traditions produces another sort of problem. While in many cases it is possible to read and make good sense of the poetry without knowledge of the philosophical views by which it is informed, critical discussion seems to require an unusually well-informed reader. In studying the poetry, I have sometimes been confused by what seems like the harnessing together of subtly incompatible views. This is particularly evident in RW, the most densely allusive of the volumes studied, where the different names used to refer to the Goddess are confusing, if not contradictory. For example, it should be clear that VAK, or SARASVATI, is central in the collection. This is made explicit several times in the poetry, with allusions to the relation of VAK as wife ("wave ... wyf") to BRAHMA. This is a reference to Hindu TANTRA, according to which the world is created out of this union: VAK and BRAHMA, SHAKTI and SIVA. For Buddhism, however, this creation is precisely the creation of the illusory MAYA, which it is the function of PRAJNA, also a goddess, to cut through. In a letter to me, Snyder responds to a question about this confusion with the cryptic comment that "Illusion and wisdom are one

in the territory of this mystery..." (Letter 3/1/84). The statement is an example of the sort of consciousness which unapologetically asserts that "contradictions don't bother me" (TRW p. 37). This point of view (a clear attempt to subvert an either-or response) is peculiarly difficult to confront adequately in the terms of an academic thesis, with its basis in logical discourse. For this reason, while remaining conscious of the essential paradox in the form of my undertaking, I have not dwelt on this issue.

(ii) Further questions

A closer examination of Snyder's oriental sources than I have given here could lead to further work. Firstly, for example, one might make a study which draws an explicit comparison between Romantic models and Snyder's Buddhist and other sources, thereby making clear the similarities and differences of their epistemological assumptions and formal practice. Such work might include discussion of the American subcultural movements in the light of Romantic models. Secondly, a similar project could examine Snyder's debt to Jung's theories (in particular his ideas about androgyny and the unconscious), and the extent to which these are compatible with Buddhist theory and practice.

While I have considered the significance of "woman as nature" with respect to the sacramental question in the later poetry, further work might study the development of this in Snyder's work as a whole. This could take the form of a fairly detailed comparison of his analysis and celebration of "marginalised" beings with that of current eco-feminist models. One might even imagine an "Animalist" literary criticism.

Finally, with respect to Snyder's use of form, one might examine the implications, firstly, of the relation between metaphor and metonymy in

the poetry studied; and secondly, of those cases in the poetry where the term "metaphor" is not quite appropriate for the semantic transfer that is taking place.

(6) CONCLUSION: To See the World in its Thusness

> To see the world for now in its thusness is finally all we want, all we need.

At the beginning of this thesis I indicated that my title was at once a statement of my question about the sacramental, and a pointer to where its conclusion may be found. I hope my reasons for this are now clear. In the poetry I have studied, what Snyder calls "real seeing" points to what he calls a "wisdom that has gone beyond". This involves seeing the world as it is, without evasion or sentimentality, and so recognising the preciousness of the most ordinary phenomena. It requires, firstly, a long hard look at the "Facts" of our situation, and the dualistic conceptual divisions by which these are informed. Secondly, "real seeing" implies a recognition that these divisions are not absolute. This allows the possibility of a vision of the world as one earth, one system, within which opposing forces (and most significantly the human perceiver herself) are ultimately contained. This vision is potentially radical in that it is the basis for personal and social transformation.

Such an orientation in Snyder's terms means seeing and hearing the Voice of Gaia -- the Goddess who is a metaphor both for the whole biosphere, and for a way of seeing that has "gone beyond" dualistic categories. In terms of Snyder's response to the sacramental question,

"To see the world in its thusness" must be all we need, since it means recognising the Goddess, Gaia, and our own necessary participation in her networking energies.

Mnemosyne, they named her, the
Mother with the whispering
feathered wings. Memory,
the great speckled bird who broods over the
nest of souls, and her egg,
the dream in which all things are living,
I return to, leaving my self.

I am beside myself with this
thought of the One in the World Egg,
enclosed, in a shell of murmurings,
rimed round
sound-chambered child.[8]

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8. Robert Duncan, "Tribal Memories: Passages 1", quoted in Nor Hall, p. 52.

APPENDIX A

SILENCE AND SOUND: A SCORING

This section offers a simple illustration of the poems "Wave" and "Regarding Wave". My purpose is to give visual confirmation for my reading of the poems in the body of the thesis and to draw attention to their effect as oral material by presenting them as what Snyder calls a "scoring" of silence and sound (TRW p. 31).

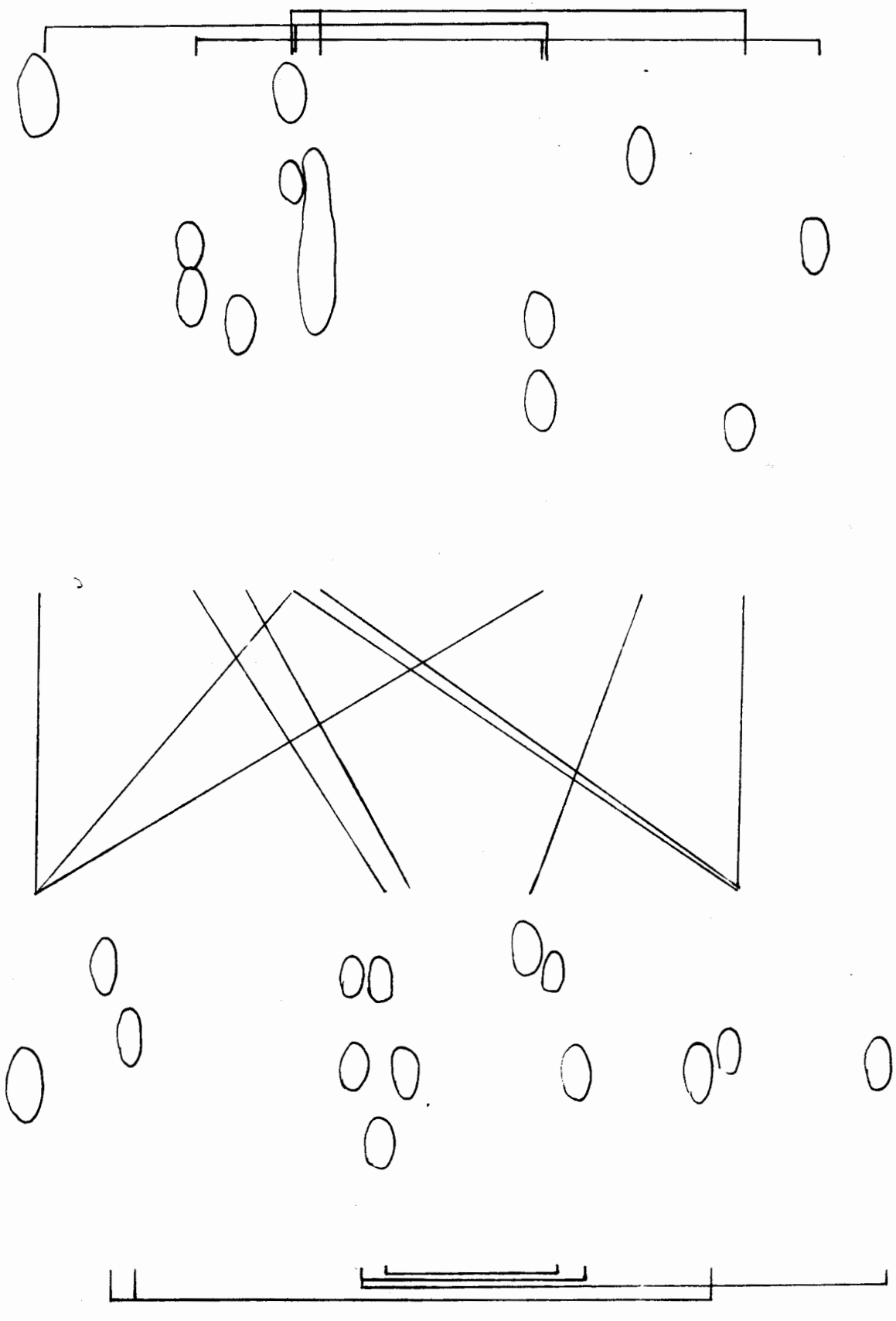
As my commentary in Chapter Two indicates, the poems exhibit a high degree of metaphoric patterning, parallelism and repetition, the function being to reproduce the poem's subject in the form. In "Wave" the poem's structural patterning suggests the "dancing grain" of wave-patterned phenomena, within which the mind of the poet participates; in "Regarding Wave" it suggests the omnipresence of Voice or VAK. For similar reasons, the collection as a whole is a highly metaphoric document, with sounds and ideas repeated and developed across several poems, as evidence of the AVATAMSAKA consciousness with which RW is concerned. This structure is particularly clear in the relation of "Wave" and "Regarding Wave".

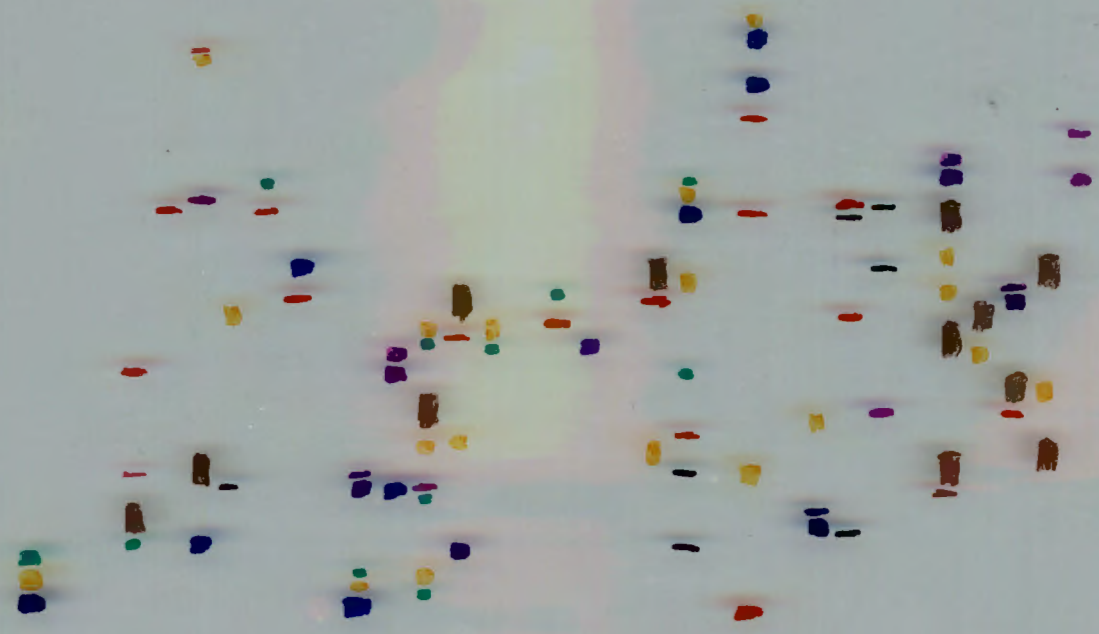
The visual reading is presented by means of three successive transparencies:

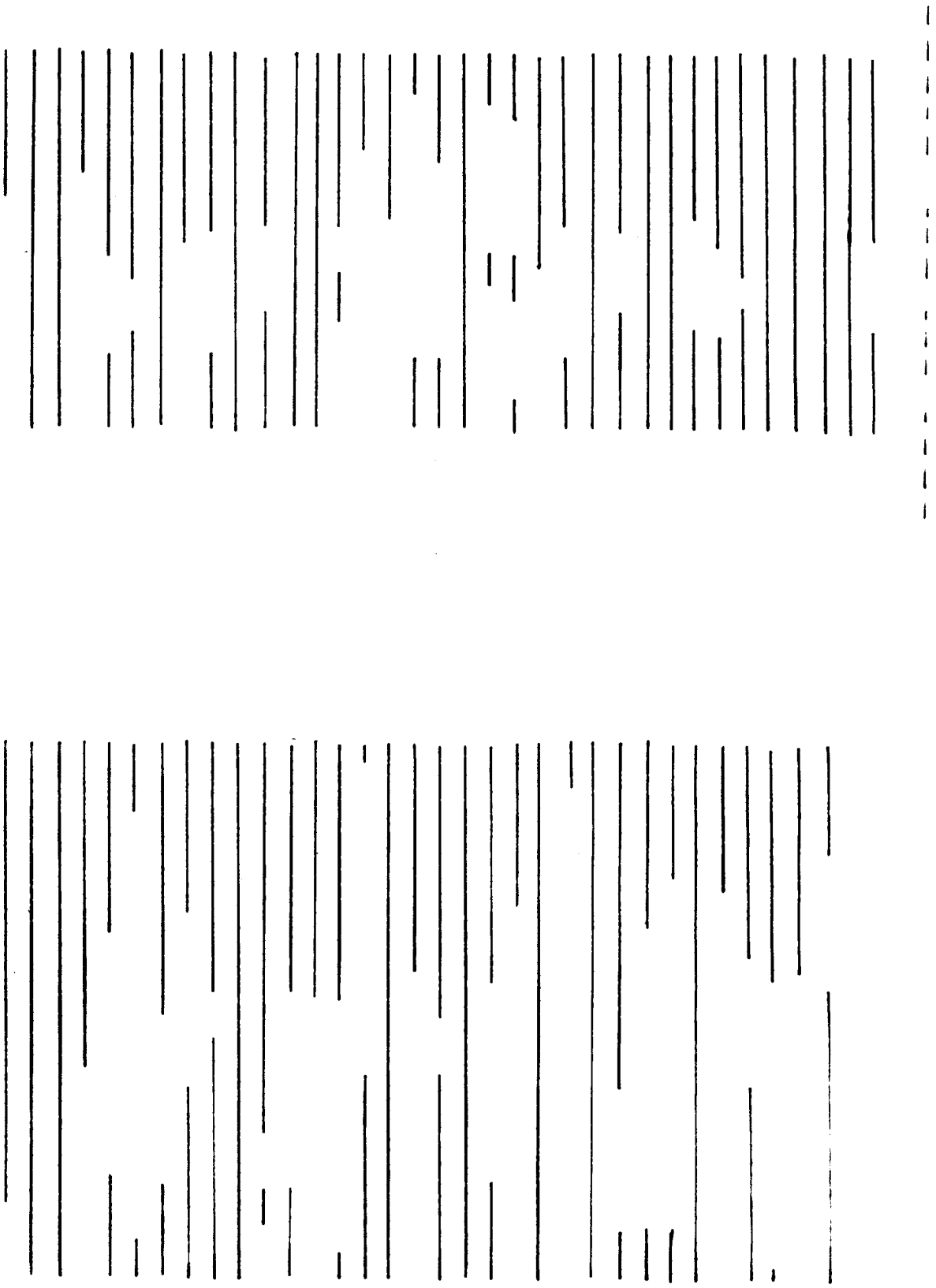
(1) The first sheet draws attention to the spaces between the words which would be indicated as rests in a musical score.

(2) The second sheet indicates in colour the syllables that are repeated often.

(3) The third sheet rings complete words that are repeated. The vertical lines connect those which are repeated within the same poem, and the horizontal/diagonal lines connect those which occur in both poems.







WAVE

Grooving clam shell,
streakt through marble,
sweeping down ponderosa pine bark-scale
rip-cut tree grain
sand-dunes, lava
flow

Wave wife.
woman—wyfman—
"veiled; vibrating; vague"
sawtooth ranges pulsing;
veins on the back of the hand.

Forkt out: Birdsfoot-alluvium
wash

great dunes rolling
Each inch rippld, every grain a wave.

Leaning against sand cornices til they blow away

—wind, shake
stiff thorns of cholla, ocotillo
sometimes I get stuck in thickets—

Ah, trembling spreading radiating wyf
racing zebra
catch me and fling me wide
To the dancing grain of things
of my mind!

REGARDING WAVE

The voice of the Dharma
the voice
now

A shimmering bell
through all.

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

Dark hollows; peaks of light.
wind stirs the cool side
Each leaf living.
All the hills.

The Voice
is a wife
to

him still.

ōm ah hūṃ

CHRONOLOGY

This account by Snyder was included in a letter to me:

> I was born in San Francisco in 1930. My parents soon returned to Washington state and started a small dairy farm north of Seattle. My lifelong sense of the world of natural systems dates from this proximity to Puget Sound, the Cascade Mountains, and from rural responsibilities.
>
> At Reed College in Portland I resolved my interests in creative writing and primitive cultures by doing an inter-departmental major in anthropology and literature. This became a focus on mythology and oral literature which took me to Indiana University. Deeply felt questions about culture:: nature and who is the "knower" however led me to an interest in Ch'an Buddhism. I moved back to the west coast to study oriental languages at Berkeley. From there I went to a long residency in Japan, almost ten years. During much of that time I was a disciple of Oda Sesson Roshi, the Chief Abbot of the Daitoku-ji temple complex in Kyoto. Poetry became part of my life and work during these years.
>
> In the late sixties, while still in Japan, I also became a part of a burgeoning Japanese cultural and pro-environmental movement that took me into the heart of Tokyo intellectual life and also to remote island villages. During that time I met and married my wife, the former Masa UEHARA.
>
> In 1969, with our first son, we came to the United States. From 1970 until the present we have been living in the Sierra Nevada of northern California, developing a mountain farmstead and working with the new and old settlers of the region. There is a sangha called "Ring of Bone Zendo" here. I have also travelled back to Japan, to Australia, Europe, and several times both to Alaska and Hawaii. My interest in promoting peace, ecology, and social justice takes the form of working and teaching on the specifics of bioregionalism, deep ecology, and fourth world politics, as well as poetics and Buddhist meditation (Letter 20/8/84).

1930: Born on 8 May in San Francisco, California.[1]
1932: The family moves to a farm in Washington, near Seattle.
1942: The family moves to Portland, Oregon.
1943: Enters high school in Portland.
Works three Summers at a camp on Spirit Lake, Washington.
1947: Enrolls at Reed College, Portland.
1950: Publishes first poems in campus magazines.
Marries Alison Gass.
Works Summer for Park Service on archaeological site.
1951: Completes bachelor thesis, He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village: The Dimensions of a Haida Myth, and graduates from Reed College with a B.A. in anthropology and literature.
1952: Spends one semester in graduate program at Indiana University.
Returns to San Francisco.
Divorced from Alison Gass.
Works as lookout on Crater Mountain.
1953: Begins studying Oriental languages at University of California, Berkeley (1953-1956).
Works as lookout on Sourdough Mountain.
1954: Works as choker for the Warm Springs Lumber Company.
1955: Works on trail crew at Yosemite National Park.
Meets Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac.
Six Gallery reading, 13 October, where Ginsberg reads Howl.
1956: Shares Mill Valley cabin with Kerouac.
Leaves for Japan, on First Zen Institute of America Scholarship.
1957: Leaves Japan, and works eight months as a wiper on the tanker, "Sapper Creek."
1959: Riprap published.
Returns to Japan.
1960: Myths & Texts published.
Marries Joanne Kyger.
1962: Travels for four months in India with Joanne Kyger, Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky.
1964: Returns to the United States to teach English for a term at the University of California, Berkeley.
1965: Riprap, & Cold Mountain Poems, and Six Sections from Mountains and Rivers Without End published.
Divorced from Joanne Kyger.
Awarded Bollingen Grant, 1966-1967.
Returns to Japan.
1966: A Range of Poems published.
Awarded a National Institute of Arts and Letters Poetry Award.
Returns to America and gives readings on college campuses.

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1. The information in this section is largely derived from Steuding, Gary Snyder, and McLeod, "Gary Snyder".

1967: Awarded Frank O'Hara Prize.
Participates, with Ginsberg, in the Great Human Be-In, in Golden Gate Park.
Returns to Japan to the Banyan Ashram, Suwa-No-Se island.
Marries Masa Uehara.

1968: The Back Country published.
Their first son, Kai, is born.
Awarded Levinson Prize and Guggenheim Fellowship.
Returns to the United States (December).

1969: Earth House Hold published.
Reagrding Wave published in limited edition.
Their second son, Gen, is born.

1970: Regarding Wave published in expanded edition, and Six Sections from Mountains and Rivers Without end Plus one published.

1971: Builds home, Kitkitdizze, in the Sierra Nevada.
Delivers paper, "The Wilderness" at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara.

1972: Participates in United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm.

1973: The Fudo Trilogy (containing three poems now collected elsewhere) published in limited edition.

1974: Turtle Island published.

1974: Appointed to the California Arts Council in co-operation with Governor Jerry Brown. First chairman of the Council.

1975: Awarded Pulitzer Prize for Turtle Island.

1977: The Old Ways published.

1979: Songs for Gaia and He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village: The Dimensions of a Haida Myth published.

1980: The Real Work: Interviews and Talks 1964-1979 published.
Final year on the California Arts Council.

1983: Axe Handles and Passage Through India published.
Delivers E. F. Schumacher Lecture in England.

GLOSSARY

This glossary includes the foreign terms that are capitalised in my text, or italicised in quotations from other writers, as well as some others that seem helpful. Definitions are necessarily brief and simplified, their function being to outline the sense in which these terms have been used in the thesis. For further reference consult my sources, listed in the Bibliography.

AVATAMSAKA SUTRA — An important Buddhist sutra, known in China as the HUA-YEN sutra and in Japan as the KEGON-KYO. It expresses the doctrine that each form is unique and precious, and that this uniqueness arises from the fact that it exists in relation to every other form. Central to this doctrine is the metaphorical perception of the universe as a network of jewels, each of which reflects all the others. Snyder's recurrent metaphor of the "jewelled net" of interdependence is an expression of the "spiritual ecology" which the sutra proposes. In a letter, he descibes this network as "a metaphor for mutual embracing, mutual interpenetration, complete interconnectedness, and simultaneous maintenance of unique individual existence" (Letter 20/8/84).

BIJA — Seed or life-germ, particularly with reference to mystical sound: hence "seed syllable", and BIJA-MANTRA. In Sanskrit theory, the BIJAS are understood to be the primary elements of language. See MANTRA.

BODHISATTVA — One whose essence is wisdom (BODHI -- illumination, wisdom). According to MAHAYANA doctrine, a BODHISATTVA is one who renounces NIRVANA until all sentient beings have likewise attained it. See M&T p. 83.

BRAHMA — Male Hindu creator deity, present in the TRIMURTI, or three forms: BRAHMA the creator, VISHNU the preserver, and SHIVA the destroyer. See VAK.

BRAHMAN — In Vedantic philosophy, name of the Absolute. BRAHMAN is the cause of the universe, the all-pervading spirit, undifferentiated and non-dual, both immanent and transcendent.

BUDDHA — The awakened, or the illuminated one.

CHAKRA — Literally a wheel or disc. The term refers to an energy center in the "subtle" body. There are usually said to be six or seven main CHAKRAS. These are represented as a succession of lotuses: from the four-petalled lotus at the base of the spinal column, to the thousand-petalled lotus at the top of the head. See KUNDALINI.

CH'AN — see ZEN.

DHARMA — The term has many shades of meaning, including: the Way, the path to enlightenment, the Buddhist canon, the Law, duty, order.

GAIA — In Greek mythology, the primal Earth goddess, great mother of the gods and the human race. Historically, her worship preceded that of the Olympian pantheon. Recently the name GAIA has been adopted by scientists James Lovelock and Sidney Epton in their "Gaia Hypothesis". According to this, the planet is understood to function like a single organism or cybernetic system. Others, like Snyder and members of the women's spirituality movement have also begun using the name.

INDRA — In Hindu cosmology, the Lord of Heaven. INDRA is a thunder deity, and so parallels Zeus and Thor.

KADO — In Zen, one of the mystic Ways (DO): the Way of Poetry.

KALI — A Hindu form of the Great Goddess, usually represented as a terrible, devouring mother.

KALI-YUGA — The present cyclic period, said to be characterised by lack of spirituality, strife, degeneration and suffering. It is the last in the cycle of four YUGAS. These are the SATYA-YUGA, the TRETA-YUGA, the DVAPARA-YUGA, and the KALI-YUGA. They total a MAHA-YUGA, or 4 320 000 years.

KOAN — A short (and often paradoxical or "illogical") anecdote, question, or statement, used as a way of opeing the mind to the truth one's Original Nature. Together with ZAZEN, or sitting meditation, the KOAN exercise is central to Zen as it is now practised.

KUNDALINI — A store of residual energy, usually represented as a coiled she-serpent, sleeping at the base of the spine. When awakened through yogic practice the feminine energy (SHAKTI) ascends through the subtle body and the CHAKRAS, to join with masculine consciousness (SHIVA) in the thousand-petalled lotus at the top of the head.

LI — In Taoism, the organic order or pattern that is manifested in different natural phenomena.

MAHAYANA — Literally, the "Great Vehicle". The North Indian Buddhist school and its descendents, including Tibetan Buddhism, and Chinese and Japanese Buddhisms.

MAITHUNA — In Tantric practice, ritualised sexual union in which the human couple is said to become at one with their divine counterparts.

MANTRA — Sound, incantation, spell, or syllable, sacred thought or prayer, thought by some to be inherently magical (see TRW p. 183).

MAYA — Illusion: literally, that which can be measured. It is also the name of the goddess who weaves the veil of MAYA, as the perceived phenomenal world, obscuring the reality of BRAHMAN. Thus, MAYA is the vision of the world informed by the individual's attempt to preserve an illusory selfhood.

NIRVANA — Necessarily indefinable, literally "no wind": awakening into a state of absolute consciousness; freedom from rebirth.

PRAJNA — Discriminating wisdom. In MAHAYANA Buddhism, PRAJNA is depicted as a goddess who cuts through the veil of MAYA to reveal things as they are.

PRAJNAPARAMITA HRIDAYA SUTRA — Also known as the Heart Sutra. The text is recited daily in Zen monasteries. It contains a central teaching about form and emptiness (SHUNYATA): "form is emptiness, emptiness is form; form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form..."(quoted in Trungpa, p. 188).

PRETA LOKA — In MAHAYANA Buddhism, the Hungry Ghost Realm, symbolising a state of consciousness that is obsessed with insatiable craving.

RAGA — In Indian music, a set pattern of ascending and descending notes, roughly approximating the Western idea of a "scale."

RINZAI — See ZEN.

SADHANA — Religious or spiritual practice or discipline; a path towards liberation.

SATORI — Zen term for sudden awakening.

SHABDA — Mystical sound, universal substrate, Logos. See VAK.

SHAKTI — Power, feminine energy. SHAKTI is also the active or kinetic female energy of a deity -- in particular, she is the consort of SHIVA, their union representing the transcendence of opposites.

SARASVATI — Hindu goddess of poetry, music and learning. See VAK.

SHIVA — Consciousness. As a Hindu male deity, associated with consciousness, and the energy of destruction and creativity, SHIVA is present in the TRIMURTI (see BRAHMA), and is worshipped under many forms. In TRW, Snyder compares the nature mysticism of Shaivism with that of "Satan and his animal worshippers" (TRW p. 176).

SHUNYATA — Emptiness, voidness. In Buddhism, SHUNYATA refers to that orientation towards the world that has "gone beyond" wisdom, or PRAJNA, and can perceive the world as it is, in its "thusness".

TALA — A rhythm cycle in Indian music.

TANTRA — Used here with respect to Buddhist Tantrism. TANTRA is a philosophic and yogic path emphasising the divine Mother, the subtle body, and the creative energy of SHAKTI. See VAJRAYANA.

TAO — "The Tao which can be spoken is not the eternal Tao." - Lao-tze.

TARA — Mother goddess, her name meaning "star": hence "Joy of Starlight" in RW p. 79. The worship of TARA, in all her many forms, is the most widespread of Tibetan Buddhist cults.

UNSUI — Term for a Zen monk. The name means literally "cloud, water", and is derived from a line of a Chinese poem: "To drift like clouds and flow like water." (EHH p. 44)

VAJRA — Literally, a diamond. The VAJRA is also a thunderbolt (INDRA's weapon), and an important ritual instrument in VAJRAYANA practice. It symbolises energy, indestructibility, and clarity, and so an adamantine state of consciousness.

VAJRAYANA — The "Diamond Vehicle" of Buddhism. A tantric magical school within MAHAYANA (see TRW p. 176 and p. 179).

VAK — Voice, speech, the Word or creative Logos, or SHABDA. VAK, also known as SARASVATI, is the Sanskrit goddess of speech, music, poetry, language and intelligence. She is mother of the Vedas, and wife to BRAHMA (see EHH pp. 124-5).

YANG — In Taoism, the terms YANG and YIN denote the male and female, positive and negative, creative and receptive principles, in whose dynamic interaction the world is created and sustained. Their relation suggests dialectic interdependence rather than polar opposition.

YIN — see YANG.

ZEN — Buddhist sect developed in China (Chinese CH'AN) and Japan: a way of liberation in which personal experience is given greater value than is doctrinal authority. ZAZEN (sitting meditation) and the KOAN exercise are central to the practice of ZEN. See TRW p. 197. Snyder studied in the RINZAI school of ZEN, the other major one being the SOTO School.

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