Contents

Acknowledgments ix
A Note on Texts xi
List of Abbreviations xiii

Introduction 1

1 The Romantic Pastoral: Snyder’s Ecological Literary Inheritance 27
2 Snyder’s Twentieth-Century Eco-Romanticism 49
3 Romantic Aspiration, Romantic Doubt 69
4 Snyder’s Post-Romantic Ecological Vision: The Shaman as Poet/Prophet 89
5 The Measured Chaos of Snyder’s Ecopoetic Form 111
6 Snyder’s Experimentations with Post-Romantic Ecological Form 133
7 Mountains as Romantic Emblems of Revelation 155
8 Rivers as Romantic Emblems of Creation 183

Notes 209

Bibliography 229

Index 239
INTRODUCTION

I

Pulitzer Prize winner Gary Snyder’s poetry and poetics reflect a lifetime spent learning and practicing an attitude to experience, at once contemplative and active, shaped from the interaction of international cultures, mythologies, religions, and ideas. He is one of the foremost figures in the American ecological literary movement. Underlying his ecological writing is a study of cultural and ideological influence that reaches from East Asian religion and culture to Native American history, folklore and tradition. Snyder is always exploring what he terms interconnectedness, interdependence, and interpenetration—or in Buddhist terms: śūnyata—a concept wherein “phenomena are śūnya or unreal because no phenomenon when taken by itself is thinkable: they are all interdependent and have no separate existence of their own.”

Snyder’s long established and generally received identity as an American Buddhist ecological poet who makes his home in the mountains of northern California must seem at odds with a discussion of the urban Atlantic. However, I intend in my study to make a case for the consideration of Snyder as a poet who is equally, if more subtly, concerned with the literary and cultural traditions of Western culture as they were disseminated across the Atlantic to find a renewed incarnation in the “New World.”

In a discussion of Snyder’s poetry, Wendell Berry summarizes his work as an articulation of the idea that “we are living in a world that is still and always being made; human history is not being made ‘on’ or ‘in’ the world, but is involved by intricate patterns of influence and causation in the continuous making of the world.” Snyder’s poetic works are indeed expressions of the “intricate patterns of influence and causation” that he sees in the world; they are also an attempt to involve literature in “the continuous making of the world.” Snyder’s poetry deals with influence and interconnection, and this monograph centers itself upon a study of the complexity, responsibility, and
intelligence of Snyder’s ecological vision. Snyder’s poetry is a study of the way in which Snyder draws upon transatlantic Eco-Romantic literary roots in order to create a revised and renewed ecological poetic tradition. Snyder incorporates in his poetry the Romantic imagination in order to reconceive the relationship of human beings to their environment, whether urban or natural or both, and to reimagine the way in which human beings negotiate the contradictory pull between these seemingly opposing environments.

II

Gary Snyder is a largely understudied poet whose work has attracted surprisingly few academic studies relative to the time span and breadth of his literary career and his acknowledged poetic achievements. Such achievements include a Guggenheim Fellowship (1968), the Pulitzer Prize for poetry (1975), the Bollingen Prize for poetry (1997), and the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize (2008), among others. Previous studies of Snyder’s work tend to focus largely on three elements: first, his overtly ecological themes and subject matter; second, the East Asian and Buddhist element of his ideas and philosophies; and third, biographical sketches of his life with accompanying guidelines for reading and understanding his sometimes-difficult, unconventional brand of poetics.

Since the budding and flourishing of ecocriticism, Snyder’s poems and essays have become a staple for ecological collections and anthologies. His interest in the natural world and the interrelation between humans and nature and the conflict between the urban and the natural predates and acts in part as a catalyst for the modern-day ecological movement, which has been increasing in momentum since the early 1960s. Authors such as Laurence Coupe, Jonathan Bate, Terry Gifford, Robert Kern, and others, have examined Snyder’s work through an ecocritical lens. There is no doubt that Snyder’s poetry and philosophies lend themselves to an ecocritical reading, and have even contributed to and shaped the field of ecocriticism. Although this work also expresses an interest in Snyder’s ecological nature-writing, it does so with an eye to examine the way in which Snyder negotiates the discrepancies between an ecologically aware desire for communion with the natural world, and the tendency within human nature to separate humanity from the natural world by building cities and civilizations that contradict the ecologically healthy idea of a community. I suggest that Snyder’s poetic tools for negotiation and perspective come from a Romantic ecological inheritance. Thus I
Introduction

seek to compare and analyze Snyder’s work in the light of previous Romantic ecological poetic endeavors. Rather than apply the moral and philosophical aims of an ecocritical reading, which I argue can often detract from the poetry itself, I seek to locate currents within Eco-Romantic poetry and poetics that have endured and developed through a series of poetic inheritances and influencings in such a way that they are reincarnated in Snyder’s work.

Snyder’s explicitly expressed interest in and practice of Buddhism has also been a subject of study for critics of poetry and ideas. Although the Buddhist element is integral to Snyder studies, this book incorporates a discussion of such philosophies and ideas in order to facilitate a further understanding of Snyder’s works, and not to trace an already explicit and openly acknowledged Buddhist influence. When necessary, I have drawn upon informational sources, such as the Encyclopedia of Buddhism, to supplement readings of Snyder’s poetry. By incorporating particulars from such informational sources, my intention is not merely to supply information, but to further facilitate an evaluation of Snyder’s poetry that connects the East Asian philosophical and religious elements of Snyder’s poetics to the Romantic tradition. This connection is specifically addressed in chapter 3, where I trace a link between Romantic epiphany, the Modernist imagist moment, and the haiku-like brevity of Snyder’s poetic form.

Critics such as Bob Steuding, Anthony Hunt, and Patrick D. Murphy have published monographs that incorporate biographical and historical supplementary information in order to elucidate Snyder’s poetry. These critics’ works have served as sources for my research. For my discussions of Snyder’s Mountains and Rivers Without End, I have occasionally drawn, in particular, from Anthony Hunt’s extensive groundwork (in Genesis, Structure and Meaning in Gary Snyder’s Mountains and Rivers Without End, 2004) on biographical and Buddhist explanations that coincide with Snyder’s long poem. Nevertheless, my research differs greatly from these critics in that I seek to trace and elucidate a Romantic connection that, although mentioned and acknowledged by Hunt, Murphy, and others, is not examined in detail.

Snyder is often the subject of sociological and political-based criticism, as is the case in the works of Tim Dean and Charles Molesworth. Molesworth’s Gary Snyder’s Vision: Poetry and the Real Work (1983) discusses Snyder’s work as “involv[ing] the establishment of an alternative vision, especially a vision of the role of the poet,” which Molesworth suggests is that of the “Western lyric poet”
who must “[maintain] an eccentric relation to dominant social values” and mediate between the poet as hermit and the poet as social entity.\textsuperscript{8} Molesworth makes occasional mention of Snyder’s Romantic inheritance in his examination of Snyder’s dialectical view of the poet; nevertheless, his intention in \textit{Gary Snyder’s Vision} is primarily to discuss the social and political implications of Snyder’s vision of the role of the poet. Molesworth’s discussion of the idea that the role of the poet is a dual and often-contradictory position stems in part from Charles Altieri’s earlier writings on the subject. However, where Molesworth finds Altieri’s observations supplementary, I find them integral. Thus, although I, like Molesworth, am interested in Snyder’s view of the role of the poet, my study focuses on the implications for Eco-Romantic connections and the ways in which Snyder integrates Shelley’s notion of the poet as “unacknowledged legislator” who serves to mediate between the mind and the external world, both urban and natural.

Charles Altieri’s discussions of Snyder’s poetics often address the poet’s attempt at mediation between the role of the poet as spokesperson for humanity and as visionary augur whose poetic utterances are often unintelligible or inaccessible to the uninitiated.\textsuperscript{9} His connections between Snyder and the Romantics, particularly Wordsworth, have been instrumental in shaping my own notions of Snyder’s own self-consciousness as a poet. My chapters on the Eco-Romantic poet/prophet are indebted to Altieri’s earlier works on Snyder and, in part, spring from and respond to Altieri’s suggestions concerning Snyder’s successes as a poet of auguries and occasional failures as a poet of the community. Nevertheless, my work differs from Altieri’s writings on Snyder. Where Altieri finds that Snyder “rarely expresses doubt or fear,”\textsuperscript{10} I find that Snyder’s self-doubt, self-consciousness, and even fear are embodied (albeit slightly hidden) in the poet’s dynamic conflict, a shifting hierarchy, between a primacy of visionary poetics versus a primacy of prophetic poetics. Snyder’s attempt at mediation between the two is representative of the poet’s own internal dialectic. Such a striving for mediation between the competing roles of the visionary poet and the socially enriching poet echoes the Romantic tradition. It is exemplified by moments of Romantic epiphany combined with the language of the common man, examples of which are discussed at length throughout my chapters on Snyder and the Romantic poet/prophet.

In \textit{Soul Says}, Helen Vendler explains that her collection of essays focuses on poets she admires, for “there is really nothing to say about an inept poem except to enumerate its absences.”\textsuperscript{11} Vendler’s
introduction to her chapter on Snyder acknowledges his well-deserved respect as a prophet and practitioner of an ecologically minded lifestyle and politics. However, Vendler asserts that “though Snyder has earned the seriousness of his views, which he presents not only in political debates . . . but also in the example of his own frugal way of living, his moral seriousness by itself would not earn him the title of poet.”

It is this perspective—that Snyder’s work as a poet must be considered in poetic terms, and not in environmental and moral terms—which I have attempted to incorporate within my study of Snyder and Eco-Romanticism. I agree with and build my discussion of Snyder from the stance of Vendler’s assertion that his poetics must be examined apart from his ecological agenda in order to determine the success of his poetry as ecopoetry. Nevertheless, this study differs from Vendler’s in that my aim is specifically to trace Eco-Romantic connections and inheritances within Snyder’s poetic works, whereas hers is an examination of his success as a poet as independent from his success as an ecological figure.

III

The current debate concerning whether the natural and the urban landscapes should be seen as separate or interpenetrative is illustrated by Ashton Nichols, who asserts that there has been a pervasive paradigm shift, a revolutionary turn away from a fallen version of “Nature” that was static and unchanging toward a Romantic “nature” characterized by dynamic links among all living things. This shift eventually leads toward a new emphasis on connections between nature and society.

This idea of a “dynamic” relationship “between nature and society,” which lies at the heart of contemporary ecological literature and poetry, as Nichols rightly points out, has an important causative relationship with the Romantic tradition.

Snyder’s poetry is śūnya, unthinkable, itself, if considered disconnected from all possible sources of influence. I therefore argue that Snyder’s poetic oeuvre can and should be seen as interfused and interpenetrated with Romantic ideals, vision, and form. He incorporates this Romantic tradition, and more specifically, the Romantic imagination, to create an ecological approach to poetry that mediates between the urban and natural environments of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Before discussing the ways in which Snyder’s
poetry is imbued with Romantic traits, including the Romantic imagination, the term “Romantic” must first be defined and established in the sense that it is applied in this monograph. The word “Romantic” is a various and difficult appellation associated with many different, and often conflicting, meanings—as both a literary movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries identified with certain distinguishing traits, and also as an ethos that spans centuries. The distinguishing traits of Romanticism have been listed, categorized, and energetically debated by many critics through the years. In an overview of Romantic poetry, Seamus Perry traces the etymology of the word, “Romantic,” and the changing and contradictory history of the debate concerning Romanticism from the time period to which the word now refers (approximately 1785 to 1830, dates which have also been debated and questioned over the years). At the time, its use was primarily a “pejorative associate of ‘wild, extravagant, and visionary,’” which then changed to a positioning by T. S. Eliot as a reaction against Classicism and reason, and later to its qualification as antinatural by Harold Bloom.  

Wordsworth, by contrast, can be seen as a nature poet whose poetic emphasis lay in a valuing of nature as that which should interact with and inspire the imagination; thus Wordsworth and Blake together embody opposing poles of a dialectic approach to imagination and nature, which points to a more contradictory and complex understanding of the fundamental character of Romanticism. One might add that Wordsworth himself can be seen as a poet of two voices with regard to his treatment of nature. On the one hand, there is Matthew Arnold’s view of Wordsworth as essentially a healer, who brings us into contact with “The freshness of the early world”; this is a poet who “laid us as we lay at birth / On the cool flowery lap of earth” (“Memorial Verses” (1850) 57, 48–9). On the other hand, there is the view of A. C. Bradley that “the road into Wordsworth’s mind must be through his strangeness and his paradoxes, and not round them” and that this “strangeness” and these “paradoxes” are often evident in his writings about the natural world, especially at those moments when a “visionary feeling” enters, and we are aware of “the intimation of something illimitable, over-arching or breaking into the customary ‘reality.’”
Snyder is, thus, the heir of a literary movement which is itself full of “strangeness” and “paradoxes.” Perry concludes his overview of Romantic poetry with discussion of a quotation from Paul De Man:

“For what are we to believe? Is romanticism a subjective idealism, open to all the attacks of solipsism… Or is it instead a return to a certain form of naturalism after the forced abstraction of the Enlightenment…?”  
There is no right answer to the question: it depends on the version of “Romantic” you have in mind.  

Michael O’Neill suggests that Romanticism can be seen “less as an identifiable literary essence than as a complex, fraught, and fascinating bundle of differing practices and achievements.” Wordsworth’s discussion of the poet in his 1802 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* illustrates a sense of what Romanticism is and what its legacy of influence embodies. Wordsworth asks “What is a Poet?” and then answers his own question with the following assertion:

To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe.

Although the passage characterizes the role of the poet, Wordsworth’s discussion of the Romantic poet is applicable to Romanticism and Romantic poetry as a whole. For Romanticism seeks to express a “more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness” as well as “a greater knowledge of human nature.” Romanticism also seeks to “[rejoice]…in the spirit of life” that is both “in him” as well as “manifested in the goings-on of the Universe.” Ultimately, Romanticism seeks to embody and express a “comprehensive soul”—comprehensive in the sense of being all-encompassing, as well as in the sense of being able to comprehend, or understand, both “human nature” and the “Universe” in general, along with the soul of the individual and the interactions and connections that link humanity, nature, and the individual to something more “illimitable,” in Bradley’s word. William Blake expresses this idea of a “comprehensive soul” in his
Auguries of Innocence as a microcosm of the whole, or an expression of the individual, which in turn corresponds—both in similarity and in difference—to the universal. The first four lines of the poem are “comprehensive” and dynamic in their all-encompassing scope and yet minute specificity:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour (1–4)

Blake’s capacity for expressing and embracing contradiction in order to articulate comprehensive vision exemplifies the Romantic tradition, and illustrates what is at the heart of Romantic poetry: aspiration and its accompanying doubt; measured, bordered form as well as wild, formless chaos; a sense of individuality that contributes to an impassioned valuation of both a human community and an expansive natural community in which humans take part; the awareness of imperfection that lies at the heart of a striving for perfection; a celebration as well as mistrust of the human mind’s imaginative capacity that can both perceive and conceive its own potential and the potential in the external world, leading the poet to explore and seek after truths concerning the connection and interaction between the two; and a self-awareness and subjectivity that both “celebrates” and “sings” the self, as in Whitman, while also recognizing that what follows a heightened self-awareness must be a discovery and awareness of, as well as an appreciation for, “the other.”

The Romanticism I identify in Snyder’s work is a tradition that, like the path of a river, leads a long and winding trail. It is transmitted to contemporary American poetry through multiple sources, including the American Transcendental tradition and the Modernist movement. American Transcendentalism has always been seen to be an incorporation of British Romanticism as adjusted and applied to a budding American culture and society by such prominent figures as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. Their contribution to Snyder and to the general characteristics of American Romanticism is a further emphasis on self-reliance, nonconformity and a practical application of these Romantic principles to everyday life. The doubleness of Romanticism is heightened in American Transcendentalism, which brings something to British Romanticism that it did not already have. There is a boldness of claim and statement in Emerson’s Oversoul and Whitman’s capacity to be everybody. American Transcendentalism
brings an ambitiously new quality of conviction to Romanticism. This boldness of conviction is surely related to the more overtly religious aspects of the movement, often associated with Unitarianism. Rather than question religion altogether, as Shelley did, Emerson questioned religious dogma and sought a return to individual spirituality without the stifling confinement of organized religion. In the opening lines of *Nature* Emerson laments the retrospective nature of his age, and calls for a renewal of the relationship between man and God through nature:

> Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us, by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past . . . ? The sun shines to-day also . . . There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.

This desire to abandon old and stagnant traditions of the past in favor of a future in which men create their own “new thoughts,” “works and laws and worship” is characteristically American. Individualist spirituality is embraced while tradition is seen as dogmatic and stifling. Emerson’s desire is for a direct communication with God without the mediation, and therefore interference of, historical “fathers” from the now-irrelevant past.

However, the problem of evil, which is so potent in Romantic poetry, is a strong problem for American Transcendentalists. In every Transcendentalist discussion about the potential for human good, one must address the capacity for evil within human nature. Hawthorne and Melville, as well as Poe, do not shy away from addressing the potential for evil that accompanies the human capacity for good. Their explorations of twisted and darkened characters stretch Transcendentalist ideas into a more “comprehensive” estimation of the human “soul.” Paired with and in contrast to the optimism and determination of Emersonian and Thoreauvian self-reliance, Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe also pushed the boundaries of individualism. They articulate the dark side of individuality as it becomes abnormality through aspects of extreme isolation and haunting alienation. Snyder discusses this Romantic and Transcendental
doubleness as a struggle between what he calls “sane” poetry and poetry that approaches “possible madness . . . possible utter transcendence.” Throughout my study of Snyder I will explore how he incorporates the Romantic “comprehensive soul” of the poet whose self-awareness, when heightened, can lead to a connection with the external world as well as a potential separation from it. This simultaneous vision of union and separation creates in Snyder’s work an ecological poetic voice of Romantic doubleness and of Romantic aspiration and its accompanying doubt.

As an American who espouses Buddhism, Snyder exemplifies the contradiction of religious tradition and individualism. His personal pilgrimage to Kyoto, Japan to study Buddhism in the Shokoku-ji temple in 1956, and in the Daitoku-ji monastery, also in Kyoto, in 1959, contrasts with and complements his individualist approach to religious practice (GSR 612). In an interview published in The Paris Review, Snyder addresses the distinction between “following a rule” and being guided by a “precept”:

_Interviewer:_ Many are surprised to discover that you’re not a vegetarian and not a Luddite, but rather a carnivore with a Macintosh. This sets you apart from, on the one hand, many Buddhists, and, on the other, from a certain branch of the environmental movement. Any comments?

_Snyder:_ Come, come, I’m not a carnivore, I’m an omnivore . . . I am a very low-key omnivore at that, as are most of the Third World people who eat very little fish or meat, but who certainly wouldn’t spurn it . . . The key is still the first precept: “Cause least harm.” . . . Ethical behavior is not a matter of following a rule, but examining how a precept might guide one, case by case.  

Ever the individual, Snyder’s Buddhism follows an Emersonian fashion. He seeks an understanding of the “one” in relation to everything else, and thus attempts to maintain a balance and a “sanity,” which keeps him from the dangers of a darker Transcendentalist isolation. His is “a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to [himself]” in which he has studied ancient “precept[s]” and now chooses how such precepts “might guide one” (my emphasis added). Snyder, like all Romantics, recognizes and even embraces contradiction because he understands that “Ethical behavior is not a matter of following a rule,” but rather a matter of individual responsibility and understanding in which contradiction is not only necessary, but also unavoidable.
This is part of Romanticism’s many-hued legacy: it opens up religious problems for discussion and exploration. Shelley puts poetry as a rival to religion. Romanticism turns tenets of pious belief into questions. Wherever Romanticism is, religion is not far away, but it is a religion of a peculiar kind. At the heart of the frequent dislike among Romantic writers for religious doctrines is the fear of apprehensions codifying into dogmas. Romantic poetry often offers something close to a religious experience, but it is one that refuses to be codified. Otherwise a systematized set of beliefs and doctrines would stifle intuition and individual versatility, concepts at the heart of Romanticism that I explore in Snyder’s work.26

As I trace Snyder’s reworking of Romanticism into a renewed Eco-Romanticism for the twenty-first century, I make brief connections to American Transcendentalism in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. However, most of my poetic comparisons are drawn from the poetry of the British Romantics for two reasons: first, their poetry predates the American Transcendentalist movement and therefore serves as an original source of the Romantic characteristics I identify in Snyder, albeit a source that is more distant; and secondly, much, although certainly not all, of the American Transcendentalist literature tends to favor essayist prose over poetry.

There are many ways in which a movement can be influential, and apparent unlikeness often conceals a deep affinity. Influence is a conversation, and not a carbon-copy reflection or mirror-image correspondence. This is certainly the case with Snyder’s direct poetic influences—the Modernist poets—who are responsible for disseminating Romantic ideals and characteristics through what has been considered a “counter-Romantic” poetics. Where the Romanticism of Wordsworth embraces the seemingly uncultivated “language of the common man,” and is often associated with rustic innocence, the Modernism of Eliot is imbued with the urbane sophistication of the city and its accompanying disenchantments. Albert Gelpi, for example, pairs Romanticism and Modernism together as a “Janus-face” of opposing, and yet simultaneously congruent approaches to poetic experience. Therefore, if I am to assert the claim that Modernism is a disseminator of and counterpart to Romanticism, it follows that a working definition of Modernism, in the sense that it is applied to this monograph, must be established.

Albert Gelpi’s discussion of the relationship between Modernism and Romanticism is integral to my application of the terms with respect to Snyder. Gelpi identifies a distinct aspect of Romanticism
that transfers through Modernism to one of Snyder’s main poetic and philosophical ideals: the interconnection between the human and the natural, between which Snyder asserts that there is actually no distinction. Gelpi says:

This radical ideological shift [to Romanticism from the Enlightenment] elevated to primacy the individual’s intrinsic capacity to perceive and participate in the organic interrelatedness of all forms of natural life and the individual’s consequent capacity to intuit the metaphysical reality from which that natural harmony proceeds, which it manifests, and on which it depends. Assimilating gnostic Neoplatonism, German Idealism, and Oriental mysticism, the Romantic supplanted the right reason of the Renaissance and the logical reason of the Enlightenment with transcendent Reason, appropriately capitalized. Its flashes of intuitive perception superseded mere lowercase reason.  

Gelpi goes on to assert that the Romantic emphasis on “the individual’s intrinsic capacity to perceive” and thus “intuit...metaphysical reality” is a “personal and individual experience of potential correspondence” that is not only the source of Romantic “psychology,” “politics,” and “aesthetics,” but is also “the source of Romantic instability and self-doubt, and so the genesis of Modernism.” Thus, according to Gelpi, Modernism “proceeded from a sceptical, experimental, relativistic, even materialistic base to seek an absolute realization and expression which internal and external circumstances seemed to rule out.”

This “sceptical, experimental” drive to “absolute realization and expression” is seen in the poetic theories of T. S. Eliot, whose publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922 with its fragmented form and sense of alienation is often considered the epitome of high Modernism, and whose approach to literary criticism posed as a reaction against more Romantic forms. But the early poetic roots of Modernism are found in a “counter-Romanticism,” as Michael O’Neill calls it (borrowing Eliot’s own term), that is highly aware of Romanticism and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of its drives. O’Neill asserts that Eliot’s “anti-Romanticism masks a powerful affinity with Romantic poetry” and that his “overt hostility to Romanticism connects with his complex feelings about self-expression in poetry.” Eliot speaks of Baudelaire as the first “counter-Romantic” poet, writing a poetry that is not anti-Romantic, but rather builds upon a sophisticated understanding of Romanticism. O’Neill demonstrates this Romantic inheritance in a discussion of the poetry of both Baudelaire—whose poetic imagery draws greatly from the dark American Romanticism
of Poe—and Eliot when he observes that “the imagery used by Baudelaire and Eliot demonstrates and conjoins what Wordsworth in his analysis of lines from ‘Resolution and Independence’ calls ‘the conferring, the abstracting, and the modifying powers of the Imagination.’” Charles Altieri asserts that “modernist rejections of romanticism might better be seen as repudiations of Victorian versions of the romantic subject” and in Snyder’s occasional valuations of Romanticism, as will be discussed throughout this study, his direct commentary on Romantic ideas is often mediated through this Victorian interpretation of the “romantic subject.” This is not to say that Snyder misinterprets Romanticism. On the contrary, the texture of his poetry shows a profound understanding of it.

With these arguments concerning the continuities between Modernism and Romanticism in mind, the Modernism I refer to is marked by a strong element of “counter-Romanticism,” in which the Romantic emphasis on visionary imagery, such as Wordsworth’s “spots of time” and Blake’s “pulsation of the artery” (Milton, Book the First 28:62–63, 29:1–3), develops into the more distilled imagiste and Vorticist factions of the early twentieth century. It is a Modernism in which the Romantic fragment develops into an amalgamation of sometimes sparse and seemingly disjunct pieces; and it is a Modernism that is deeply involved with explorations of the self that seek otherness and an interaction with the external in order more closely to examine the internal.

Born in 1930, Snyder’s development as a young poet in the 1950s followed the rich poetic tradition of the prominent poets that emerged from the Modernist era, such as Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Wallace Stevens. As an inheritor of both the Romantic and Modernist traditions, Snyder is categorized as a postmodern poet by critics such as Tim Dean, whose Gary Snyder and the American Unconscious: Inhabiting the Ground (1991) examines Snyder’s poetics through a psychoanalytic, especially Lacanian, lens. That Snyder is in many ways postmodern (another slippery and widely debated term)—particularly if by using the word “postmodern” a critic refers to the rejection of the “high” and “low” cultural hierarchy—is easily acceptable. But Snyder’s poetic ideal certainly does not embrace the assertion of the meaninglessness and confusion of contemporary human existence often associated with the term, and his poetry generally lacks the ironizing tinge often found in postmodern literature. Additionally, Snyder has openly objected to postmodernist criticisms and deconstructions of nature and literature. In an essay entitled “Is Nature Real?” Snyder made what Laurence Coupe calls “a heartfelt
complaint” against “the slippery arguments being put forth by the high-paid intellectuals trying to knock nature and knock the people who value nature and still come out smelling smart and progressive” (GSR 387). Laurence Coupe identifies Snyder’s “high-paid intellectuals” as “literary theorists and philosophers who, having discovered the joys of deconstruction, think they are being ever so clever in declaring nature to be nothing more than a cultural construct.”

My characterization of Snyder as a post-Romantic ecopoet, then, expresses a view of Snyder as a poet coming after Romanticism and creating a reignited, reformed, and current Romanticism.

In tracing Snyder’s transatlantic, Romantic, and Modernist literary influences, I am indebted to Harold Bloom and his theory of poetic influence as outlined in his seminal *The Anxiety of Influence*, from which I draw on the prompts to thought supplied by the assertion that “criticism is the art of knowing the hidden roads that go from poem to poem.” Some of the roads between Snyder and the Romantics are less hidden. For example, Snyder’s connection to Blake is documented by Snyder himself, whose poem “IT,” from the collection *Regarding Wave* (1970), is subtitled “[Reading Blake in a cowshed during a typhoon on an island in the East China Sea].” In the poem Snyder invokes the classic Blakean image of the whirling, spiraling vortex of perception as he dramatizes the meeting of the two poets’ minds represented by the intersection of two storm fronts that lie “on the edge of a spiral / Centered five hundred miles southwest.”

Snyder uses the subtitle of the poem to give important background information, including the poet’s location: “an island in the East China Sea,” or in other words, Japan. Knowing that Snyder is in another country where he must communicate and read in a foreign language, a reader can appreciate the genuine affinity Snyder expresses for Blake—a fellow English speaker whose poetry communicates to Snyder through their “Mother Tongue.” But the connection is built upon far more than a common language. Snyder finds connection to Blake as a fellow poet whose ability is evident to Snyder in “the way the words join.” As Snyder says himself in the poem, his language “bite[s] back” at Blake’s with an innovation upon traditional poetic diction. Blake is known for his alliteration, particularly in collections such as *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, and Snyder incorporates moments of Blakean alliteration while maintaining his own poetic form and device. He repeats the letter *w*, perhaps to echo the onomatopoetic sound of the wind, in “way,” “words,” “weights,” and “warp.” Then, in the following line, he plays with the letter *w* once more with “know what.” By inserting an unusual distance, a space, between the
two words and between the repeated letter, Snyder creates a great deal of possibility, of simultaneous separation and connection between the letters, the words, and the phrases within the line.

The image of a spiralling storm introduced by Snyder in the line, “on the edge of a spiral,” recalls Blake’s discussion of the nature of infinity from *Milton, Book the First*, where the poet asserts that “The nature of Infinity is this: That every thing has its / Own Vortex” (15:21–22). Snyder’s “mind-fronts meeting” is the “Vortex,” or spiraled storm of his own mind as it meets, intersects, interpenetrates as well as clashes with, responds to, and even differs from the spiraling “Vortex” of Blake’s mind, imagination and poetry. When the forces meet, they produce “one hundred knot gusts” of energy and creation.

Snyder’s connection to Blake is also traced through his friendship with Allen Ginsberg, whose interest in and study of Blake bordered upon obsession. More subtly, and yet, on occasion, still directly, one can find connection to some of Shelley’s works and ideas in Snyder’s poems. The final lines of “IT: [Reading Blake in a cowshed…]” equate his “Cowshed” shelter from the typhoon to a “skull” which encases his mind, but whose windows are open to the influence of the Shelleyan as well as Blakean poetic storm. This final image of a “Cowshed skull” with “Its windows open” as the shed/mind “swallows and strains” “wild-slung / quivering ocean air,” which “feeds the brain” creates an unmistakable vision of “fast influencings” rendered and received (*Mont Blanc* 37) by the “Cowshed skull” human mind. The link to Shelley within the passage is also evident in the notion of a connection between the physical sensation of the storm and the mental sensation of poetic idea. This characteristically Romantic notion is seen in the physical and mental correspondence of Snyder’s “Cowshed skull,” which “swallows and strains / gulfs of wild-slung / quivering ocean air,” providing sustenance for the mind. The final lines of the poem—“breathe it; / taste it; how it / Feeds the brain”—draw upon a Shelleyan metaphor in which the poet’s mind is fed by immortal substances such as ideas represented by the immaterial air. In *Prometheus Unbound* the Fourth Spirit refers to the sleeping poet as one who “feeds on the aerial kisses / Of shapes that haunt thought’s wildernesses” (I.i.741–42). Ideas born out of Romanticism, the image suggests, provide sustenance for Snyder’s poem.

It is also worth noting that although the form of Snyder’s poem does not seem to follow a traditional pattern and meter, Snyder still incorporates moments of metrical pattern and poetic device. For
example, Snyder disguises iambic pentameter by breaking it into two lines: “gulfs of wild-slung / quivering ocean air.” In the lines: “breathe it; / taste it; / how it,” he combines repetition with slight variation by using a parallel syntactical structure in the imperative statements “breathe it; / taste it.” But Snyder employs variation while still incorporating repetition by shifting from imperative to interjection with “how it / Feeds the brain.” The repetition of the word “it” and the concentration of poetic device at the close of the poem give a connection and insight to the poem’s title, “IT,” which must seem an obscure title for the poem up to this point. At its conclusion, the poem provides the reader with the connection between the pronoun “it” and the subject it modifies. Grammatically, that subject is “gulfs of wild-slung / quivering ocean air,” whose demarcation in iambic pentameter substantiates such a conclusion. Metaphorically, the “wild-slung / quivering ocean air” is representative of Blake’s poetry, which communicates and speaks to Snyder of his cultural and linguistic roots. Also, ultimately, the “quivering ocean air” of which Snyder speaks is the Romantic wind—that “wild West Wind” (Ode to the West Wind 1), dense and wet with the moisture of the Earth’s oceans, which brings with it life and death, change and poetic inspiration: food for Snyder’s poetic and artistic thought.  

Snyder’s connection to Shelley is certainly not limited to “IT.” Anthony Hunt, for example, comments on the direct quotation of lines from Shelley’s “The Cloud” in Snyder’s “Arctic Midnight Twilight” from Mountains and Rivers Without End. Hunt asserts that the borrowed lines from Shelley—“by the midnight breezes strewn,” and “The beat of her unseen feet”—inform a greater understanding of the poem and lead the reader to identify Snyder’s “her” as Shelley’s “orbèd maiden with white fire laden, / Whom mortals call the moon” (45–46). Snyder puts the borrowed lines from Shelley’s “The Cloud” in quotation marks within “Arctic Midnight,” thus giving a clear indication of a conscious influence arising from Shelley. Hunt gives further discussion of the similarities between Snyder’s poem and Shelley’s, concluding that Snyder’s poem is “a love song sung to the moon in all its ‘splendor.’” However, greater than the similarities of syntax and language between Snyder and Shelley is the shared—and for Snyder, at least partially inherited—Eco-Romantic vision of the holistic and interdependent nature of the earth and its individual parts that come together as a great whole. Shelley’s poem personifies a cloud, and traces the movement of its processes and characteristics as it participates in the water cycle and in the natural processes of the earth. Snyder’s poem, as Hunt describes it, “refers
to the perceptible harmony of Alaskan Dall mountain sheep in their age-old habitat.” The underlying thread that connects both poets and poems is their shared theme and expression of “harmony,” or interconnection, interpenetration, and interdependence that connects the cloud to the flower or the mountain sheep to the human race.

Snyder’s connection to the inescapable influence of Wordsworth, a poet with whom Snyder is often compared due to their shared responsiveness to nature, is actually more subtle and difficult due to the fact that Snyder claimed in a 1978 interview with Ekbert Faas to find Wordsworth “tiresome,” asserting that he “really can’t read” the great Lake Poet. Snyder’s reaction to Wordsworth seems to echo his Modernist predecessors and exemplifies Altieri’s observation that the Modern poets’ rejection of Romanticism was due to a Victorian misrepresentation of the Romantic subject. The idea that one can escape a particular influence by not reading a certain influential poet is a common delusion; and Snyder’s productive inability to escape the long arm of Wordsworthian poetic influence, both in terms of Eco-Romanticism as well as in terms of poetics in general, is explored throughout this monograph. For, as Harold Bloom puts it, “Wordsworth will legislate and go on legislating for your poem, no matter how you resist or evade or even unconsciously ignore him.”

Snyder himself asserts that “Every living culture and language is the result of countless cross-fertilizations—not a ‘rise and fall’ of civilizations, but more like a flowerlike periodic absorbing—blooming—bursting and scattering of seed” (EHH 126). This “bursting and scattering of seed” in which “living culture and language” and ideas are exchanged is reminiscent of Shelley’s remarkable image in Ode to the West Wind of the dissemination of ideas and inspiration as “wingèd seeds” (7) borne upon the wind and driven as “thoughts over the universe” to “quicken a new birth” (63–64). The Romantic wind is a force of influence whose traces can be seen throughout the Modern and Postmodern tradition. It is a wind, which has transported “wingèd seeds” that have quickened the poetry of Snyder through a multitude of transatlantic “cross-fertilizations,” traced throughout this book.

IV

T. S. Eliot has said that “the work of the critic is almost wholly comprehended in the ‘complementary activities’ of comparison and analysis. The one activity implies the other; and together they provide the only way of asserting standards and of isolating a writer’s peculiar
merits.” I have sought to discuss Snyder as an ecological and post-Romantic poet through Eliot’s “complementary activities” of comparison and analysis,” which serve as my primary method of study. Through close readings and thematic discussions of Snyder alongside readings and discussions of Romantic works, I seek to establish an affinity between ideas and structures that unite Snyder’s ecopoetics to the Romantics. My approach to the concept of literary influence, as previously mentioned, is indebted to Harold Bloom’s *Anxiety of Influence*. I build a reading of Snyder that is based upon Bloom’s definition of “influence” as “a metaphor, one that implicates a matrix of relationships—imagistic, temporal, spiritual.” However, although I do not necessarily take issue with Bloom’s concluding aspects of this definition—that influence is also “psychological,” and that these “imagistic, temporal, spiritual, psychological” relationships are “all...ultimately defensive in their nature”—I focus my comparison and analysis of Snyder upon the “matrix” of “imagistic, temporal,” and “spiritual” relationships between Snyder and Romanticism. Where I have discussed Snyder in association with anxiety, it is with reference to an articulation within the poetry of a poet’s self-conscious struggle to overcome self-doubt in favor of poetic aspiration, particularly in the articulation of a connection with “the other”—an internal poetic struggle that finds its roots in Romantic poetics and which I discuss in detail in chapters 3 and 4. My discussion of anxiety therefore does not include or necessarily build upon Bloom’s sometimes Freudian idea of a poet’s anxiety as a defensive desire to assert one’s primacy and originality by deliberately misreading sources of influence in order to devalue and even disguise such influences. My use of the term *anxiety* is applied to a poet’s own valuation of his/her poetic ability rather than his/her fears concerning originality. Throughout, I read Snyder as coming after the Romantics and therefore differing from them. Poetic influence is a far more complicated issue than mere imitation; thus it could be said that this study of influence is a study of causation and interaction, or, as Snyder would say, of “flowerlike periodic absorbing—blooming—bursting and scattering of seed.” Additionally, influence can often be identified as the way in which a later poet chooses to construct his/her vision and conceptualization of, as well as interaction with and response to, an earlier poet.

Because Snyder’s poetics is also fed by an East Asian cultural, religious, and poetic tradition, I have sought, where appropriate, to trace and identify connections between this tradition and Romanticism. An integral element to Snyder’s poetics, philosophy and lifestyle, Buddhism is a system of belief and thought that assists in a greater
understanding of Snyder’s poetry. Unlike Snyder’s Transcendental and Romantic predecessors, Snyder has more openly embraced and endorsed a particular religious creed. However, Snyder still expresses skepticism and a distrust of organized religion. As previously mentioned, Romanticism often turns religious belief into questions. Snyder revisits these questions, often through a Buddhist point of view. Nevertheless, the questions that both Snyder and the Romantics address are questions that do not spring from Christianity or Buddhism exclusively. This is not to say that Snyder’s Buddhism is irrelevant to his poetry, for his poems and essays are replete with Buddhist and East Asian references, which could potentially leave a reader in the dark. My assumption has therefore been that most Western readers are less familiar with many of Snyder’s Zen Buddhist and East Asian references and allusions, and I have thus given supplementary discussions and definitions as is needed for an understanding of the dynamic between Snyder’s Buddhist vision and Romantic ideals and dimensions. Above all, my emphasis in this area is on the poetic use to which Snyder puts Buddhist ideas.

In selecting editions for my discussion of Snyder’s poetry, I have sought to incorporate the versions of his poems and collections by which he is best known. This means, for example, that although Snyder published some sections from *Mountains and Rivers Without End* beginning in 1965, I have referred to and discussed the poem as published in its entirety in 1996. Although Snyder has made minor changes and corrections in his publications of poems over the years, those changes are few and bear no effect on my line of argument and discussion of Snyder as an Eco-Romantic poet.

V

This book is structured around four main themes: Eco-Romanticism, Eco-Romantic poetic form, the Eco-Romantic visionary poet/prophet, and mountains and rivers as holistic, and yet dialectical, Eco-Romantic emblems. My first two chapters, focused on Eco-Romanticism, address Snyder’s ecological inheritance from the Romantics as it is disseminated across the Atlantic and incorporated into a Transcendentalist and American Romantic tradition. I begin chapter 1 with an examination of the British Romantic pastoral tradition in the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, as well as the American pastoral ideas of Emerson and Thoreau. I explore the idea that the pastoral is a complex genre, which is often unjustly simplified as an extolment of the values of the countryside versus the evils of
the city. Snyder reworks an American Transcendentalist pastoral into a Postmodern and post-Romantic ecological poetics that articulates the contradiction and tension at work in modernized contemporary life. I argue that a didactically ecocentric criticism of both Romantic poetry and Snyder’s work tends to oversimplify the poetry and often ignores the dual vision and tension between a longing for connection with nature and the possibility that human self-consciousness does not allow for such harmony. I argue that Snyder’s poetry is successful in its ecological message when it avoids didacticism and instead seeks to articulate this Romantic dual vision of the separation and connection with nature. Chapter 1, although predominantly focused on Snyder’s Romantic predecessors, concludes with a discussion of Snyder as an heir of Eco-Romantic tradition, which is elaborated upon in chapter 2.

Building upon the Romantic pastoral tradition, I structure chapter 2 around a discussion of the Romantic pastoral alongside Snyder’s contemporary Eco-Romantic verse. In chapter 2 I give more detailed close readings of Snyder’s poetry as a contemporary beneficiary of the ecological awareness in the Romantic tradition. My readings build upon the dialectic between the desire for the mind to be “melded to the universe” and a self-consciousness that often opposes or interferes with a union between humanity and nature. This acknowledgment of discord is often what makes Snyder’s work impressive, for the dramatic tension and dynamic expression of contradiction and discrepancy approaches the significance of Wordsworth’s “comprehensive soul,” which seeks to express all aspects of the interaction between humanity and the natural world. This discord is manifest in many ways throughout Snyder’s poetic repertoire. I examine poems from the range of Snyder’s career in order to explore his recurrent attempt to find a reconciliation between urban and natural environments that are separated or connected by the Romantic imagination—the “human mind’s imaginings.” I discuss Snyder’s poetic examples of reconciliation, achieved by mediating between consciousness and the imagination as well as between the individual as part of the human community and as a separate entity.

This attempt at mediating between the individual and the community develops in the following two chapters. These two chapters center on the concept (one embraced by Snyder) that a connection between human and the external world is a task that must be undertaken by the poet through the poetic imagination. Chapter 3 gives a discussion of the Romantic conflict between a poet’s aspiration and its accompanying doubt. This poetic aspiration is defined by Wordsworth
in the Preface to *The Excursion* as a desire to “give utterance” (13) through poetry to the marriage of the “discerning intellect of Man” to this “goodly universe” (52–53). And this doubt is embodied in a poet’s fear that such utterances will fail, or will “[step] beyond the bound onto the way out,” as Snyder has said (*Earth House Hold* 39), past understanding that would serve the poet’s community. I follow this idea with a subsequent discussion of Snyder and the Romantic poet/prophet, which traces the notion, inherited particularly from Wordsworth, Blake, and Shelley, of the poet who is conflicted by the divergent roles of the poet as seer, whose visionary disseminations are rarely intelligible within the general community, and as prophet, whose role is to speak to and for society. For Snyder, this contradictory nature of the poet is an ever-present theme. In this chapter, I examine a sample of poems from across the time span of Snyder’s career. A central poem, “As for Poets” (from *Turtle Island*, 1974), articulates a hierarchy of kinds of poetry in which Snyder places the poetry of the “Space Poet” in direct competition with the poetry of the “Mind Poet,” while the “Earth,” “Air,” “Fire,” and “Water” poets are valued to a lesser degree. This competition between the visionary, boundless “Space” poetry and the more steady, mediating “Mind” poetry exemplifies Snyder’s own struggle to find balance between the visionary poet who is often misunderstood, and the prophetic poet whose work is aimed at providing a means of mediation toward at least a partial understanding of the boundless, visionary utterings of the “Space Poet.”

Chapter 4 expands my discussion of the roles of the poet as potentially visionary, and as articulate mediator and ambassador by drawing connections between Snyder’s ideas concerning the poetry of the “Mind Poet”—which seeks, through the Romantic imagination, to express a dynamic and reciprocal interaction between the mind and the natural world—and the Romantic dialectic or conversation in which the power of nature and the power of the mind interact. I explore Snyder’s attempt to articulate this conversation between mind and nature as expressed in his epiphanic poetic moments. These moments of epiphany and simultaneously static and dynamic visionary imagery, although undoubtedly a product of Snyder’s lifelong study of Zen Buddhism, also draw upon a Romantic and Modernist inheritance, a contention that I support through close readings in this chapter.

A principal means by which Snyder attempts to articulate and embody his ecological poetic vision in a way that communicates powerfully to the reader is experimental poetic form. My chapters on post-Romantic poetic form in Snyder’s work, chapters 5 and 6,
see Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads* as a crucial text for Romantic and post-Romantic poetics. Chapter 5 explores the Romantic roots of “open form poetics” and/or “free verse” and Snyder’s inheritance from that Romantic tradition. I apply Shelley’s assertion, from *A Defence of Poetry*, that “every great poet must inevitably innovate upon the example of his predecessors in the exact structure of his peculiar versification” (679) to Snyder’s own poetic aspirations toward formal innovation. This is done through close examination of Snyder’s poetry in the light of previous experimentations on form as exemplified by Wordsworth’s revolutionary Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* and its accompanying verse. I also trace how Coleridge’s theories concerning organic form travel across the Atlantic through Whitman’s quasi-Biblical catalogues into Snyder’s own biologically influenced notions and practice of open form. This biological, or ecological, idea of open form reflects Snyder’s overarching theme of the interconnectedness and interpenetration of all things; it brings modern notions of the way organicisms function to the poetic structure itself, with its associations and seemingly random but purposeful interactions. Ultimately, poems are not self-enclosed things. Their tools are words that interact and correspond with each other, with multiple meanings and with varying interpretations. The result is what Snyder calls a “measured chaos” (PIS 168).

Snyder asserts that language is “fundamentally wild” and that poetic form, syntax and style should reflect more closely the way in which thought functions rather than following traditional poetic conventions of form:

consciousness, mind, imagination, and language are fundamentally wild. “Wild” as in wild ecosystems—richly interconnected, interdependent, and incredibly complex. Diverse, ancient, and full of information. At root the real question is how we understand the concepts of order, freedom, and chaos. Is art an imposition of order on chaotic nature, or is art (also read “language”) a matter of discovering the grain of things, of uncovering the measured chaos that structures the natural world? Observation, reflection, and practice show artistic process to be the latter. (PIS 168)

That Snyder sees language as “fundamentally wild” is evident throughout his poetic repertoire. Snyder follows and yet innovates upon the tradition of experimental and unconventional form set forth by his Romantic predecessors. In chapter 6 I also examine Snyder’s development from more traditional forms in his earlier publications to increasingly more experimental forms in his later poetry. This
development over time also reflects Snyder’s desire to create poetry that represents and corresponds to the external world in both its shapes and its ideas. Snyder’s recurrent themes and ideas often reflect a duality of mind and the external world that is echoed in the complex structures of his poems. He readily acknowledges separations, differences and contrasting elements, but also seeks through his poetry to explore relationships of interconnection and interdependence that are often hidden at the heart of seeming discrepancies.

The final two chapters of this work, chapter 7 and chapter 8, focus on Snyder’s use of two ecological emblems—mountains and rivers—as dialectical and yet interdependent elements of nature whose interaction embodies a microcosmic representation of the whole. This interaction between mountains and rivers, for Snyder, is holistic, even all-encompassing. It is a conceptual representation of the interaction and interdependence between the universe and the mind. I structure a discussion of these emblems as inherent in and derived from a Eco-Romantic tradition. Chapter 7 gives a detailed investigation of mountains as intrinsically visionary and inspirational natural locales in which the poet/prophet is faced with the dilemma of his/her dual role as seer and as legislator. This is seen throughout Romantic works such as Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* and Shelley’s *Mont Blanc*, which I examine closely, giving especial consideration to these poets’ interactions with such mountains as symbols of both the metaphysical and temporal realms. I then give a detailed reading of Snyder’s “Bubbs Creek Haircut,” from *Mountains and Rivers Without End* (1996), as an example of Snyder’s poetic representations of mountains as visionary locales upon which, and through an interaction with, the poet can obtain understanding. “Bubbs Creek Haircut” represents a post-Romantic reinvention of such a traditionally Romantic theme.

Chapter 8, which focuses on rivers, takes as its starting point Shelley’s assertion that “rivers are not like roads...they imitate mind.” It examines the way in which the Eco-Romantic tradition becomes a precursor to Snyder’s mountain-river-mind poems that attempt to embody the holistic dynamic of creation and destruction. This Romantic influence often lies latent in intermediating poetry until a new poet lives up to and brings new life to Romantic ideas. This final chapter’s discussion of Snyder’s rivers and waters addresses the post-Romantic ecopoet’s inheritance and renewal of a contemplation of water in its varying forms and processes that becomes a meditation of the structure of the universe in its interconnections between the smallest sentient being and the cosmic system in its entirety. I begin with a discussion of Snyder’s Romantic predecessors—namely
Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley—and their poetic visions of landscapes as traced, shaped and defined by rivers and as interpreted and mediated by the imagination and the mind of man. I include a discussion of how Williams’s *Paterson* carries this Romantic theme of equating the movement of rivers with the processes of the human mind to Snyder’s treatment of cognizance and water. And I conclude the chapter with a discussion of Shelley’s *Ode to the West Wind* in which Shelley’s wet and fertile wind of influencings and destructive regeneration gives rise to Snyder’s own creative and destructive rivers which culminate in a “burning sky-river wind” (“1980: Letting Go” from *Danger on Peaks*, 2004) of volcanic lava, and thus a culmination of abject destruction that eventually leads to a healing and flowering restoration.

VI

Vendler describes Snyder’s “poetic function” as “to be a link in the transmission of what there is to be seen and known in the world.” It is this sense of Snyder’s place within a poetic tradition—a tradition that Snyder himself would assert stems back in time beyond Romanticism to the beginning of poetry and literacy and human thought—which this study seeks to discuss. Just as Snyder serves as a “link in the transmission,” so too Romanticism serves as a paramount “link” through which, as Shelley observes, “the episodes of that cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of men” are conveyed so that “the Past, like an inspired rhapsodist, fills the theatre of everlasting generations with . . . harmony.”

In particular, my contribution falls within the bounds of a discussion of Romanticism as another such “link in the transmission” of seeing and knowing. I seek not only to reassert, as many critics before, the primacy and value of the ideas and visions imparted to us from our Romantic predecessors, but also to examine the extent to which such ideas and visions are inherent in a contemporary poet who has developed such ideas and made them his own. This monograph belongs to the study of transatlantic Romantic and Eco-Romantic legacies. Thus, rather than underscoring a disjunction and separation between the ideas and characteristics attributed to Romanticism, Modernism and subsequent literary and aesthetic movements, an examination of Romantic legacies seeks to uncover the inherent harmonies behind the superficial discord. Snyder himself calls it a “measured chaos that structures the natural world” in which the apparent dissonance between ideas and things belies a subtle, yet pervasive,
synthesis. Among the “countless cross-fertilizations” between cultures and languages and ideas, there is a significant “blooming,” “bursting and scattering of seed” located in the relatively short time period designated to the Romantic movement. To acknowledge that the Eco-Romantic wind is a powerful force of influence provides a further understanding of “what there is to be seen and known in the world”, and to trace such influence to a present “periodic absorbing” of Eco-Romantic ideas gives us an opportunity for a glimpse at the future. For “the future is contained within the present as the plant within the seed.”
Index

Abrams, M. H., 36–7, 214n63
  The Correspondent Breeze, 36–7
  Natural Supernaturalism, 28–9
Alighieri, Dante, 160
Altieri, Charles, 4, 13, 17, 52–3, 69, 85, 106, 146–7, 195
  Enlarging the Temple, 112–13
American Poetry, 114
Aristotle, 117, 167
Arnold, Matthew
  “Memorial Verses”, 6
Auden, W. H., 138
Augustine, Saint, 139

Bate, Jonathan, 2, 31–2, 41, 43
Baudelaire, Charles Pierre, 12–13
Beat poets, 96, 114, 138
Beowulf, 137
Bergvall, Åke, 156
Berry, Wendell, 1, 112, 209, 232
Berryman, John, 138
Bible, The
  The Book of Revelation, 125
  The Gospel According to Matthew, 168
Black Mountain poets, 96
Blake, William, 6–8, 14, 15, 21, 46, 72, 114, 138, 160, 200
Annotations to Wordsworth’s Poems, 6
Auguries of Innocence, 8, 75, 103, 123
The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 45, 112, 176
Milton, Book the First, 13, 15, 97–8

Songs of Innocence and Experience, 14
  “Introduction”, 67
Bloom, Harold, 6, 17, 91
The Anxiety of Influence, 14, 18, 70
Poetry and Repression, 17
Bornstein, George, 51–2
Bradley, A. C., 6
Buell, Lawrence, 41
Buttigieg, Joseph A., 127
Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 128, 221n32
Manfred, 126

Campbell, Joseph, 160
Chan, Wing-Tsit
  Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, 129
Chuo-koron, 113
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 19, 22, 24, 35–9, 41, 91, 117–18, 166
  “Kubla Khan”, 153, 189
Lyrical Ballads (with William Wordsworth), 111
  “The Eolian Harp”, 36
  “Frost at Midnight”, 36, 38
  “The Nightingale”, 36, 37–8, 213n42
  “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, 36
The Statesman’s Manual, 36
Collins, Robin, see Four Poems for Robin in The Back Country
Colwell, Fredrick S., 183
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooper, James Fennimore</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coupe, Laurence</td>
<td>2, 13–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crabbe, George</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curran, Stuart</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetic Form and British Romanticism</td>
<td>28, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelley's Annus Mirabilis</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin, Charles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Origin of Species</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin, Erasmus</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davids, T. W. Rhys</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davy, Humphry</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean, Tim</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Snyder and the American Unconscious: Inhabiting the Ground</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Man, Paul</td>
<td>7, 127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dings, Fred</td>
<td>175–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncan, Robert</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot, T. S.</td>
<td>11, 12–13, 17, 86, 96, 138, 153–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Quartets</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Burnt Norton”</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Music of Poetry”</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Studies in Contemporary Criticism”</td>
<td>17–18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tradition and the Individual Talent”</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Waste Land</td>
<td>12, 95, 169–70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson, Ralph Waldo</td>
<td>8–9, 10, 11, 19, 28, 29, 38–41, 115, 118, 213n42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>9, 39–41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Poet”</td>
<td>115, 118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empson, William</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Types of Ambiguity</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Versions of Pastoral</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faas, Ekbert</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards a New American Poetics</td>
<td>17, 67, 117, 123, 159, 160–1, 174, 214n63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fawkes, Francis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see Sappho</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox, Charles James</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freud, Sigmund</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulford, Tim</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrard, Greg</td>
<td>42–3, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gelpi, Albert</td>
<td>11–12, 50, 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Coherent Splendor</td>
<td>86, 111–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifford, Terry</td>
<td>2, 44–7, 58, 217n15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gill, Stephen</td>
<td>214n63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginsberg, Allen</td>
<td>15, 96, 138–9, 219n19, 222n16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Howl”</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravil, Richard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Dialogues</td>
<td>38–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawthorne, Nathaniel</td>
<td>9, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herder, Johann Gottfried</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoffman, Steven K.</td>
<td>138–9, 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hofstader, Mark</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopkins, Gerard Manley</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hulme, T. E.</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, Anthony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis, Structure and Meaning in Gary Snyder’s Mountains and Rivers Without End</td>
<td>3, 16–17, 78, 171–2, 174, 194, 197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffers, Robinson</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hurt Hawks”</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce, James</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Hero</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keats, John</td>
<td>56, 95, 216n20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endymion</td>
<td>102–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“La Belle Dame Sans Merci”, 144–5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 13 March 1818, 120–1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ode to a Nightingale”</td>
<td>213n42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Lionel</td>
<td>191–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kern, Robert</td>
<td>2, 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerouac, Jack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desolation Angels</td>
<td>224n10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dharma Bums</td>
<td>224n10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kravec, Maureen</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kroeber, Karl, 32, 36–7
Kyger, Joanne, 174

Lacan, Jacques Marie Émile, 13
Lawrence, D. H., 37, 86
Swan, 98
Lowell, Robert, 138

McCorkle, Locke, 224n10
McGann, Jerome, 29
McKusick, James, 31–2, 34, 39, 41, 215n11
McNeil, Katherine, 89
Marx, Leo, 28

The Machine in the Garden, 42–3
Mason, Michael, 32–3
Matthews, G. M., 179
Matthiessen, F. O, 39
Melville, Herman, 9, 38
Milarepa, 170
Milton, John, 82, 156
“Lycidas”, 112
Paradise Lost, 28, 58, 71–2
Mistral, Gabriela, 169
Molesworth, Charles
Gary Snyder’s Vision: Poetry and the Real Work, 3–4
Muir, John, 46
Murphy, Patrick D., 3, 215n3

Naked Poetry (Stephen Berg and Robert Mezey, eds.), 116–17, 119, 147
Newman, Lance, 32, 39, 41, 43
Our Common Dwelling: Henry Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and the Class Politics of Nature, 44
New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, The, 31
New York Quarterly, The, 130
Nichols, Ashton, 5
Nicholson, Marjorie Hope
Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, 156–7

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm
The Birth of Tragedy, 90
Noringa, Motoori, 141

O’Neill, Michael, 7, 12, 114
The Human Mind’s Imaginings, 179

Paris Review, The, 10, 152
Pendell, Dale
Pharmako/Poeia, 176
Perry, Seamus, 6–7
Peterson, Walter Scott, 97, 102
Pite, Ralph, 33
Plath, Sylvia, 138
Plato, 168
Poe, Edgar Allan, 9, 13, 38
Pound, Ezra, 13, 50, 72, 86–7, 89, 93, 95–7, 102, 118, 133, 137, 138, 148, 159, 168, 204, 222n16
“Canto LIX”, 191–2
“Canto LXXIV”, 88, 200
A Few Don’ts by an Imagist, 98
Priestly, Joseph, 46

Rapp, Carl
William Carlos Williams and Romantic Idealism, 95–6
Reed, Michael D., 118
Roethke, Theodore Huebner, 138
Rueckert, William, 27

San Francisco Renaissance, 96
Sappho
[The Pleiads now no more are seen] (trans. Francis Fawkes), 143, 144
Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm
Joseph, 37
Schlegel, Karl Wilhelm Friedrich, 117
Schwartz, Delmore, 138
Seafarer, The, 137
Sexton, Anne, 138
Shakespeare, William
  *Hamlet*, 160, 163, 168
  *Twelfth Night*, 38

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 21, 24, 46,
  157, 166, 180, 213n42
  *Alastor*, 178–9, 189, 202
  “The Cloud”, 16
  *A Defence of Poetry*, 22, 24, 25, 54,
    69–70, 74, 86, 114–15, 200
  *Laon and Cythna*, 179

Letter to Thomas Love Peacock,
  17 July 1816, 187–8

*Mont Blanc*, 15, 23, 50, 91–3,
  163, 174, 179, 188–9

*Ode to the West Wind*, 16, 17, 24,
  65, 173, 201–6

*Prometheus Unbound*, 15, 179–80,
  195, 202
  “To a Skylark”, 179

Shikibu, Murasaki
  *The Tale of Genji*, 141–2

Smith, Eric Todd, 170–1

Snodgrass, W. D., 138

Snyder, Gary
  *The Back Country*, 49–50, 89,
    215n3, 222n16
  “An autumn morning in
    Shokoku-ji”, 143–5,
    see also *Four Poems for Robin*
  “A Berry Feast”, 138
  “Burning the Small Dead”,
    122–3
  “Circumambulating
    Arunachala”, 59–61
  “December at Yase”, 143,
    145–46, see also *Four Poems
    for Robin*
  “For the West”, 61–8
  *Four Poems for Robin*, 139–46
  “The Manichaeans”, 104–6
  “Marin-An”, 53–6
  “Siwashing it out once in
    Siuslaw Forest”, 139–41,
    143–4, see also *Four Poems
    for Robin*

“I spring night in Shokoku-ji”,
  141–3, 144, see also *Four Poems for Robin*

*Back on the Fire*, 81

“The Beat Generation”, 114

*Danger on Peaks*, 24, 152–3,
  155, 175, 177, 179, 206,
  225n41
  “Atomic Dawn”, 178
  “Baking Bread”, 153
  “Blast Zone”, 179
  “The Climb”, 129, 177
  “Enjoy the Day”, 180–1
  “The Mountain”, 177
  Mount St. Helens, 124, 152
  “1980: Letting Go”, 153, 178,
    206
  “Pearly Everlasting”, 124–9,
    153, 180
  “To Ghost Lake”, 180

*Earth House Hold*, 17, 20, 67, 73,
  75–6, 81–2, 195
  “Lookout’s Journal”, 56–7
  “Is Nature Real?”, 13–14

*Mountains and Rivers Without
  End*, 3, 152, 155, 158–9,
  170, 190
  “Arctic Midnight Twilight”, 16
  “Bubbs Creek Haircut”, 23,
    158–75, 177, 200, 202
  “Endless Streams and
    Mountains”, 190–5
  “The Flowing”, 196–206
  “The Making of *Mountains and
    Rivers Without End*”, 190
  “The New Wind”, 114

*No Nature*, 52
  “How Poetry Comes to Me”,
    115, 119–21
  “Word Basket Woman”, 57–8

*A Place in Space*, 22, 114, 116,
  158, 167, 188

*The Practice of the Wild*, 103,
  128, 155–6, 171, 176
  “The Etiquette of Freedom”,
    121

*The Tale of Genji*, 141–2
Regarding Wave, 14, 190
   “All Over the Dry Grasses”, 106–7
   “Everybody Lying on their Stomachs, Head toward the Candle, Reading, Sleeping, Drawing”, 107–10
   “IT: (Reading Blake in a cowshed during a typhoon on an island in the East China Sea), 14–16
   “Regarding Wave”, 89, 92–5
   “Shark Meat”, 150
   “Song of the Taste”, 40, 131–2, 150, 151
   “Wave”, 130–1
The Real Work, 73, 81, 124, 130, 147, 149
   “The Landscape of Consciousness”, 78
Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems, 133, 155, 175
   “Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout”, 56, 133–5, 144, 146, 175
   “Milton by Firelight”, 45
   “A Stone Garden”, 136–8
Six Sections from Mountains and Rivers Without End, 158, see also Mountains and Rivers Without End in Snyder, Gary
   “Smokey the Bear Sutra”, 197
Turtle Island, 27, 69, 74, 147, 190
   “As for Poets”, 21, 74–8
   “Control Burn”, 49, 82–5
   “For the Children”, 49
   “Front Lines”, 49
   “The Hudsonian Curlew”, 147–52
   “Mother Earth: Her Whales”, 49
   “The Wild Mushroom”, 147, 150
   “Without”, 78–82
Socrates, 181
Spender, Stephen, 169–70
Spensner, Edmund, 156
Steele, Timothy
   Missing Measures, 111
Steuding, Bob, 3
Stevens, Wallace, 13, 50–1, 90, 166
   “The Auroras of Autumn”, 91
   “The Man on the Dump”, 166–7
   “On the Manner of Addressing Clouds”, 166
   Opus Posthumous, 51
   “Adagia”, 51
   “The Snow Man”, 90–2, 177
Sutton, Walter, 113, 118
   American Free Verse, 136–7
Swinburne, Algernon Charles, 137
Thomas, Dylan, 37
Thoreau, Henry David, 8, 9, 11, 19, 28, 38, 40–4, 56, 114, 118, 210, 211, 213n42
   Walden and Other Writings, 41–2, 44
Twain, Mark (Samuel Clemens)
   Huckleberry Finn, 161
Vendler, Helen
   Soul Says, 4–5, 24
Weisbuch, Robert, 39
Whitman, Walt, 8, 11, 22, 38, 96, 114, 118, 120, 132, 136
   Leaves of Grass, 118
   “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”, 137
   “Song of Myself”, 118–19
Williams, Miller
   “The Revolution That Gave Us Modern Poetry Never Happened”, 112
Williams, William Carlos, 13, 50, 72, 89, 95–7, 138, 159, 219n19
   Imagination, see Spring and All
Paterson, 24, 54, 96, 97–104, 106, 197, 199–200
Spring and All
   “The Red Wheelbarrow”, 102–3
   “III: The farmer in deep thought”, 63
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Works/Sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wordsworth, Jonathan</td>
<td>30–1, 185, 214n63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Excursion</em>, 19–20, 31, 70–2, 81, 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Ruined Cottage”, 127, 164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Guide to the Lakes</em>, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letter to Lady Beaumont, 21 May 1807, 217n3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Lyrical Ballads</em> (with Samuel Taylor Coleridge), 7, 22, 28, 32–3, 70, 73, 111, 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Brothers</em>, 33, 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Lines Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey</em>, 32, 34–6, 40, 93, 136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeats, William Butler</td>
<td>138, <em>Chosen</em>, 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yin, Kuan</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimmer, Heinrich</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>