

# A Sense of the Whole



Gary Snyder's library on his Kitkitdizze homestead in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

# A SENSE *of the* WHOLE

Reading Gary Snyder's  
*Mountains and Rivers Without End*

*Edited by* MARK GONNERMAN

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*For Christopher*  
*and*  
*Whole Earth Inhabitants — Past, Present, and Future*

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## Fieldwork: Gary Snyder, Libraries, and Book Learning

MARK GONNERMAN

Once took a summer job cataloging images of Japanese prints for the slide library of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In the morning, I walked to Harvard Square from my Shaler Lane apartment, caught a shuttle to Harvard Medical School, and walked another ten minutes to the museum. At day's end, I meandered on foot through Boston and along the Charles River back to Cambridge. Prompted by Ezra Pound's observation that "artists are the antennae of the race," my reading turned to interviews with contemporary artists.<sup>1</sup> Before long, the Widener Library copy of Gary Snyder's *The Real Work: Interviews & Talks, 1964–1979* was in my backpack and on my mind as I made my way.<sup>2</sup>

These interviews brought me into Snyder's world. I was struck by the keen awareness of this rural, American, Buddhist intellectual who wears prodigious learning lightly and brings it to bear on a range of historical, political, philosophical, and literary concerns. Before long, *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems, Myths & Texts, Earth House Hold, The Back Country*, and *Turtle Island* were making the rounds with me as well.

When I arrived in California to study for my doctorate, I hoped to meet this estimable teacher, and I did as the Mountains & Rivers Workshop got underway in the fall of 1997. Gary occasionally traveled to Stanford for our seminar meetings. One November morning at breakfast he asked, "Would you like to read through the fire-safe copies of my personal journals?" I was careful not to choke on my toast and replied, "Sure. That would be great!" A few weeks later, Eric Todd Smith showed up at my door with forty-five bound volumes, Snyder's personal record of life and learning from 1947–95.

With this generous loan in my possession, I became curious about ways the anthropological tradition of Franz Boas (1858–1942) — the intellectually

adventurous German-Jewish émigré who fostered the field of cultural anthropology in and of North America — informed Snyder’s work as an artist, culture-change agent, and pioneering Zen Buddhist.<sup>3</sup> My dissertation, “On the Path, Off the Trail: Gary Snyder’s Education and the Makings of American Zen,” was submitted to Stanford’s Department of Religious Studies in 2004.<sup>4</sup>

I was interested in approaching Snyder’s intellectual biography through attention to his books and reading on the model of Robert Sattelmeyer’s *Thoreau’s Reading: A Study in Intellectual History with Bibliographical Catalogue*.<sup>5</sup> For this, I spent five weeks at Kitkitdizze during the summer of 1998, perusing the stacks and cataloguing parts of Snyder’s library. I was also able to browse neat files of 3" × 5" index cards — mostly notes from Snyder’s reading and research in college and graduate school — that remain in his collection. From this, I got a good, though by no means complete, sense of Snyder’s lifelong learning from texts.

#### YOUTH AND REED COLLEGE

Remember once (1949–50) plotting how to spend a whole day reading without serious interruption even while cooking & eating--when all you need for any day is a good dig of anything, even for a minute, the heart freed the mind sincer’d.

— Gary Snyder (19 January 1956 GSJ)

Snyder discovered a love for books and reading in the wake of a crippling accident that happened when he was just seven years old. At age two (1932), he and his parents moved from San Francisco to Lake City near Seattle to live on a small dairy farm. The farmland had been clearcut in 1905, and Snyder remembers his father, Harold (d. 1968), “dynamiting stumps and pulling the shards out with a team. . . . Some of the stumps were ten feet high and eight or ten feet in diameter at the ground” (PW 116–17).<sup>6</sup> In June of 1937, while his father was burning brush and parts of stumps, the boy ran barefoot through a fifteen-foot diameter mound of ash, presuming it was cold. However, hot coals glowed at the center, and Gary burned both feet so badly he was unable to walk for four months: “At the beginning of that period I could

barely read. At the end of that period I was reading books. I was drinking them up. And so that was my little slip into an understanding and appreciation of what you could learn from reading a lot, and I never stopped.”<sup>7</sup>

His mother, Lois (b. 1906), took Gary on weekly trips from Lake City to the University District Goodwill and Seattle Public Library branch, keeping him connected to the world of books.<sup>8</sup> In boyhood, his reading mostly concerned North American history, Indians, and animals, and he found all these themes in the work of the Canadian nature writer, Ernest Thompson Seton (1860–1946). Snyder came to see Seton as a revolutionary who worked to change “‘the myth of the white man’ because he was ‘on the side of nature, on the side of the Indians, on the side of the unconscious, on the side of the primitive.’”<sup>9</sup> An ability to imagine and appreciate different perspectives was one enduring outcome of Snyder’s youthful appetite for knowledge through books.

When Snyder speaks of his formal education, he emphasizes library skills: “I went to Reed College in Oregon, I had some marvelous teachers, I learned how to use a library” (TRW 64). Snyder refers to libraries as “shrines” where one must “learn the rituals to approach layers of knowledge. . . . I suppose nine-tenths of your university education is finished when you learn how to use the bibliographies and the card catalogues.”<sup>10</sup> When he moved to Kyoto to study Zen, Snyder eventually chose not to live in a monastery because “in a monastery you have no access to texts or dictionaries. . . . As an outsider-novice-foreigner, you are continually wrestling with problems of translation and terminology — you have to look things up” (TRW 100). Contrary to what may be a popular misunderstanding of Zen Buddhist life, Snyder enjoys extraordinary book knowledge and knows how to use it: “I’m a rural intellectual, I’m a shamanist Buddhist intellectual, but I’m still an intellectual. Ideas and language are the sharpest tools in my tool kit. So I use my tool kit to the best of its advantage.”<sup>11</sup>

#### WARM SPRINGS AND THE CUL-DE-SAC OF INDIANA

SNYDER: [Reed] was an intense enough education that I perceived that I would have to de-educate myself later. An education is only valuable if you’re willing to give as much time to de-educating

yourself as you gave to educating yourself. So, you go to college for four years, you have to figure you're going to do four years coming off it, too.

GENESON: When you say "de-educate yourself," you mean what?

SNYDER: I mean get back in touch with people, with ordinary things: with your body, with the dirt, with the dust, with anything you like, you know — the streets. The streets or the farm, whatever it is. Get away from books and from the elite sense of being bearers of Western culture. . . . But, also, ultimately, into your mind, into *original mind* before any books were put into it, or before any language was invented.

— Gary Snyder, "The Real Work" (1977)

With his Class of 1951 BA degree from Reed College tucked away, Snyder took a summer job as a timber scaler with the U.S. Indian Service on the Warm Springs Reservation just east of the Cascade Range in north central Oregon.<sup>12</sup> As he looked back on that experience at the end of the year, he noted a frustration:

Last summer I failed again, brought into contact with Warm Springs, the loggers, Indians, pine trees; I simply couldn't digest them. The Greek alphabet, Li Po, the I Ching, Thompson's motif-index, and that inexpressibly real countryside wouldn't fuse. It was maddening, and I ended up simply reading all the time.

(30 December 1951 GSJ)

This tension between book learning and other life experience would not soon go away, and Snyder's default position was to take refuge in myths and texts such as Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*.<sup>13</sup>

Between the mid-August end of his Warm Springs work and his September departure for Indiana, Snyder took a trip to "the Olympics with Hoodlatch [Bob Allen], Cameron Creek & out — county fair, & ferryboat to Victoria, then back down the Sound & bus to Portland in the night, hitched off to SF Coast Hwy 101 — full of linguistics & graduate school plans" (20 August 1964 GSJ). The trip down 101 took "4 rides" (29–30 August 1951 GSJ), and Snyder left San Francisco on 7 September after a visit with Philip Whalen (1923–2002). He arrived in Bloomington three days later.

In “On the Road with D. T. Suzuki,” Snyder recounts a life-changing reading experience as he went east:

I was standing by the roadside in the vast desert of eastern Nevada hitchhiking the old Route 40. . . . I was on my way to enter graduate school in Indiana, and here by the highway in the long wait for another ride I opened my new book. The size of the space and the paucity of cars gave me much time to read *Essays in Zen*, First Series. It catapulted me into an even larger space.<sup>14</sup>

In the introduction to Suzuki’s first published collection of papers on Zen, Snyder read: “Zen in its essence is the art of seeing into the nature of one’s own being, and it points the way from bondage to freedom.”<sup>15</sup> Five pages later, Suzuki addresses one of Snyder’s main concerns at the time by saying, “Zen proposes its solution by directly appealing to the facts of personal experience and not to book knowledge.”<sup>16</sup> Soon Snyder would find that graduate school was pointing from freedom to bondage.

If Snyder was heading toward a scholarly career in anthropology and linguistics, Indiana was an excellent place to go. Dell Hymes (1927–2009), a comrade at Reed, was already there, and the two scholars shared “an apartment above a little Chinese restaurant on Kirkwood Avenue.”<sup>17</sup> Soon after school started, Snyder paid his bills by teaching Turkish as a graduate assistant in the Army Airforce Language Program and assisting Professor Charles (“Carl”) Voeglin with a course on American Indian languages, staying one step ahead of the other students as the course proceeded.<sup>18</sup>

Carl Voeglin (1906–1986), Snyder’s academic advisor, was hired by Stith Thompson (1885–1976) in 1941 to develop the study of American Indian languages and cultures, and, in 1946, he founded the Department of Anthropology along Boasian lines.<sup>19</sup> Snyder also studied with semiotician Thomas Sebeok (1920–2001) and philosopher David Bidney (1908–1987).<sup>20</sup> Bidney’s course in Western philosophy was especially valuable to Snyder; his notes from Bidney’s lectures on philosophical idealism indicate he used this opportunity to articulate and hone by way of comparison his knowledge of East Asian thought.<sup>21</sup> Here he also began the Chinese language studies he would resume at Berkeley in 1953: “Of all things, morning; and a Chinese test in two hours” (26? November 1951 GSJ).

Snyder was ambivalent about this graduate school adventure from the start. The semester at Indiana in what he called “this cul-de-sac of Bloomington” confirmed he would not become a PhD anthropologist (30 December 1951 GSJ). On the day he arrived in Bloomington, he writes: “I am not interested in the scientific or objective aims of anthropology. I do concern myself with those areas of human experience which are not available to scientific study; and may be seen in religion, art, language. Anthropology has facts and a few methods; but not concepts capable of dealing with these” (10 September 1951 GSJ). By the end of October, Snyder knew he was not going to find what he was looking for in academia and decided he would stay “at least until the end of the semester” (30 October 1951 GSJ). On 16 January, he “dropped the boom” on his advisor who “was certainly gracious, understanding & sympathetic. . . . So I feel clear & good now that it’s off my chest & by grace of god, Voegelin, & conscience, am no longer an anthropologist” (16 January 1952 GSJ).

A question of vocation was at the heart of Snyder’s deliberations, for he continually measured academic life against a dawning realization that he might in fact be a poet. He put it this way at that time: “For vocation, however, I must admit it is poetry. As scholar one must keep his reputation continually going; writing papers, attending conventions, in short fitting into a managerial society. . . . The financial security that it represents means nothing to me” (26? November 1951 GSJ). A month later, in a conversation with Dell Hymes, he clarified his intentions:

Poetry to bridge the experiences and the reality; including all of nature in this realm by extension (nature not as a stage, but as a direct part of humanity & human experience, or rather human experience as a part of it) using a technique of mythical reference, particularly to the animal-transformer & trickster myths of Amerinds, and factual material based on historical & anthropological studies. The key thing will be concrete objects & relationships, but seen through image & metaphor to their infinite extensions. And in doing this to forge a language that is colloquial, direct, and rich & precise, all in one time by use of symbols,

paradoxical and ambiguous juxtapositions, to charge the colloquial with greater & new meaning (29 December 1951 GSJ).

These convictions were further clarified by Snyder's reading at the time, especially in D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966), R. H. Blyth (1898–1964), Alan Watts (1915–1973), and Kenneth Rexroth (1905–1982). In fact, Snyder credits his discovery of the Indiana-born Rexroth — whose work he first found in the Indiana University library — as a major impetus behind his decision to return to California: “His evocation of California landscape and the unique combination of a classical and biological sensibility helped give me courage to make the break from the academy, return to the West coast, and launch myself into a life as worker/scholar.”<sup>22</sup>

In planning for his return to the West Coast, Snyder resolved to “aim at reading & practicing Zen, studying a general body of poetry . . . studying poetic craft . . . and practic[ing] the forms & background reading in Oriental cultures. . . . BUT always with one aim: Purifying my own vision & insight into the object, the act — and increasing my skill in the manipulation of symbols to the end of clarifying and communicating the perceived” (16 January 1952 GSJ). In this way he would hone his mind.

In the summers of 1952 and 1953, Snyder took work as a mountain lookout in the Skagit District of Mt. Baker Forest.<sup>23</sup> In November 1954, he published a notice in *Zen Notes*, the First Zen Institute of America newsletter, entitled “Anyone with *Yama-Bushi* Tendencies: A Message from a California member of special interest to those seeking jobs which leave time for study and zazen.”<sup>24</sup> While the job requires “physical and mental toughness” it also allows “vast leisure”: “The hardest work is chopping and packing firewood (alpine trees are tough to split) from timberline to the station. . . . I found an excellent period for zazen between sunrise 4:30 a.m. and the radio check-in at 8 a.m. One must be able to pack a 50-lb. load and walk 10–15 miles a day for this work, for you may be expected to go out and fight a fire. But as a rule you can schedule 8 hours of study a day. . . . (They do hire women as lookouts rarely).” Here one might strike an ideal balance between books and other ways of knowing.

In the years between Reed and Kyoto (1952–56), Snyder read voraciously

and had difficulty regaining the equilibrium he enjoyed as a lookout. As his journal entries indicate, this imbalance remained a matter of concern: “It is no good, this reading books, this learning to manipulate more & more symbols. Multiplications of unrealities by visionary means; illusion piled upon illusion” (17 November 1953 GSJ). Two months later, he strikes the same tone: “It is time I consider seriously the limitations of time & the idiocy of most printed matter & start a serious self-curtailement in reading activity. . . . Learn instead to rely on the oral tradition? It wd be interesting to try to do without books altogether — practice memorizing a few key poems and stories & one or two Buddhist sutras, & then recite them at proper times, & also pay attention, great attention, to the styles & devices of all people talking” (15 Jan 1954 GSJ). Yet the allure of book learning persisted, and after another two months we read, “I regret my intellectual failures, stand appalled at the books yet to be read, wait for the stew to get hot, hope for better poetry, curse my insincere heart (*ch’eng hsin*), & try to remember: there is no striving in the Tao” (14 March 1954).

Snyder’s concern about his enmeshment in text-based culture is understandable, for his anthropological studies made him well-aware of “preliterate” civilizations and the fact that cultures with writing are an aberration from the world-historical norm.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, Buddhist traditions seemed to offer access to that norm, and, in Snyder’s reading of Suzuki especially, these traditions appeared suspicious of books. Furthermore, Snyder’s life as a working man called into question the value of his identity as an intellectual and scholar. Soon after arriving in Kyoto (and just days before becoming an official *deshi* of his teacher, Miura Rōshi), he writes: “I am a free man: in no fancy Buddhist sense perhaps, but in the old American individual sense--& I learned it not out of books but from the old guys who have been working hard & been broke all their lives, Ed McCullough, Roy Raymond, Blackie Burns, & many” (5 July 1956 GSJ). Snyder dedicates *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems* (1959) to these and other men “*In the woods & at sea.*”



## KYOTO AND THE LIBRARY AT RYOSEN-AN

Atop the mountain, another mountain.

— Zen saying

Snyder's interest in Asian religions began in the late 1940s, but it was not until the mid-1950s — when he was studying Asian languages at the University of California, Berkeley — that plans were set in motion for a voyage to Japan. In April 1955, Alan Watts (1915–1973) introduced Snyder to his former mother-in-law, Ruth Fuller Sasaki (1892–1967), at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. This began the process of creating a place for Snyder at the First Zen Institute of America in Japan, her Kyoto research center at Ryosen-an, a branch temple of Daitoku-ji. There she built a library to support scholarly English translations of Rinzai texts.<sup>26</sup>

On 5 May 1956 (three days before his twenty-sixth birthday), Snyder sailed for Japan on the *Anita Maru* freighter, arrived in Kobe sixteen days later, and was met by “Ruth Sasaki & Washino-san at the pier” (21 May 1956 GSJ). Soon after Snyder took up residence at Rinko-in of Shōkoku-ji in Kyoto, he knew he would not become a resident monk. He writes: “With considerable relief I suddenly realize, this morning, that I should in no case become an *unsui*. The undeterminable coyote-nature of poetry & working-man life would make it a foolish thing. I have a karma of intransigence & city-&-mountain wandering that won't be put down. But I can't make it as a householder either — just a *vagrange*, a strolling vagrant, a dharma bum, I guess” (29 August 1956 GSJ). Since he felt unsuited to full-time monastic life, and conventional householder life did not seem quite right, he found a happy compromise that would allow peregrination between the monastery, Kyoto hills and streets, and the Ryosen-an library, where he could pursue life as a scholar-poet.<sup>27</sup>

Sasaki's Zen Institute provided an excellent setting for Snyder to find once more a balance between books and other approaches to learning. Sasaki's intentions are evident in the following statement from the opening chapter of her *Rinzai Zen Study for Foreigners in Japan*:

I believe — unorthodoxly, no doubt — that the basic principles of Mahayana Buddhism as they are interpreted in Zen can be put

into words. To present these principles accurately, the first and most important thing is realization of them through practice, then clear intellectual understanding of what has been realized, and lastly ability to express this understanding simply and straightforwardly in words and terms that are as exact as possible. . . . When this has been successfully accomplished and when the basic Zen texts have been made available through translations of those who have prepared themselves for their work by Zen practice as well as linguistic studies, I feel sure that such westerners as have a natural relationship with Buddhism and with Zen will find they have been provided an unparalleled foundation for abstract thinking and a guide for daily life as well. Please do not mistake what I have said. These westerners will not gain through reading that realization which is the pivot of Zen today, as in the past. But perhaps through the expedient of words, the import of which they can grasp, they may achieve a clearer view of the depth and breadth of Zen teaching, and from there be led on to undertake such of the practices as their way of life permits.<sup>28</sup>

Sasaki hoped her endeavor would produce literate Zen Buddhists: practitioners who know their way around the tradition's texts, teachers, and temples. The Kyoto institute was largely based on this notion that "clear intellectual understanding of what has been realized" would enhance Zen practice and vice versa. She aimed to create a setting whereby Western students might enter the hermeneutic circle of religious life through active, open-ended engagement with the tools and techniques of Rinzai Zen.<sup>29</sup>

In Rinzai tradition, monks work mainly with *kōans*, questions posed by the teacher to better enable meditation practice.<sup>30</sup> A *kōan* is literally a "public case" or verbal expression that sets a standard whereby an awakened mind is both encouraged and confirmed by a teacher. Questions such as "Two hands clap and there is a sound, what is the sound of one hand clapping?" or "All things return to the One; where does the One return?" are posed to help the monk move toward an experience of *kenshō*, which means "seeing things as they are." Typically, *kenshō* is thought to mean "things as they are without conceptualization," though Victor Hori points out this could also

mean “‘without attachment’ or ‘without value judgment.’”<sup>31</sup> In fact, Hori argues against the idea that kōan practice is intended to take the student into a realm of prelinguistic consciousness and for the notion that this is a way to understand emptiness (*śūnyatā*) by wielding the sharp tool of language. Rather than a hindrance to liberation, language may be the vehicle that brings it about!

As Hori says, “The entire monastery kōan curriculum operates on the assumption that beginning monks start with a slight insight which further training systematically deepens and makes intelligible.”<sup>32</sup> As soon as a monk passes a kōan, the master gives the apprentice yet another. Working full time, a monk can expect to work through the entire kōan curriculum in fifteen years. While there are many ways in which a monk might demonstrate his comprehension, the following report from Michel Mohr is very telling: “In a sermon given on December 4, 1994, Daigu Sōkō (Morinaga 1925–1995) Rōshi commented on the expression ‘true understanding’ (*cheng chien-chieh*, J. *shinshō no kenge*) that appears in *The Sayings of Lin-chi*. He confessed, ‘What I am eagerly waiting for in the consultation room is for someone to come in possessed by an irrepressible joy [*osaerarenai hodo no yorokobi*]; I am not looking for an answer to the kōan.’<sup>158</sup> To realize a kōan — to make it real — is itself an experience and expression of aliveness.

A monk may take from six months to several years to pass the first kōan (*shokan*). While early stages of this highly structured curriculum bring about and deepen awareness, more advanced stages are meant to undercut the monk’s attachment to a sense of accomplishment by posing ever-more difficult challenges. Hori quotes Asahina Sōgen Rōshi on this point:

Once a person feels he has attained some degree of satori, he becomes satisfied with the Dharma joy of this new world and thus it is hard for him to make any further advance. In the history of Zen, there are many who at this stage have sat down in self-satisfaction and stopped here. Such people think themselves fine as they are and therefore have no ability to help other people. Indeed on closer reflection [we see that] they have not even saved themselves. The Nantō [advanced-stage kōans] are a painful stick to the one who undertakes them. They make one

know what it means to say, ‘Atop the mountain, another mountain.’<sup>34</sup>

This process of letting go of any notion of self — even of a self that has awakened — is concomitant with the work of arousing compassion for others. Though one rarely hears this said with regard to Rinzai Zen (which has a reputation for toughness), compassionate service to others is the endless end (*telos*) of kōan work. As Hori says, “*Kenshō* is not the self’s withdrawal from the conventional world, but rather the selfless self breaking back into the conventional world.”<sup>35</sup>

Snyder’s formal kōan practice commenced in 1959 with Oda Sessō Rōshi (1901–1966), his teacher and the abbot of Daitoku-ji.<sup>36</sup> His most explicit description of his engagement with this practice is in a letter to Katsunori Yamazato (27 July 1987):

I started formal Zen study with Oda Sessō Rōshi at the beginning of the Rainy Season Sesshin (Nyusei Sesshin) 1959. He assigned me the “first koan” called “sound of one hand” or in Japanese “*sekishū onjo*.” I lived in the monastery for all the sesshin that year, but worked off days at the Zen Institute, Ryosen-an, a temple with a research wing and a small library that was just across the lane from the Daitoku-ji monastery. Morning and evening for over a year I went into the Rōshi’s room with nothing to share. Then I was fortunate enough to fully experience the import of this koan on June 11, 1960. I was shelving books in the stacks of the Ryosen-an library, and while pushing a book into its place suddenly and totally saw myself together with all the other entities of the universe each totally ‘in place’ and beautifully so, all fitting together in all directions, each full of wisdom, each transparent. That evening I ran to the monastery for the evening sanzen. Rōshi took my answers and excitement with a charming nod, and started me on the ‘checking koans’ that help one deepen that breakthrough. And so I finished checking koans and moved into main case koans from the classic collections — each one a new adventure, though always referring back to the key insight. A few years later Oda Rōshi called for a little ceremony with the

monks on which occasion he gave me my name “Chofu” or “Listen, Wind” and a *rakusu*, an abbreviated Buddhist robe, with an inscription on the back in calligraphy. This naming, and ceremony, usually delayed a few years to see if the student stays with it, is a traditional way for the teacher to acknowledge that the student has had a *kensho*, “seeing into true nature” — another name for satori. I have to laugh that such a wilderness lover as I should have had his first powerful Zen experience in the dim depths of a library! Rather appropriate, really. Zen study actually just begins and continues through hundreds of koans, but the passing of koans is not the real point. Zen practice should lead to a full ripening of insight and character and capacity of communication, and it never ends.<sup>37</sup>

#### THE LIBRARY IN THE FOREST AT KITKITDIZZE

##### Ideal Paradise Heaven

A mountain range, glaciers,  
 snowfields, meadows, talus, benches,  
 — wind and sleet sometimes blow —  
 and every few hundred yards  
 a door  
 that leads into a vast Library  
 within with reading rooms  
 &  
 coffee.

— Gary Snyder (27 April 1988 GSJ)

When he returned to live in Northern California in December 1968, Snyder migrated with family and friends to the San Juan Ridge in Nevada County and began to build his homestead, Kitkitdizze. In an essay that describes the initial work of organizing his life on the Ridge — the land was ritually “opened” 19 June 1969 — Snyder notes the fundamental import of his library: “I set up my library and wrote poems and essays by lantern light, then went out periodically, lecturing and teaching around the country. I

thought of my home as a well-concealed base camp from which I raided university treasuries. We named our place Kitkitdizze, after the aromatic little shrub" (APIS 255).<sup>38</sup> For Snyder, libraries are basic because, for moderns, books often perform a role played by elders in traditional societies:

The original context of teaching must have been narratives told by elders to young people gathered around the fire. Our fascination with TV may just be nostalgia for that flickering light. My grandparents didn't tell stories around the campfire before we went to sleep — their house had an oil furnace instead, and a small collection of books. I got into their little library to entertain myself. In this huge old occidental culture, our teaching elders are books. For many of us, books are our grandparents! In the library there are useful, demanding, and friendly elders available to us. I like to think of people like Bartolomé de las Casas, who passionately defended the Indians of New Spain, or Baruch Spinoza, who defied the traditions of Amsterdam to be a philosopher. (And in my days as an itinerant forest worker I made especially good use of libraries: they were warm and stayed open late at night). (APIS 201; see also PW 61–62)

It is not insignificant that Snyder describes his base camp and the library it houses as "well-concealed." Intellectual life, the production of culture, and a rhetoric (if not the reality) of solitude are commonly associated in a variety of places and times. In his preface to the *Selected Poems* of Lew Welch (1926–1971?), Snyder captures these associations: "Lew really achieved the meeting of an ancient Asian sage-tradition, the 'shack simple' post-frontier back country out-of-work workingman's style, and the rebel modernism of art."<sup>39</sup> The poet or philosopher-sage is typically imagined as a hutted back woodsman cut off from ordinary ties. Think, for example, of Heraclitus (fl. c. 500 BCE), Lao-Tzu (fl. c. 500 BCE), Jerome (c. 347–420), Han Shan (627–650), Saigyō (1118–1190), Bashō (1644–1694), Thoreau (1817–1862), and Nanao (1923–2008).<sup>40</sup>

Snyder's library in the forest is indeed remote — "off the grid" — and the poet-scholar relishes his solitude. As with any supposed isolate, his efforts are in fact supported by innumerable social interactions and networks

ranging from family and immediate neighbors to activists, artists, and producers of culture and diverse sorts of knowledge worldwide. It is paradoxically fitting that Snyder's notoriety makes possible his uninterrupted time alone.<sup>41</sup>

Snyder started building his personal library at age nineteen, and the Kitkitdizze library began in a corner of his house where his earliest acquisitions still adorn a wall.<sup>42</sup> In 1982, when the new Ring of Bone Zendo was finished and the local Zen group moved out of Snyder's "barn-dō," Snyder converted the barn into a den (see frontispiece). In addition to the large area that is his study proper, there is a room with a built-in bed (his son Kai's former room) where mountaineering equipment is now stored. This room is on the left as one enters the library through the sliding glass door at the end of a path between the barn and house. At the bedroom door one may turn right, walk between stacks with Californiana on the left and Asian literature on the right, and step into an addition that was Carole Koda's study.

If one does not turn right but walks straight ahead, the first item of note is an altar on the left just before entering the main room. The image in this small homemade altar is that of the Dharma-protector, Fudō-myōō.<sup>43</sup> The altar sits on a table with a vajra, feathers, pinecones, stones, incense, and lists of names of those ailing and deceased.<sup>44</sup> Leaning next to the altar against the wall is Alan Watts's *shakujō* (monk's walking staff).<sup>45</sup>

With another step, one enters the main workspace. To the left is a small rolling table with Snyder's laptop, and a modest desk sits just beyond that. Along the outside wall on the left one finds a work table with file cabinets and bins for correspondence. A sliding glass door that opens onto a deck — where one may pick up the path that ends on the opposite side — is straight ahead. In the corner on the right is a comfortable chair with a reading lamp beside a wood-burning stove. The setup is tidy and efficient.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the opportunity to peruse books, decipher marginalia, and sort through reading notes, my fieldwork was motivated by curiosity about whether the shelf order of books would somehow represent Snyder's approach to ordering the various domains of knowledge. Might the physical layout of this library provide a map of Snyder's mind? The answer is by no means obvious, and I dare not venture too far in this direction. However, it is, I think, telling that poetry is shelved either on bottommost shelves or in

a dark room behind the poet's desk. Perhaps this arrangement is consistent with Snyder's notion that poetry rises up from the unconscious to reveal the mysterious and wild backcountry territory of Mind.

## NOTES

1. Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 1960 [1934]), 81.
2. Gary Snyder, *The Real Work: Interviews & Talks, 1964–1979*, ed. Wm. Scott McLean (New York: New Directions, 1980).
3. Franz Boas (1858–1942) traveled to British Columbia in 1886 and began fieldwork with the Kwakiutl that engaged him for a period of fifty years. See *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883–1911*, ed. George Stocking, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
4. Mark Gonnerman, "On the Path, Off the Trail': Gary Snyder's Education and the Makings of American Zen" (PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 2004).
5. Robert Sattelmeyer, *Thoreau's Reading: A Study in Intellectual History with Bibliographical Catalogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Sattelmeyer's book contains a catalogue of 1,478 entries, plus two indices and bibliography. Snyder's Kitkitdizze library — intact from the time he started collecting around the age of nineteen — contains approximately five thousand volumes.
6. Snyder gives the 1905 clearcut date in Nicholas O'Connell, "Gary Snyder," in *At the Field's End: Interviews with Twenty Pacific Northwest Writers* (Seattle: Madrona Publishers, 1987), 309. Barbara Novak begins her discussion of axe-and-stump icons in American art with the following observation: "While Thoreau meditates on his use of the axe to make himself a dwelling place in nature, he also mourns lost trees, which he misses like human beings. National identity is both constructed and threatened by the double-edged symbol of progress, that axe that destroys and builds, builds and destroys. The paradoxes of this relationship to nature are sharply revealed in the 'civilizing' of the land. Progress toward America's future literally undercut its past" (*Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825–1875* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1980], 157).
7. Gary Snyder, "The Education of the Poet," Lecture at the Guggenheim Museum, New York City, 6 May 1986 (cassette tape recording). In a conversation on 12 July 1998, Snyder elaborated on this story: "After the accident there was nothing for me to do except read. We didn't have a radio or anything, so I started reading books recommended by the children's librarian. After a few weeks or maybe a month the activity of reading became transparent in an instant and it was as if I was taking off in a fleeing spaceship in hyperdrive. The processors kicked in and I found myself reading at the speed of speaking. My mother still remembers that I called her and exclaimed, 'I can read!' I quickly moved on to reading adult books like *Mutiny on*



*the Bounty* (not the children's edition). We never bought books, for that seemed like a luxury. I used the public library until college, though in high school I owned my own bird and tree books."

8. A certificate from the Seattle Public Library hung on the wall of Snyder's office at the University of California, Davis: "This is to certify that Gary Snyder has satisfactorily fulfilled all requirements of the vacation reading club for the summer of 1938. [Signed,] Ann Wilson, Children's Librarian." The following books are listed in pencil on back: "Hawes, *Dark Frigate*; Hawes, *Mutineers*; Malory, *Boys King Arthur*; Kipling, *Jungle Book*; Hawk, *Gold Trail*; Tonsey, *Chinkey the Banker Pony*; Murray, *Shoes for Sandy*; Drummond, *Monkey that Would Not Kill*." And this from John P. O'Grady: "I was an extensive reader as a kid. . . . It was a standard Saturday trip to the university branch of the public library to pick up a new round of books for me. I took out ten or twelve every week. I read John Muir very early on and was suitably inspired. I was inspired by how light he went. . . . I read the biography *John of the Mountains* [Linnie Marsh Wolfe, 1938] when it came out. I also read a number of lesser-known people: Steward Edward White's novels about the Pacific Northwest and the West. Gad, I read everything. H. L. Davis, *The Winds of Morning*, a great novel about eastern Oregon. It catches the flavor of twenties and thirties eastern Oregon sheep and ranch culture really nicely. . . . Now get this (laughs): The Tugboat Annie series of stories, which were based on Puget Sound and which I read as a kid living in Puget Sound, came out serially in the *Saturday Evening Post*. (Laughs.) I also read some of the standard fare of western writers, including Zane Grey. Oh, and Oliver La Farge — the novel *Laughing Boy* [1929], which was a very important novel to a lot of people and was quite a success in its own time. I'm sure it inspired D. H. Lawrence and a whole bunch of American Southwest lovers of that era, and brought a very sympathetic eye to Native Americans of the Southwest. It also has, as I recall, maybe the first account of a peyote vision, a peyote trip, in mainstream American literature — that's way back there. I was doing this a year or two before I discovered D. H. Lawrence and Robinson Jeffers, prior to reading standard literary fare, but it's more like what a kid reads when he browses around" ("Living Landscape: An Interview with Gary Snyder," *Western American Literature* 33/3 [1998]: 279–80).
9. Snyder quoted by Bert Almon, *Gary Snyder* (Boise, Idaho: Boise State University, 1979), 6–7, from a 1975 interview with Snyder by Rolan Husson, "Amerique, Ile Tortue," *Entretiens* 34 (1975), 225–32.
10. James McKenzie, "Moving the World a Millionth of an Inch: Gary Snyder," in *The Beat Vision: A Primary Sourcebook*, ed. Arthur and Kit Knight (New York: Paragon House, 1987), 16. In this same interview, Snyder also mentions his "great respect for the possibilities of libraries, for the storing and transmission of lore" and says he would like to write an essay where he will "put in a 40,000 year anthropological

- perspective what universities are. They're like giant kivas that people descend into for four years to receive the transmission of the lore" (p. 15).
11. O'Connell, *At the Field's End*, 319. One thinks here of Max Weber's observation that the scholar as "craftsman still owns his own tools (in essence, a library), just as in the past the artisan in industry did." This observation is embedded in Weber's worry that bureaucratization and state-sponsored scholarship will eventuate in "the same development [that] . . . takes place in all capitalist concerns: the 'separation of the worker from his means of production.'" Weber senses a shift in the spirit of scholarship from vocation to profession, a development that, he says as he delivers this lecture at the University of Munich in 1918, "is now fully under way" (Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *Max Weber's 'Science as a Vocation'*, ed. Peter Lassman and Irving Velody [London: Unwin Hyman, 1989 (1919)], 5).
  12. "11 June 1951–17 August 1951. Timber Scaler for U.S. Indian Service. Cecil Atkeson and Nick Welder, Warm Springs, Oregon 1.25 hr" (GS LIBRARY/ Poetry/ Criticism/ GS Notes: "Work Record," Card 5.12). "The Warm Springs Reservation lies east of the summit of the Cascade Mountains in north central Oregon. It is roughly thirty miles square, with an area of 563,800 acres. The eastern slopes of the Cascades, which are included in the reservation, are covered with fir and yellow pine forests. The timber is sold by the Indians, under a sustained-yield program, to two private logging companies. Both of these companies operate mills on the reservation and provide some wage work for Indians" (Kathrine French and David French, "The Warm Springs Indian Community: Will it Be Destroyed?" *The American Indian* VII/2 [1955]: 4).
  13. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1932–1936). While defining his undergraduate thesis topic ("The Dimensions of a Haida Myth" [1951], published by Grey Fox Press as *He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village* in 1979), Snyder became aware of Thompson's encyclopaedic reference in world folklore. It was not available in the Reed College Library, so he wrote to Indiana University in Bloomington where Stith Thompson was teaching to ask if the *Index* was still in print. Time passed, and six paperback volumes appeared in Snyder's mail, a gift of this great reference work from Thompson along with an encouraging letter. By that time it had been decided that Snyder would be heading to Indiana for graduate school in linguistics and anthropology in the fall of 1951. Unfortunately, Thompson was on leave the year Snyder arrived in Indiana.
  14. Gary Snyder, "On the Road with D. T. Suzuki," in *A Zen Life: D. T. Suzuki Remembered*, ed. Masao Abe (New York: Weatherhill, 1986), 207. See APIS 153 for another story from this hitchhike to Indiana.
  15. D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series* (New York: Grove Press, 1961

- [1949]), 13. This introduction is a 1911 lecture entitled “Zen Buddhism as the Purifier and Liberator of Life,” first published in *The Eastern Buddhist*, the journal Suzuki founded in 1921.
16. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, 18.
  17. Dell Hymes, “A Coyote Who Can Sing,” in *Gary Snyder: Dimensions of a Life*, ed. Jon Halper (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991), 393.
  18. “Sept. 20, 1951 to November first 1951. Graduate Assistant, Indiana University, U.S. Army Airforce Language Program, teaching Turkish” (GS LIBRARY/ Poetry/ Criticism/ GS Notes: “Work Record,” Card 5.13); Hymes, “A Coyote Who Can Sing,” 393.
  19. On Voegelin’s Boasian program for Amerindian language studies, see Charles Voegelin, “Training in Anthropological Linguistics,” *American Anthropologist* 54 (1952): 322–27.
  20. Bidney’s papers have been collected as David Bidney, *Theoretical Anthropology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967 [1953]).
  21. “Plato misses Tathata concept; hence fails to see extension of appearance into self contained ideal (suchness) form, not removed but an integral part of, the sunyata reality.-->difference between Platonic & Brahmanic (also Mahayana) idealism. --how does Plato make his metaphysical reality have anything to do with people (all imitations). Myths used as allegory by Plato to illustrate metaphysical truth.--> practical philosopher. K’ung uses parables (cf pancantantra) but not myths” (GS LIBRARY/Subjects/Philosophy: Bidney lecture [1952]).
  22. Snyder, “Kenneth Rexroth,” *Kyoto Review* 15 (Fall 1982): 2, cited in Katsunori Yamazato, “Seeking a Fulcrum: Gary Snyder and Japan (1956-1975),” (PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 1987), 36n12. Snyder was moved by Rexroth’s *The Signature of All Things* (New York: New Directions, 1950), which, on its final page, contains the poem “Further Advantages of Learning”: “One day in the Library, / Puzzled and distracted, / Leafing through a dull book, / I came on a picture / Of the vase containing Buddha’s relics. A chill / Passed over me. I was // Haunted by the touch of / A calm I cannot know, / The opening into that / Busy place of a better world.”
  23. See John Suiitor, *Poets on the Peaks: Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen & Jack Kerouac in the North Cascades* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2002).
  24. Gary Snyder, “Anyone with *Yama-Bushi* Tendencies,” *Zen Notes* I/11 (1954): 3. My thanks to Tim Hogan for finding and mailing this to me from out of the blue. Snyder lists the following “lookout books” in his 16 August 1952 journal: “tao te ching / myths & symbols in indian art [Zimmer] / meeting of east and west [Northrop] / white goddess [Graves] / golden bough [Frazer] / 1000 faces [Campbell] / essays in zen [Suzuki]/.” There is no list from the 1953 lookout period, though in the

- journal one finds: “Now I am reading *Walden* which is a novelty & a delight” (17 July 1953 GSJ).
25. Following the work of Munro Edmonson, *Lore: An Introduction to the Science of Folklore and Literature* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), Walter Ong writes: “Our literate world of visually processed sounds has been totally unfamiliar to most human beings, who always belonged, and often belong to this oral world. Homo sapiens has been around for some 30,000 years, to take a conservative figure. The oldest script, Mesopotamian cuneiform, is less than 6,000 years old (the alphabet less than 4,000). Of all the tens of thousands of languages spoken in the course of human history only a tiny fraction — Edmonson (1971: 323) calculates about 106 — have ever been committed to writing to a degree sufficient to have produced a literature, and most have never been written at all. Of the 4,000 or so languages spoken today, only around 78 have a literature (Edmonson 1971: 332). . . . Those who think of the text as the paradigm of all discourse need to face the fact that only the tiniest fraction of languages have ever been written or ever will be. Most have disappeared or are fast disappearing, untouched by textuality. Hard-core textualism is snobbery, often hardly disguised” (“Writing Is a Technology That Restructures Thought,” in *The Linguistics of Literacy*, ed. Pamela Downing, Susan D. Lima and Michael Noonan [Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1992], 296).
  26. See Isabel Stirling, *Zen Pioneer: The Life & Works of Ruth Fuller Sasaki* (Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2006).
  27. Philip Yampolsky remembers that while “Gary was a devoted Zen student, taking part in the monastery *sesshins* and studying directly under a Zen Master, he allowed ample time to devote to his writing and to indulge in the diversions Kyoto had to offer: drinks at a jazz coffee shop, the Belami, which played the records of Chet Baker; visits to tiny drinking establishments that served quantities of sake, including the delicious unrefined white milky version known as *doburoku*, which was splendidly inexpensive” (“Kyoto, Zen, Snyder,” in *Gary Snyder: Dimensions of a Life*, ed. Jon Halper [San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991], 64–65). In a statement read at Philip Yampolsky’s memorial service in the fall of 1996, Snyder writes: “I saw Phil when I first arrived in Kyoto in 1956, my Japanese in pitiful condition, imagining myself to be in some ways knowledgeable about the Far East from reading books. . . . He worked part-time for Mrs. Sasaki, but he was really in Japan to do his Columbia University dissertation on Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of early Ch’an. I learned more of Philip’s background as time went on, and was charmed to discover the Franz Boas connection. Philip was fully in tune with the Boas heritage, what with his dedication to rational clarity, social compassion, and a political conscience” (“Remembering Philip Yampolsky,” 11 November 1998 email from Gary Snyder).
  28. Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Rinzai Zen Study for Foreigners in Japan* (Kyoto: First Zen Institute of America in Japan, 1960), 5–6.

29. “The hermeneutical consciousness culminates not in methodological sureness of itself, but in the same readiness for experience that distinguishes the experienced man from the man captivated by dogma” (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1992 [1960], 362)).
30. Rinzai and Sōtō Zen are typically distinguished by the idea that Rinzai emphasizes kōan practice and Sōtō does not: “One reason for the demise of *kōan* commentary in Sōtō Zen was the success of a late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reform movement that sought, in the interests of unification, to standardize procedures of formal dharma transmission and eliminate the transmission of esoteric lore (including *kōan*) that had previously distinguished various branches of the Sōtō school. In their zeal to create a new identity for the Sōtō school as a whole, reformers began to celebrate the teachings of the ‘founding patriarch’ Dōgen (1200–1253), which they cast in a way that emphasized the differences between Sōtō and Rinzai Zen. Perhaps because influential Rinzai reformers such as Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768) were stressing the importance of contemplating phrases in their own tradition, the Sōtō Side sought to distance itself from *kōan* as much as possible, characterizing Dōgen’s approach to Zen practice as one of ‘just sitting’ (J. *shikantaza*). The irony is that *Dōgen’s Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma (Shōbōgenzō)*, the work that modern Soto Zen reveres as its bible, is in good measure a collection of comments on the Chinese *kung-an*, although the comments were delivered in the vernacular for the benefit of Japanese disciples” (T. Griffith Foulk, “The Form and Function of Koan Literature: A Historical Overview,” in *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 25).
31. G. Victor Sōgen Hori, “*Kōan* and *Kenshō* in the Rinzaï Zen Curriculum,” in *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 284. See also the discussion of *kenshō* in Ruth Fuller Sasaki and Isshū Miura, *Zen Dust: The History of the Kōan and Kōan Study in Rinzaï (Lin-Chi) Zen* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 228–30.
32. G. Victor Sōgen Hori, “Teaching and Learning in the Rinzaï Zen Monastery,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 20/1 (1994): 6n.1.
33. Michel Mohr, “Emerging from Nonduality: Kōan Practice in the Rinzaï Tradition since Hakuin,” in *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 248. Morinaga tells of his own experience: “One night I sat, in the middle of the night, a lump of fatigue sitting on a zazen cushion, both head and consciousness were in a haze, and I could not have roused the desire for satori if I had to when, suddenly, the fog cleared and a world of lucidity opened itself. Clearly seeing, clearly hearing, it was yet a world

- in which there was no 'me'! I cannot fully explain that time. To venture an explanation would be to err somewhere. The one thing I am sure of is that in this instant, the functioning of the heart with which I was born came into play in its purest form. I could not keep still in my uncomfortable joy. Without waiting for the morning wake-up bell, I made an unprecedented call on the roshi. . . . When I arrived, Roshi was still in bed. I crawled right up to his pillow and said very simply, 'I finally saw.' Roshi sprang from his bed, examined me for a time, as if with a glare, and said, 'it's from now on. From now on. Sit strongly.' This is all he said to me. From then on for the next sixteen years, until my fortieth year and Zuigan Roshi's death at age eighty-seven, whether in the monastery or back in the temple, I continued koan practice" (*Novice to Master: An Ongoing Lesson in the Extent of My Own Stupidity*, trans. Belenda Attaway Yamakawa [Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002], 106–07).
34. Victor Hori, *Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Kōan Practice* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 22–23.
  35. Hori, *Zen Sand*, 7.
  36. Snyder dedicated *Earth House Hold* (1969) to his teacher, "For Oda Sessō Rōshi (1901–1966) / "the mysterious further higher peak." Irmgard Schlägel writes, "Sessō Rōshi was a man of few words, and relied on teaching by personal example. He never taught or talked abstract theories, but he embodied and lived them" ("A Zen Master [Oda Sessō Rōshi]," *Studies in Comparative Religion* 1/4 [1967]: 181–83).
  37. Snyder to Katsunori Yamazato (27 July 1987) in "Seeking a Fulcrum," 89–90. The "checking koans" (*sassho*) Snyder refers to are a way for the rōshi "to confirm that the insight is actually the monk's own and not something he is repeating at second hand" (Hori, *Zen Sand*, 18). Snyder mentions this library experience in PW 151–52.
  38. Snyder's 1969–71 journals indicate at least one such raiding trip a year: November 4–December 7, 1969: to River Falls, Northfield, St. Paul, Collegeville, Madison, Stevens Point & New York, New Jersey, Buffalo; April 3–25, 1970: to Chicago, Long Island, Bloomington, Fort Collins, Denver; November 4–23, 1971: to Montreal, Portland, Orono, Colby, Wellesly, Boston, Walden, Denison, Bowling Green.
  39. Gary Snyder, "Preface," in *Lew Welch: Selected Poems*, ed. Donald Allen (Bollinas, CA: Grey Fox Press, 1976), n.p.
  40. The recluse scholar-poet is a pervasive image in Chinese art, inspired in large part by Lao Tzu, who, according to legend, was himself a librarian. Around 500 BCE, he advised anyone who would withdraw from society to imagine themselves in a region where "the next place might be so near at hand that one could hear the cocks crowing in it, the dogs barking; but the people would grow old and die without ever having been there" (*Tao Tē Ching*, chapter 80, trans. Arthur Waley). Commenting on this image, Ann Cline writes: "What began after Lao Tzu as a trickle of gentleman recluses had, a thousand years later, turned into a steady stream. Educated

cosmopolites retired to the mountains and there recorded their lives in verse and in painting. The latter formed a major genre that illustrates the recluse poet's world: most typically a tiny hut set in some particularly interesting aspect of a vast mountain terrain crisscrossed by narrow paths, along which one or two human figures amble, gazing out at the vista. This recluse living apart from the world, aware of it (and later, it aware of him) but participating only in his immediate world, would eventually extend his influence not only back to the cities he abandoned, but to distant shores — Japanese and European" (*A Hut of One's Own: Life Outside the Circle of Architecture* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997], 4). Cline traces Lao Tzu's influence on European conceptions of the solitary scholar to the seventeenth-century importation of porcelain, a technical advance in ceramics much admired in Europe and Japan: "Many porcelain imports had small snippets of poetry painted on them, which the Japanese could translate, but the Europeans generally could not. Instead, the Europeans more readily understood the images of huts and mountain landscapes that also frequently decorated these treasures" (*A Hut of One's Own*, 11–12).

These decorations seemed readily decipherable because there was already a Western tradition joining solitude and insight. In the Bible, Moses is on his own on the top of Mount Sinai, John the Baptist cries alone in the wilderness, and Saint Paul goes solo (but for his donkey) on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. In the Middle Ages, it was thought a life of separation from society was most authentically Christian, so the monastery, the hermitage, and the reclusorium were major medieval sites for the production of religious knowledge. *Monk*, from the Greek *monus*, means "alone."

With the creation of the private study, the college, the laboratory, and the observatory in the Renaissance, the relative isolation of the scholar strengthened the notion that "enforced solitariness" (a phrase used by Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* [1628]) was a necessary correlate of great learning. At the dawn of the modern period in the seventeenth century, Descartes cogitated "alone in a stove-heated room," and Newton was famous for autodidactically dwelling in his Trinity College rooms (see Steven Shapin, "'The Mind Is Its Own Place': Science and Solitude in Seventeenth-Century England," *Science in Context* 4/1 [1990]: 191–218).

In New England, Emerson taught that "greatness is the fruit of solitary effort" (in Maurice Gonnaud, *An Uneasy Solitude*, trans. Laurence Rosenwald [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987 [1964], 193]). Thoreau devoted a chapter of *Walden* to "Solitude" (though he was seldom very much alone), and when John Muir — who crossed from Edinburgh to Wisconsin at age eleven in 1849 — sauntered to California in 1868, he was wandering on his own. In 1901, William James — who crossed back over the Atlantic to Edinburgh for his Gifford Lectures — defined religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men *in their solitude*, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine"



(*The Varieties of Religious Experience* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985 [1902], 34, emphasis mine).

To come full circle, there is a hut (“Ditch Hut”) at Kitkitdizze where Snyder retreats so that even his neighbors might not find him. While standing in his library in 1998, Snyder told me he sometimes thinks of himself as the kind of “outlaw-poet-scholar” one encounters in Chinese folktales.

41. I was once reminded of this while at a bookstore in San Francisco’s Japantown. Two photographs of Snyder at a 1993 book signing with the following caption were visible through the store’s front windows: “Gary Snyder makes a rare public appearance to read and sign copies of his popular titles at Kinokuniya bookstore.” Snyder has long had a claim to fame as a Buddhist and literary celebrity, but his public appearances are not all that rare. The notion that he seldom appears in public indicates the Snyder of myth, for that Gary Snyder confirms the public’s hope that there are in fact individuals who exemplify mythic ideals.
42. Scott McLean remembers, “And when the library was in the main house and one borrowed books, they all smelled like smoke and talk and songs and jokes, and this lent a rather special frame to the reading” (“‘Thirty Miles of Dust’: There is no Other Life,” in Jon Halper, ed. *Gary Snyder: Dimensions of a Life* [San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991], 130).
43. Snyder writes about Fudō in exhibition notes accompanying his contributions to the Ring of Bone Zendo Dharma Art Exhibit in September 1987: “The Yamabushi [monks who sleep in the mountains] have their own lore and practice of Fudō. For the other Buddhist followers, he is seen as a Dharma-protector, a grim but compassionate tough guy, punk or street-Buddha, no bullshit, the noose is said to be a lasso and save some folks from hell whether they want it or not, or said to be for binding up destructive passions. Actually the noose stands for The Precepts. The sword is the same sword as Manjushri yields, cutting through delusion and foolishness. Such a figure appropriate to this worst of centuries, a Buddha of enlightened determination who will not back off, who is not averse to confronting the mass murder of Ukrainians, of Jews, of Cambodians, and the threat of nuclear holocaust. Who can sit down with the generals and dictators and talk even tougher than they. And then laugh about it, and convert and forgive. Or so I like to imagine” (Stanford University, Allen Ginsberg Papers, Series 1, B295, F3).
44. From Snyder’s Sunday, 28 July 1996 journal: “Did an early morning okyo [chanting service] for Mark Kirihara, Hisao Kanaseki, Paul Shepard (& Yuiko Yampolsky called to tell me--yesterday--that Phil would soon be dead) — so, Philip Yampolsky. & ‘all those killed during the wars’ — Banrei Eko Daihishin Dharani 5 times.”
45. There is a note on this *shakujō* by Snyder for the September 1987 Ring of Bone Zendo Dharma Art Exhibit: “The staff leaning in the corner, with rings on the top,



is an old Asia-wide Buddhist pilgrims' staff also called (in Skt) Khakkhara. It can be seen in 5th century paintings in the caves at Tun Huang. The jangling of the sistrum-like rings on top were to warn animals and insects to slip away and not get accidentally stepped on. It was often used in early times for begging, a mendicant would shake the rings in front of the door of a house. In the hands of the Yamabushi it is useful as one of the ritual objects employed in exorcising demonic forces. This Shakujo used to belong to Alan Watts" (Stanford University Archives, Allen Ginsberg Papers, Series 1, B295, F3).

46. With its bedroom, altar and stacks, the layout is akin to the famous library of Michel de Montaigne, established in Bordeaux in 1571: "The library is first and foremost a place of solitude. In fact, it is part of a whole complex of solitary dwelling, which consists of the tower's three stories. This solitary complex includes a chapel on the first (ground) floor, a bedroom ("where I often lie down to be alone") on the second floor, and the library, with a study and wardrobe adjoining it on the third" (Adi Opher, "A Place of Knowledge Re-Created: The Library of Michel de Montaigne," *Science in Context* 4/1 [1990]: 169). Significantly, Snyder's library sits right on the ground.