

Original Paper

A Study of Eco-psychology Writing in Gary Snyder's *Mountains and Rivers Without End* from Classic Chinese Thoughts

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Abstract

*Gary Snyder spent forty years writing a book of ecological poetry titled *Mountains and Rivers Without End*. The harmonious relationship between humans and the environment is depicted in these poems, which are full of profound ecological meaning. This condition of harmony aligns with the meanings of traditional Chinese thought, such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. The aim of this paper is to apply traditional Chinese thought to the eco-psychological writings in *Mountains and Rivers Without End*. It examines how humans and the environment interact in the poem using the theories and techniques of eco-psychology. Beyond this, it unpacks Snyder's ecological vision—probing how ecological systems shape human psychology and the dynamic reciprocity between people and their surroundings—while laying bare the poet's deepest convictions, emotional currents, and wellsprings of creativity.*

Keywords

*Gary Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, ecopsychology, traditional Chinese thought, human-environment interaction*

1. Introduction

The four-decade poetry project *Mountains and Rivers Without End* by Gary Snyder, which examines the symbiotic link between humans and nature, is a prime example of Western ecological literature. Snyder's work does more than depict the natural world—it uses ecological dynamics, filtered through

Eastern philosophy, to mirror the human psyche. Rooted in this blend are traditional Chinese tenets: the Taoist “unity of heaven and humanity”, Buddhism’s “emptiness”, and Confucian “benevolence”. Together, these principles align with Snyder’s vision of ecological balance, bridging ancient wisdom and modern environmental consciousness. This study examines the ways in which Snyder reinterprets human-nature connections through the integration of Chinese notions and eco-psychological concepts. By carefully analyzing natural imagery (such as water cycles and mountain symbolism), the study uncovers two basic mechanisms: (1) how ecology affects psychological states, and (2) how Snyder’s cross-cultural ethos weaves together Eastern philosophical profundity and Western ecological critique. This paper analyzes how Snyder’s reverence for nature manifests in his poetry and traces how his ecological ideals emerged from a synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophies. By bridging Taoist, Zen, and Western ecological thought, this study aims to foster cross-cultural dialogue while offering new interpretive pathways for understanding his poetic engagement with the natural world.

2. Eco-psychological Studies on Gary Snyder’s *Mountains and Rivers Without End*

At a time when the global environmental crisis is worsening, ecological literature has become an important cultural form of response to environmental issues, and Gary Snyder, as an ecological poet, enjoys the reputation of being “the most ecologically conscious poet of the 20th century”.

Many researchers regard Gary Snyder as a pioneer of ecological literature. His works explore the complex relationship between humans and nature. In order to examine how Chinese philosophy is incorporated into Snyder’s poetry, compare Chinese and Western ecological concepts, and comprehend the harmonious relationship between humans and nature that Snyder depicts in his poetry, Chinese scholars have recently frequently begun from the standpoint of cultural comparison.

When it comes to blending ecology with Eastern thought, Gary Snyder’s work is a goldmine. Academics have dug deep into how Taoist and Zen Buddhist principles fuel his unique take on humanity’s place in nature. Xiang Yu (2016) examines Snyder’s alignment with classical Chinese texts like the “Tao Te Ching” and “Zhuangzi”, arguing that the convergence of Taoist principles (such as harmony with nature) and Zen concepts (including self-negation, non-anthropocentrism, and simplicity) forms the foundation of Snyder’s ecological vision. Similarly, Chen Zhigan and Wang Yufeng (2011) trace Snyder’s life trajectory, highlighting how Confucian, Taoist, and Zen ethics—embodied in the balance of internal reflection and external engagement (as encapsulated in the phrase “the great hermit lives in the court, while the small hermit retreats to the mountains”)—shape his ecological mosaic. Bi Jiancheng (2024) draws parallels between Snyder’s poetry and Chinese landscape painting, employing Western theories like perceptual phenomenology and postmodern reading theory to analyze the harmonious interplay of “image” and “text” in works such as *Mountains and Rivers Without End*.

Western scholars, such as Kocot (2024), interpret Snyder’s poetry as a critique of Western modernity and a call to transcend ecological crises through “non-dualistic” and “earth-centric” narratives,

encapsulated in the idea that “the only way out is integration”. Norton (2021) focuses on Snyder’s reverence for indigenous land practices and wilderness, arguing that his local consciousness advocates for human-nature symbiosis rooted in the North American continent rather than narrow nationalism.

In these studies, Snyder’s twin obsessions—“ecological consciousness” and “traditional Chinese thought”—fuel his rejection of consumer culture and his lifelong hunt for spiritual liberation. His belief that humans exist “within”—not above—nature resonates with the Taoist ideal of “harmony”. Works like *Mountains and Rivers Without End* exemplify his “wild ecological poetics”, which seeks to awaken ecological awareness through a fusion of poetry and science, envisioning a world of “magnificent mountains and rivers and universal harmony”.

Despite rich analyses of Snyder’s ecological themes, Liu and Chen (2002) note a critical gap: scholars often overlook the psychological dimensions of his work. While some (e.g., analyses of *The Great Clod*) acknowledge Snyder’s nature-loving fanaticism and emotional fusion with nature, few delve into the “interactive psyche” between poet and environment. This underscores the need for interdisciplinary research bridging literary criticism and ecological psychology—a field that examines how environments shape human psychology and how poets project inner states onto natural imagery.

By integrating Chinese cultural perspectives, this paper investigates Snyder’s “regenerative ecology” and the psychological interplay in his depictions of mountains and rivers. It explores how traditional thought, particularly the Zen-Taoist synthesis of “self-negation” and “holism”, influenced his vision of a harmonious world. Snyder’s assertion that “literary works condense humanity’s primal wild thinking” (Earth 119) aligns with ecological psychology’s focus on primal human-environment connections, offering a new lens to decode his inner world and cultural hybridity.

3. Ecological Shaping of the Psyche in *Mountains and Rivers Without End*

Eco-psychology has always held that the relationship between humans and the environment is not an oppositional one but rather a complex unified whole. However, anthropocentrism remains at the core of Western culture. In the poetry collection *Mountains and Rivers without End*, Snyder’s ecological writing is a projection of his inner self. Snyder employs metaphor to re-imagine the interplay between psyche and nature, moving beyond human-centered frameworks to position animals, plants, and non-living entities as lenses through which to interpret the human mind and body. This poetic strategy reframes ecological relationships, rejecting hierarchy in favor of reciprocity—a vision aligned with the traditional Chinese concept of “the unity of heaven and humanity”. As the *Tao Te Ching* asserts: “Humans follow the earth; the earth follows the heavens; the heavens follow the Tao; the Tao follows what is natural” (Chapter 25). In *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, Snyder synthesizes this Taoist ecological ethos, insisting that humans and nature exist in mutual shaping: just as the psyche is molded by ecological forces, so too does human consciousness shape its environment.

3.1 Ecology and Thought: The Role of Tao and Emptiness

Ecology and Tao. Some scholars (Tan & Qiu, 2016, p. 171) once believed that Snyder had his own understandings when he came into contact with Chinese “Tao”. One of the “tractable ways” mentioned by Snyder refers to where humans “walk”. Walking can be regarded as the practice of the body and the soul, enabling people to get close to nature and feel the integration of themselves and the world. In the poem “Earth Verse”, the poet uses concise language to describe the characteristics of the earth, “*Wide enough to keep you looking, Open enough to keep you moving...*” (Snyder, 1996, p. 150). The poet describes the earth’s characteristics such as “*wide, open, dry, prickly, old*”, constructing the grand and extensive image features of the earth. Snyder writes that the earth uses the above characteristics respectively as “*Wide enough to keep you looking, Open enough to keep you moving, Dry enough to keep you honest, Prickly enough to make you tough, Green enough to go on living, Old enough to give you dreams*”. The neat metrical pattern is just like the earth chanting its guidance to humans.

“Our conceptual systems largely capitalize on the similarities between our bodies and the environments we inhabit” (Lakoff et al., 1999), and Taoist ecological thought is mainly embodied in the concept of ecological equality of the ‘law of nature’, which Snyder understands and respects (Zhu, 2008, p. 44). Snyder understands and admires this (Zhu, 2008, p. 44), the earth is under the feet of human beings, from the body to the mind, human beings are homogeneous with nature, and “wildness is our innate quality” (Snyder, 1990, p. 181). Snyder seeks communion between nature and human beings through the earth’s natural qualities, and in this way, embodies the idea of shaping human spirit and behavior. embodies the shaping of human spirit and behavior. Lao Tzu’s Jing of Purity describes it this way, “*The Great Tao is formless and gives birth to heaven and earth; the Great Tao is emotionless and runs the sun and the moon; the Great Tao is nameless and nourishes all things*”. This idea of all things being in common and interacting with each other is also a corroboration of ecology and the Tao, and it is by incorporating this idea that Gary Snyder sees ecology as a call and guide for people.

Ecology and Emptiness. In the last poem of this collection, “*Finding the Space in the Heart*”, Snyder writes: “*all equal, far reaches, no bounds. Sound swallowed away, / no waters, no mountains, no bush no grass and / because no grass / no shade but your shadow. / No flatness because no not - flatness. No loss, no gain. So — / nothing in the way! / — the ground is the sky / the sky is the ground, / no place between, just / wind - whip breeze, tent - mouth leeward, time being here*”. As scholar Xiang Yu once pointed out, this poem elaborates on the concept of “emptiness” in Chinese culture. “*Auditory, visual, and even olfactory senses all disappear; mountains, rivers, birds, flowers, insects, and fish no longer exist; heaven and earth, earth and heaven have no unique essence of their own, that is, there is no distinction. This is precisely that all things are empty*”. “*O, ah! The awareness of emptiness brings forth a heart of compassion! This view of emptiness does not mean that ‘all worldly affairs are impermanent, and all things are empty’, but rather that all things do not have complete independence and are closely linked to each other without distinction*”.

There are also plenty of reflections on “life and death” and “entanglements” in the poem. In the 1960s, he “traveled with two friends”. In the 1970s, “got stuck—scared the kids—slept the night”. In the 1980s, “With my lover I went where the roads end”. In the 1990s, “They all somehow swarm down here— sons and daughters in the circle / eating grasshoppers grimacing”. Explorations in the wilderness during different periods and the company of different people emphasize the connection between lives, which is the entanglement of “life” and “life” (between people).

“Faint shorelines seen high on these slopes, long gone Lake Lahontan, / cutthroat trout spirit in silt— / Columbian Mammoth bones / four hundred feet up on the wave - etched beach ledge; curly - horned / desert sheep outlines pecked into the rock, / and turned the truck onto the playa heading for know - not, / bone - gray dust boiling and billowing, mile after mile, trackless and featureless, let the car coast to a halt / on the crazed cracked...” At this time, by describing the ancient relics and traces of life in nature (such as “the disappeared lake shorelines”, “the spirit of fish in ancient lakes”, “the bones of mammoths”, “the outlines of desert sheep” etc.), he laments death. Death implies the fragility, transience, and irreversibility of life. However, in this poem, death is just a part of finding the space in the heart. This admiration for death eliminates the opposition between life and non-life. Gary Snyder conveys the profound influence of the natural ecology on the spiritual world. These relics not only trigger the poet’s sense of history and life consciousness but also inspire his awe and perception of the life cycle and the mysterious power of the natural world, which is the resonance of “life” and “death”.

3.2 Ecology and Emotion: Benevolence and Healing

Snyder not only describes the wild nature in his works and expresses his love for it, but also devotes himself to nature in life, integrating himself with the beloved wild nature to obtain more profound insights. This emotion is deeply influenced by “benevolence” in Chinese culture. In Confucian thought, benevolence is not limited to the care for people, but also includes the pity and awe for nature. Snyder connects humans and nature through Zen thought. He emphasizes the equality of all things, which highly coincides with the Confucian “benevolence” thought. Gary Snyder has repeatedly mentioned that his ultimate goal is to “interpret the common interface of society, ecology and language in a myth-poetic way”. For this reason, he puts forward his own eco-political proposition that is to “become a spokesman for wild nature” and is willing to regard “wilderness” as his “main constituency”. The construction of this ecological consciousness is not only a beautiful vision in Snyder’s heart, but also a projection of his worship and love for ecology.

Worship of nature deities. Worship of nature deities refers to humans regarding natural phenomena such as natural forces and natural objects as objects with life, will, and great power. There are a large number of portrayals and descriptions of nature deities in *Mountains and Rivers Without End*. The reason for this is mostly because Snyder expects to inspire people to restore their awe of nature through invoking the tradition of myth in literary works and heal the spiritual crisis faced by humans in modern civilization.

In “*The Mountain Spirit*”, the poet enters the valley. In a trance, it seems that he has a conversation with the mountain spirit in a dream and meets an old woman. “*You had a bit of fame once in the city for poems of mountains, here it’s real*”. “*But what do you know of minerals and stone. For a creature to speak of all that scale of time — what for? Still, I’d like to hear that poem*”. “—*The Mountain Spirit and me like ripples of the Cambrian Sea dance the pine tree old arms, old limbs, twisting, twining scatter cones across the ground stamp the root-foot DOWN and then she’s gone*”. These verses are extremely worthy of in-depth exploration for the “portrayal of goddesses” of ecology. Jung believed that “one of the main archetypes in the collective unconscious of humans is the mother archetype. Nature is generally compared to the mother who gave birth to humans, and the goddess is the main manifestation of the image”.

In “*The Dance*”, the poet describes “*the wild dance of the goddess Izanami when she falls, the ridicule of the gods, the excessive description and materialization of the goddess’s body*”. In short, the goddess metaphors in these two articles are symbols of awe for ecology. First, compared with the long river of history and the ecology that embraces all things, humans are just like dust. The divinity of nature symbolizes that revering nature is the only way out for humans. Second, the portrayals in these two poems are also a reflection of the battered ecology: the mountain spirit appears in the poet’s dream in the hunched image of an old woman, or shows an overly materialized and bullied image, meaning that reverence for nature may have declined. It also implies the suffering of the goddess (the destruction of nature) and the separation of humans from nature. Snyder’s writing isn’t just painting pretty scenes—it’s a wake-up call to reconnect with nature and revive the sacred ‘goddesses’ at the heart of the wild.

Emotional Healing in Modern Society. With the progress of modern civilization, Snyder clearly recognizes the impact of the emergence of human civilization on nature and the loss of the abilities that were originally acquired in nature. Moreover, modern society has also caused the disappearance of some natural landscapes. “*When California was wild, it was one sweet bee - garden...’ Now, however, it has become “And the ground is covered with cement culverts standing on end, house-high & six feet wide culvert after culvert far as you can see covered with mobile homes, pint-size portable housing, johnny-on-the-spots, concrete freeway, overpass, underpass, exit florals, entrance curtsies, railroad bridge, long straight miles of divider oleanders...”* (“Covers the Ground”). Therefore, when Gary Snyder depicts modern scenes, besides describing the negative aspects of modern scenes, he will inevitably recall ecological images, silently expressing that “humans cannot live without nature”.

Nature is an outlet for modern people suffocating in life and a narrow crevice that brings emotional healing. “*Walking the New York Bedrock Alive in the Sea of Information*” describes a large number of “*people coming and going in modern cities, concrete jungles, various sharp roars, and information tides*”. It seems civilized, yet it is also savage as “*Wind blows through black tunnels spiderwebs, fungus, lichen*”. To make the poem more contrasting, Snyder uses a large number of ecological images among

the steel and iron structures for contrast. He compares “*New York*” to a “*sea anemone*”, “*Information*” to a “*Sea*”, and “*helicopters*” to bees “*Trading pollen and nectar in the air*”. The whining of chainsaws, and “*Clean crisp white dress white skin women and men*” become the predators of “*ostracod*” in the civilized city, longing for photosynthesis. At the very end, there appears “*As the street bottom - feeders with shopping carts Slowly check out the air for the fall of excess, Of too much, flecks of extra, From the higher - up folks in the sky As the fine dusk gleam Lights a whole glass side of Forty some stories Soft liquid silver, Beautiful buildings we float in, we feed in*”. The appearance of momentary natural elements is a healing agent for urbanites. Looking up at the setting sun has become a luxury in urban life. However, “*human civilization is but a moment, and continental drift is the eternal rhythm*” (Snyder, 1990). Humans are always inseparable from nature. In many literary works, the shadow of nature can be found. For example, “*The wise find pleasure in mountains, while the benevolent find pleasure in waters*”. Mountains and waters are symbols of nature. There are also Zen thoughts like “*One flower is a world; one leaf is a bodhi*”. Wildness is “the process and essence of nature” and the biological attribute that makes humans and all things fit together. Therefore, “our bodies are wild” and “it can be said that the body is within the mind. Both are wild” (Snyder, 1990). In literature, nature isn’t merely a backdrop of beauty—it’s a mirror reflecting the author’s psyche. These vivid depictions go beyond admiration for the environment; they lay bare the writer’s inner world, blending reverence for nature with raw self-revelation.

4. The Regenerative Ecology Underlying Psychology in *Mountains and Rivers Without End*

“Human–Environment Self-Realization” is the ultimate goal of deep ecology. Psychologist Arne Naess believes that self-realization progresses from the ego to the social self, and then to the metaphysical “Self”, that is, the ecological self, which can be achieved only in the relationship with the human community and the earth community (Liu & Fan, 2019, p. 17). The natural environment is not only where humans come from but also where they return. “*When I view things, all things are colored by my perspective*”. It is precisely because of Snyder’s concept of community and his being influenced by Chinese Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian thoughts that the natural scenery in his works can form a whole.

Combined with Arne Naess’s deep ecological theory, Snyder’s ecological thought can be deeply analyzed from two perspectives: ecological central equality and self-realization. Snyder’s deep ecology emphasizes that all living beings have intrinsic value and advocates ecological central equality. The first poem in “*Mountains and Rivers Without End*”, “*Endless Streams and Mountains*”, depicts the integration of humans and nature in the way of unfurling a scroll: mountain streams, forest hollows, pedestrians, post stations, ancient temples and monasteries, cruise ships, fishermen... Every scene and object in the scroll appears peaceful and serene, just like the Peach Blossom Spring described by Tao Yuanming, reflecting a state of “benign interaction” of the unity of heaven and man. Harmony within

the natural world extends beyond the simple joy of cohabiting with nature. It also embraces the cooperative relationship we establish with nature to ensure our very survival. Ecologists term this cooperative state “symbiosis”.

In addition, Snyder’s poetics of ecological integrity hinges on interconnectedness, articulated through layered metaphors. Images like “nets”, mirrored surfaces (e.g., the “two-sided mirror” in “Bubbs Creek Haircut”), and energy cycles analogize nature’s interdependence. These metaphors operationalize Buddhist cosmology—notably *Indra’s Net*, where jewels reflect all existence—to frame ecology as an indivisible web. Crucially, Snyder anchors this abstraction in tangible processes: energy flows and material recycling become poetic testaments to universal symbiosis.

The concept of equality is the key to resisting “centralism”. Snyder’s ecological conscience of harmonious coexistence is mainly manifested in the harmonious living state of peaceful coexistence between humans and other lives. The concept of equality is a deeper thought based on harmonious coexistence in his ecological consciousness. Drawing on the “*no middle, no two sides*” often mentioned in Zen thought from things around us is called “the middle way”. Essentially, the “middle way” means equality of all sentient beings and treating everything without discrimination. Snyder, deeply influenced by Chinese Zen culture, permeates this concept of equality into his ecological consciousness and philosophical thought. Snyder writes in “*Instruction*”: “*Engine switch off, on. Off, on. Just two places. Forever, or, not even one*”. In his view, life is originally composed of repetitive trivial matters. The process of people constantly repeating these trivial matters should also be regarded as a process of “practice”, and our entire world is the place for practice. All things have philosophical implications. These thoughts guide his ecological literary creation and ecological practice throughout his life.

Snyder’s lived experiences—from mountaineering in the Pacific Northwest to studying Zen in Japan—profoundly shaped his ecological ethos, enabling him to craft works that bridge physical landscapes and psychological states. “*When an individual’s abilities, resources, and needs are consistent with the requirements and supplies of the environment, the individual is more likely to experience a sense of control over the environment and a sense of self-worth and can actively make adjustments*”. The forty years of creating “*Mountains and Rivers Without End*” is a period of continuous evolution of Gary Snyder’s life experience, ideological development, and literary creation. In his youth, under the impact of multiple cultures, he acted on impulse and wandered around, traversing east and west to seek the wisdom for the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature. In middle age, he returned to the mountains and lived a peaceful and indifferent life while actively engaging in the world. In old age, he still kept writing and continued to influence generations of people with his thoughts and poetry. Natural beauty and Eastern ecology have made Snyder’s life journey and creative journey form an intertextuality. Therefore, Gary Snyder’s life journey and the creative background of “*Mountains and Rivers Without End*” are the external manifestations of the “human–ecological consistency theory” in ecological psychology. It is his life trajectory and the

ecology he is in that make his words and emotions flow like springs.

5. Interpretation of Ecological Sublimation from the Perspective of Ecological Psychology

“Prototype theory is a psychological theory that focuses on the universal symbols and patterns in the collective unconscious of humans”. In literature and art, these prototypes often appear in specific images and symbols, thus influencing people’s cognitive and emotional experiences. Snyder believes that “text is information stored for many years. The strata of rocks, the layering of pollen in swamps, the expanding annual rings of tree trunks can all be regarded as texts. The “calligraphy” of rivers is text because rivers meander on the ground, leaving traces of previous riverbeds in layers. The layers of historical accumulation of language become the text of language itself”. Creators express subjective feelings and experiences and achieve “ecological sublimation” by endowing objective things and texts with life and emotions. In *“Mountains and Rivers Without End”*, the existence and arrangement of ecological images themselves carry rich psychological and symbolic meanings.

5.1 The Image of Water

In 1974, Snyder created the poem *“The Flowing”* (1996, p. 100). The four sections are *“Headwaters”*, *“Riverbed”*, *“Falls”*, and *“Rivermouth”*, which together form a long poem that describes different forms of flowing water. Water inherently has various connotations such as “peacefulness”, “turbulence”, “circulation”, and “repetition”. The four combined forms of water are combined in a leaping manner. There is no clear logical relationship between one water and another, and conjunctions and prepositions that serve as connections are omitted. One picture follows another. On the surface, they seem disjointed and unconnected, but in fact, there is an intrinsic and close connection. The four completely different water flow pictures directly present a recurring *“alternation of day and night, ups and downs”*. The poem also uses synesthesia and association to create a dual enjoyment of sight and sound for the reader. First, different flowing water imagery. The description of flowing water can be used as both visual imagery language and auditory imagery language. Although the four kinds of flowing water are different, each contains different philosophies of life. The author further implies different stages of life and its cyclical nature. At the source of the water, *“Lord of the Headwaters, making Rocks of water, Water out of rocks”*. Here, the lord of all sources is not only a statue but also the source of the gurgling water. It is the beginning of all life and symbolizes the author’s reverence for the origin of life. The imagery of flowing water serves as a versatile literary device, evoking both vivid visual depictions and resonant auditory sensations. While the text delineates four distinct manifestations of aqueous movement—each embodying distinct philosophies of existence—their collective symbolism extends to reflect life’s cyclical progression through its developmental stages. The scene depicted at the riverbed shifts from the source to the Cerillo. People of all kinds *“catching salmon, talking, napping scattered through the rocks”*. *“The lift and plume of the water curling out and over, Salmon arching in the standing spray”*. People’s lives are inseparable from water. The scaffolding and fishing nets at the

riverbed symbolize people's taking from nature. Then the picture shifts to the third section, the waterfall: "*Crash and thunder on the boulders at the base painless, playing, droplets regather seek the lowest, and keep going down in gravelly beds. There is no use, the water cycle tumbles round —*". The waterfall surges freely, changes wantonly, and waters different vegetation. From the edge of the stone to behind the stone, from high to low, flowing into the riverbed is "circulation". It is the gushing and bursting forth in life and even more "inherited in one continuous line and developing independently". At the rivermouth, "*Once sky-clear and tickling through pineseeds humus, moss fern stone but NOW the vast loosing of all that was found, sucked, held, born, drowned, sunk sleepily into the sea*". Sweeping by with everything mixed in, rushing towards the sea, it is an end and also the beginning of a new cycle.

Second, due to the fluidity of water, people naturally associate water with the passage of time. Just as in Chinese culture, there is also "It passes on just like this, not ceasing day or night". The attributes of water that flows ceaselessly, cannot be stagnant, and cannot be reversed are also the attributes of time. The metaphor of water for time has even become a kind of collective unconscious. In the poem, the poet constructs pictures of flowing water far from the real world. Water metaphorizes change and the passage of time. Snyder uses water to express the impermanence and unpredictability of life. Water often represents the changing state of life and the fluidity within his heart, reflecting his exploratory spirit and profound thinking about the impermanence of nature during that period. In addition, water also symbolizes the cycle and destination of life. The convergence of rivers and their return to the sea symbolize the origin and ultimate destination of life, reflecting Snyder's complete worldview.

5.2 *The Image of Mountains*

Snyder is a "mountain poet", and the mountains have made Snyder who he is. As a mountain enthusiast, Snyder joined a mountaineering team at a very young age and roamed in the mountains. He said, "*Before I was twelve, I had climbed many mountains. At thirteen, I was taken to climb the snow peaks in the Pacific Northwest. In a place with such rocks and such a sky, I felt that I had been changed forever*". Snyder once expressed in the poem "*Climbing Mount Tehachapi in the Sierra Nevada Range Again After Thirty-One Years*": "*Range after range of mountains / Year after year / I am still in love*". As a poet, Snyder's works have a strong mountain flavor. His first poetry collection, "*Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems*", is mainly about his mountain life. It echoes the secluded life of the Tang Dynasty poet - monk Han Shan on Mount Tiantai, with unique charm and laying the theme and style for Snyder's poetry creation.

Just as Professor Ou Hong said in his doctoral dissertation "*Snyder and Chinese Culture*", like Han Shan, "*Snyder has a 'mountain soul'*". The towering mountains "*Big ranges lurk behind these rugged little outcrops—these spits of low ground rocky uplifts layered pinnacles aslant...*" In this poem, mountains are depicted as majestic and hidden forces, symbolizing the deep-seated natural forces and spiritual challenges. These mountains represent the peaks and valleys in the journey of life, reminding

people that in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, they need to face seemingly endless natural forces. Snyder's depiction of mountains reflects his awe of nature, and mountains have become a symbol of his personal spiritual growth and inner peace. Especially when facing the fluctuations of the complex modern society, he gains strength and balance from the mountains in nature. The mountains of Buddha nature "Mountains will be Buddhas then when—bristlecone needles are green! Scarlet penstemon flowers are red!" Here, mountains symbolize transcendence and tranquility, reflecting Snyder's greater absorption of Zen and Buddhist thoughts in his later years. Mountains are compared to "Buddhas", symbolizing eternal wisdom and a peaceful state of mind. This also reflects that through his long-term interaction with nature, he has finally reached a certain spiritual balance.

5.3 The Image of Wilderness

"Jackrabbit" and "The Black-tailed Hare" are two poems that describe rabbits. The first rabbit poem reads: "Jackrabbit, black-tailed Hare by the side of the road, hop, stop. Great ears shining, you know me a little. A lot more than I know you". The other poem is described as follows: "A grizzled black-eyed jackrabbit showed me irrigation ditches, open paved highway, white line to the hill...bell chill blue jewel sky banners, banner clouds flying: the mountains all gathered, juniper trees on their flanks, cone buds, snug bark scale in thin powder snow over rock scrabble, pricklers, boulders, pines and junipers singing. The mountains singing to gather the sky and the mist to bring it down snow-breath ice-banners — and gather it water sent from the peaks flanks and folds down arroyos and ditches by highways the water the people to use it, the mountains and juniper do it for us said the rabbit". In these two poems, Snyder elevates the role of animals (rabbits) to the position where they can act as human mentors. Especially in the second poem, Snyder makes animals (the other) speak and act as narrators, teaching us that the "rainfall cycle" is the result of the joint prayer for rain by mountains and the forests on the mountains. From a spiritual perspective, this poem also teaches readers to transcend the values of "anthropocentrism". Through the perspective of rabbits, the creation story of rainfall comes alive between the lines. From an ecological perspective, the relationship between humans and nature, and between humans and animals is symbiotic, complementary, and dialogical, rather than a dominant relationship between master and slave.

In Snyder's "The Canyon Wren", the narrator mourns the breakneck pace of environmental destruction as the New Melones Dam looms on the horizon—a stark symbol of humanity's collision with the natural world. As a result, not only will the "mountains and waters" here change, but the life of the canyon wren will also be affected from then on. Therefore, this poem will always preserve the "memory of the wren and the earth": "These songs that are here and gone, here and gone, to purify our ears" (Snyder, 1996, p. 91). Another allegorical poem about the environment is "The Old Woodrat's Stinky House". A coyote advises people to cultivate a sense of local attachment and not to dirty their own homes: "piled up for centuries placed under overhangs—caves in cliffs—at the bottom, antique fecal pellets; orange-yellow urine-amber. Shreds of every bush that grew eight thousand years ago;

another rain, another name. Cottontail boy said 'Woodrat makes me puke! Shitting on his grandmother's blankets—stinking everything up—pissing on everything—yucky old woodrat! Makes his whole house stink!'—Coyote says "You people should stay put here, learn your place, do good things. Me, I'm traveling on". In this section of the poem, the long-tailed woodrat dirties its own home, and the coyote advises the long-tailed woodrat and humans not to declare their control over the earth with dirt and mess.

In Snyder's work, ideas like *home*, *local roots*, and *tuning into the land's rhythm* aren't about patriotic slogans—they're about sinking your hands into the dirt and listening to what the earth itself has to say. These words are also linked and refer to each other with the earth. Just as the etymology of the word "ecology", "eco" represents "oikos", which means "home". However, for Snyder, home has two meanings: one is the "residential" home, and the other is the "earth" home. As usual, Snyder binds the real and the virtual together, enriching the meaning of home. "*Macaques in the Sky*" describes that when walking on the path of Nanren Lake, the leaves cover the sky like a canopy. At this time, they are in an open space — we see a clear spot in the jungle canopy of leaves — a high point arch of heavy limbs, a lookout on the forest slope— A mother monkey sits and nurses, A couple perching side by side, A face peeks from another leaf screen, pink cheeks, shining eyes, An old male, silver belly, furrowed face, laid back in a crotch harsh little cough-calls echo faces among the leaves, being ears and eyes of trees soft hands and haunches pressed on boughs and vines. Snyder stitches together the primal image of a "mother monkey" nursing her young, the cosmic maternal embrace of the Milky Way, and the mythic "mother of the heavens"—blurring biological boundaries until animals, humans, and the divine breath as one. The kindness of this mother monkey is in line with the theme of the compassionate heart of the Tantric Tara, flowing smoothly. In this poem, Snyder makes the poem not only words for reading but also regards the poem as an oral tradition and a performing practice: "*Then—wha!—she leaps out in the air the baby dangling from her belly, they float there, —she fetches up along another limb— and settles in. Her arching like the Milky Way, mother of the heavens, crossing realm to realm full of stars as we hang on beneath with all we have enjoy her flight. Drink her light. Rhesus macaque*".

In this moment, the mother monkey's journey, both physical and spiritual, serves as a bridge. It connects the wild vitality of the observed macaque, the observer's awestruck reverence, and the reader's sudden realization, intertwining them into a single, unfiltered beat of shared existence. Notably, the word "wha" here also has an audiovisual quality that evokes a moment of sudden enlightenment, capable of bringing the author or reader an instant epiphany. In other words, the mother monkey embodies a kind of wisdom of reaching the other shore, a natural allure that the author gleans from animals.

6. Conclusion

Finally, through the ecological ideas shown in *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, Snyder puts forward a new type of social and ecological view, emphasizing that human beings must return to nature and respect it while achieving self-development. The poem's ecological imagery does more than dazzle aesthetically—it lays bare the poet's intimate awareness of the symbiotic relationship binding humans to nature. Through the ideological perspective of ecological psychology and traditional Chinese culture, we can understand the ecological elements and their symbolic meanings in *Mountains and Rivers Without End* more deeply, revealing how the poet expresses the complex emotions and psychological state of his inner world through natural scenes, so as to further understand the overall structure and ideological connotations of the poem, and thus explore the author's inner mountains and rivers.

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Notes

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