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Green Beat: An Environmental Biography of Gary Snyder

Gary Snyder is one of the most important “green writers” of the twentieth century. His works include poems, prose, academic essays, and much more. He has been the subject of academic research for the last five decades and has been recognized by public and politicians alike. Snyder influenced subcultures ranging from the Beat Generation to the Hippie Movement to Eco-Villagers. “Bioregionalism” and “Deep Ecology” are central ecological thoughts and movements that, in part, were made possible by Gary Snyder.

Snyder was born in 1930 in San Francisco and is still writing and travelling. Both his writing and activism demonstrate the close links between environment and society. During his extensive travels on the American continent, as well as in Asia and Europe, Snyder always studied different cultures and their links to nature and environment. His first works gained him university degrees in anthropology and literature. Today he still shows a deep interest in environmental studies, biology, and technology, which is reflected in his writings.

The biography will be chronologically structured and will closely link Snyder’s writing to significant political and environmental events from the 1940s to the 2010s. The dissertation will be heavily based on diary entries, letters, writings, lecture series, and academic talks. A huge selection of interviews will help to form a narrative structured around Snyder’s life.

Snyder plays an important role in linking environmental movements in the second half of the twentieth century. Different concepts like “Deep Ecology,” “Bioregionalism” or “Gaia” will be covered and put into historical context. Throughout the biography, Snyder will be shown as a link between social, cultural, political, and environmental developments.

This dissertation is the first approach in depicting Snyder’s life and achievements in full. Material that can be used ranges from a huge number of interviews, audio recordings, transcripts of public talks, reviews, and much more. The main sources for this biography can be found in the writings of Snyder. These primary sources will be read and analyzed to establish a critical insight into Snyder’s life and actions.