

there develops existential flexibility and openness, what Snyder calls "the maturity of relying on nothing and responding to whatever turns up on the doorstep."

This is the goal of ending craving, attachments that ensnare and frustrate; blowing out the flame of desire (craving) being one meaning of "nirvana." As this process is accomplished, one becomes available to be at home, in freedom, wherever one wanders in the post-modern world.

Yet some geographical grounding is helpful, even necessary. For some this may mean, as with Gary Snyder, putting down roots in a locale, rural or urban, while learning from one's environment over the years an integrated way of life. This may occur in more than one location during a lifetime. Even the suburbs can teach us, with their proximity to both urban and rural, if there is community, and a garden.

For people whose "fall from place" is more thorough and continuous, geographical and cosmic centering can take the form of "pilgrimage." One "journeys to," from time to time, a place laden with personal meaning, reconnecting with the center: home for the "homeless." It could be the place of one's natural birth or spiritual rebirth. There may be more than one place a person travels to, periodically, on pilgrimage.

But the places of pilgrimage are not to be clung to anxiously, in an attempt to make them more than they are. For one remains essentially "homeless." The haiku-like ditty by Sixties troubadour Donovan, "First there is a mountain, then there is no mountain, then there is," comes to mind: places special to us have a reality, but only as passing phenomena in and out of which we ourselves pass on the way through life.

A Story Strangely Located

A young man wearing backpack and headband hitchhikes up the coast through Big Sur, amazed at what he sees, having never before encountered landscape so beautiful and majestic. His spirit expands to take it in as he moves north toward his destination, a commune in Berkeley.

He feels lonely but excited and strangely fulfilled, continuing his journey so far from his Pennsylvania home. The places he is *not*—Vietnam, in college (a year off to "search"), at home with parents—cast into relief the places he now is, the experiences he now acquires.

Then somewhere near Carmel, he is passed by a carload of his closest friends and kin driving south. He recognizes them as they pass by, although the car looks odd and futuristic, and its passengers, different, and older than he would have thought. Gazing at the Pacific, they fail to see him by the other side of the road.

They weave down the coast, through the village of Big Sur, past Pfeiffer State Park, down Highway 1 as it twists and turns, in and out of deep canyons, along the high cliffs overlooking the ocean.

The purposeful travelers drive into the southern part of Big Sur, past Esalen Institute, then past a solitary cross by a monastic road ascending the mountain. At a certain place, they park off the road, traverse the headlands and descend to a beach where, reading Whitman and bowing deeply to the Buddha-nature of all things, they toss his ashes into the sea which, it seems, reaches to infinity. ❖

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Endlessly Chewing

*Mornings before all else
before coffee even
even sometimes before a pee
I feed the two cats
the house cat and the one
outside half wild
filling their bowls with dry food
topped with a spoon of the wet stuff
made from ground-up animals
the cats mewing and scratching
and rubbing up against things—
the outside cat's bowl
brought in at night because of
the prowling raccoons—
after zazen I feed myself
or go out to eat rolls or pancakes
in some room where others
sit chewing and swallowing—
life, existence, all of this
basically ravening hunger, ourselves
nothing but a skin stretched over
appetite...each creature likewise
a feathered appetite
a furry appetite
a slimy appetite
mouths constantly open, endlessly chewing
gulping some other creature
only to become feed in turn
(Bill the Bard said it best:
"We fat all creatures else to fat us,
and we fat ourselves for maggots."
and the flocks of shoppers
the tourists, all of us
CONSUMERS
eating up the world
gorging on the latest fashions
yummy yummy for mind and tummy—
What does Kuan Yin hear with those big ears
but the crunching, sucking sounds from earth.*

—Daigan Lueck