

# Thursday Review

arts and entertainment

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## *Northwest writers explore their region*

One of the most profound thinkers on the subject of regionalism — a concept that can be extended to include a regional approach to literature — also happens to be a native of the Northwest.

The poet Gary Snyder has argued for years that writers must work consciously to develop a "sense of place" in their lives and in their writing. Snyder's definition of a sense of place means the writer tries to "correlate the overlap between ranges of certain types of flora, between certain types of biomes, and climatological areas, and cultural areas, and get a sense of that region."

In a 1971 interview with Richard Grossinger, Snyder says, "All these are exercises toward breaking our minds out of the molds of political boundaries or any kind of habituated or received notions of regional distinctions."

One of the benefits of breaking these mental boundaries to develop a sense of place, Snyder says in a 1979 interview with Michael Helm, is the one that relates to literature:

"... by being in place, we get the largest sense of community. We learn that community is of spiritual benefit and of health for everyone, that on-going working relationships and shared

concerns, music, poetry, and stories all evolve into the shared practice of a set of values, visions, and quests."

Of course, Snyder's view isn't entirely new. Many major writers — such as William Faulkner in the South or Willa Cather in the Midwest — have worked from an intimate awareness of their own region.

The peculiarities of the Northwest — by comparison a recently settled region — currently are being explored by a variety of good writers. The work of those represented here is barely a start.

*See Page 4B.*