

Renowned poet shares environmental works

By Will Clark

Crowded into the balconies of Mead Chapel Tuesday evening, an audience of students, faculty, staff and townspeople listened to Pulitzer Prize winner Gary Snyder discuss the environment, his poetry and a new means of categorizing people. Snyder, a faculty member at the University of California-Davis (UC-Davis), came to Middlebury as part of the Fulton lecture series.

Entitled "Rediscovering Turtle Island," Snyder's two hour presentation was a mix of poetry and prose. The title came from a conference organized by UC-Davis faculty called Reinventing Nature, which attempted to focus on nature as a social construct. According to Snyder, those involved in the study of humanities are "beginning to recognize that nature and culture cannot be separated."

He suggested that the environmental movement is undergoing a period of change with the addition of many new fields of study including environmental ethics, environmental history and nature literature. Public policy is also an area of change, as land managers and other officials rethink past ideas and actions and suggest new innovations,

such as wildlife corridors which link core environmental areas. Although nature is very resilient, "human beings may yet put a kink in organic development," Snyder warned.

Snyder identified two views of nature: the school of thought which gives great importance to the pristine, original condition of nature, and the view that nature's constant change means no stage is better than another. The Wise Use movement, characterized by Snyder as

(continued on page 3)

INSIDE

Arts

Road-tripping to Canada without losing your mind, page 13

In Depth

Behind the scenes at WRMC, page 15

Opinions.....	5
Features.....	9
Arts.....	13
In Depth.....	15
Sports.....	18

Renowned poet

(continued from page 1)

the "Use It Up Quick movement" accepts the latter view. "Both views," said Snyder, "suggest a natural world as subject to change or human impact."

He believes, however, that "[We] might try and resort to an older view of nature... as a locus of intrinsic worth." Snyder came to this view upon his return from ten years in a Japanese Zen monastery while listening to stories about the Native American-inspired cultural and ecological renaissance of the late 1960s-70s. In a story about the creation of the world, which became known as Turtle Island, communal living and interdependence helped build a community, such as the Native American cultures.

Although "Eurocentric history" overshadowed this view of creation, says Snyder, he realized a "sizable groundswell" of people in the Western Hemisphere who began seeing the environment in a different way.

"People began working for the environment," he noted. Many of these people settled in the region between northern California and southern British Columbia, sharing a desire to learn how to think as Native Americans did, promote economic sustenance and respect native cultures. Snyder feels these are the inhabitants of a re-energized Turtle Island.

He also feels that his poems "speak of place" and reflect the desire of people to be together on Turtle Island. The Turtle Island viewpoint is now being applied in "bioregionalism," which is a focus on a specific system, such as a watershed. Nature is now being seen as an intrinsic rather than utilitarian value.

The author of 15 books of poetry and prose, Snyder's "Practice of the Wild" is used in several courses at Middlebury. Snyder won the 1975 Pulitzer Prize for his book, "Turtle Island," a collection of some of his poems, many about the environment.