



Wilderness and Pastoral:

A Comparative Study of Ecopoetics in the Works of Gary Snyder and Robert Gray

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by

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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study of the ecopoetics of an American poet, Gary Snyder and an Australian poet, Robert Gray. The work of both poets is considered in relation to a radical school of ecological thinking which has been called 'deep ecology.' This thesis contends that both poets explore ideas of returning to nature by using two poetic strategies: distancing and de-idealising. Conjoining these two poetic strategies are two of the most discussed topics in ecocriticism – the idea of wilderness and the pastoral genre. Both poets deploy the poetics of distancing to negotiate with the paradox involved in wilderness writing. In their post-Romantic pastoral poems, they both refuse the idealisation of a Virgilian Arcadia. Rather, their works test the generic limits of the pastoral as a way of exploring evolving relationships between poetic expression and the environment. Works of both these avowedly Buddhist poets are interested in the meaning of human presence in the natural world. The thesis concludes with a consideration of Gray's and Snyder's poetic discussed in relation to the idea of human dwelling.

