

## What does it Mean to be a Cascadian?

In a USAmerica more culturally divided than since the Civil War, we examine the basic premise of bioregionalism especially as it relates to Cascadia. What does it mean to be Cascadian, how would that be better than what we have now and what makes that different from someone in any of North America's other bioregions? Using Zoom breakout rooms, spontaneous writing exercises honed over 25 yers of workshops, maps and sharing of discoveries, we may find that we can be more connected to where we live despite life amidst the death throes of the U.S. empire.

“When you find your place where you are, practice occurs.” Dōgen

1. Flash Introductions :30 seconds each: Who are you, where do you live, what did you want out of this workshop?
2. Show map. Discuss bioregionalism.

Gary Snyder from Turtle Island Introductory Note:

*A name: that we may see ourselves more accurately on this continent of watersheds and life-communities—plant zones, physiographic provinces, culture areas; following natural boundaries. The “U.S.A.” and its states and counties are arbitrary and inaccurate impositions on what is really here.*

Peter Berg from Bioregions (Resurgence No. 98, May/June 1983)

*Bioregions are geographic areas having common characteristics of soil, watersheds, climate, and native plants and animals that exist within the whole planetary biosphere as unique and intrinsic contributive parts. Consider them as possessing the diverse and necessary distinction of leaves from roots, or arms from legs. The Amazon jungle, for instance, provides so much oxygen that it can be counted as a lung of the biosphere. The Nile delta is a kidney for the Mediterranean Sea. underneath and around the industrial grids of row-houses and factories, streets and sewers, highways and railways, oil and gas pipelines, legal jurisdictions and political boundaries, this natural geography of life continues to endure.*

How would your nation's boundaries look if they were created by Gaia and not generals (sometimes) looking at a crude map?

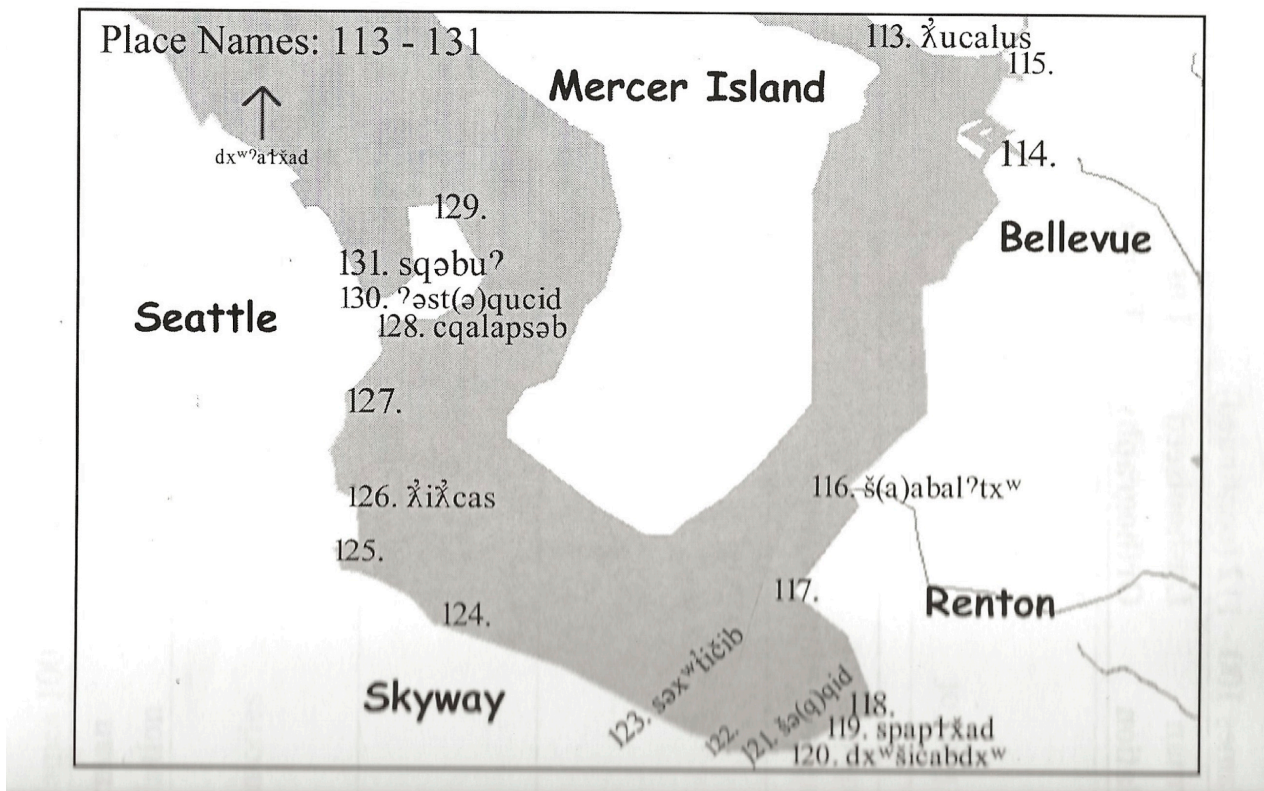
# Puget Sound Geography from T.T. Waterman

Place names:

94

*Lake Union, Lake Washington*

Map 5.9



(show place out window)

term means literally "something which emits a squeak or peep."

**125** <sup>Tux</sup>woo'kwib "loon," for a creek draining into an inlet north of Rainier Beach. Surrounding the inlet, there is a deep swamp or marsh.

**126** TL1'Ltcus "small island," for a promontory separated from the mainland by the marsh just mentioned. It lies west of the south end of Mercer Island.

Writing Exercise: Things to Do Around \_\_\_\_\_.

(Six minutes)

GARY SNYDER

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THREE WORLDS § THREE REALMS § SIX ROADS

(From *Mountains and Rivers Without End*)

THINGS TO DO AROUND SEATTLE

Hear phone poles hum.  
Catch garter snakes. Make lizard tails fall off.  
Biking to Lake Washington, see muddy little fish.  
Peeling old bark off Madrone to see the clean  
red new bark.  
Cleaning fir pitch off your hands.  
Reading books in the back of the University District  
goodwill.  
Swimming in Puget Sound below the railroad tracks.  
Dig clams.  
Ride the Kalakala to Bremerton  
See Mt. Constance from the water tower up by the art  
museum

<https://dces.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/128/2013/08/Where-You-At-Quiz.pdf> (Have participants take turns reading.)

# Where You At? A Bioregional Quiz

Developed by Leonard Charles, Jim Dodge, Lynn Milliman, and Victoria Stockley.

*Coevolution Quarterly* 32 (Winter 1981): 1.

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1. Trace the water you drink from precipitation to tap.
  2. How many days til the moon is full? (Slack of 2 days allowed.)
  3. What soil series are you standing on ?
  4. What was the total rainfall in your area last year (July-June)? (Slack: 1 inch for every 20 inches.)
  5. When was the last time a fire burned in your area?
  6. What were the primary subsistence techniques of the culture that lived in your area before you?
  7. Name 5 edible plants in your region and their season(s) of availability.
  8. From what direction do winter storms generally come in your region?
  9. Where does your garbage go?
  10. How long is the growing season where you live?
  11. On what day of the year are the shadows the shortest where you live?
  12. When do the deer rut in your region, and when are the young born?
  13. Name five grasses in your area. Are any of them native?
  14. Name five resident and five migratory birds in your area.
  15. What is the land use history of where you live?
  16. What primary ecological event/process influenced the land form where you live? (Bonus special: what's the evidence?)
  17. What species have become extinct in your area?
  18. What are the major plant associations in your region?
  19. From where you're reading this, point north.
  20. What spring wildflower is consistently among the first to bloom where you live?
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If we envision ourselves properly in a place, for me tux woo kwib watershed in the greater Cedar River watershed, practice can occur many different ways. When we tune in to our own inner guidance, we get a sense of the projects we might do that allow for that practice to occur.

Homework: write a poem (or series of poems) inspired by one of the 20 quiz items. Consider a “saturation job” in the parlance of Charles Olson or a “multi-decade research project” as Ed Sanders would put it. See also Brenda Hillman’s Minifesto.

My example:

<https://paulenelson.com/2012/05/10/60-hymn-to-indian-plum/>



## 60. Hymn to Indian Plum

*The interlocking hearts carved on benches are the cheap wedding vows of seducers.*

— *Ramón Gomez de la Serna*

& the book as spiritual instrument will not itself thicken your knowledge (will knot itself) will not itself allow yr vision to penetrate the evergreen nor the cliff above Obstruction will not itself lift you up out of animal blinders or make luminous the February witch hazel's view or the perched Anna's Hummingbird or the frail first candleflames of the Indian Plum, no.

Might make a fine window (widow?)  
to jump in & see the Light of the Supreme Lamp of Universal Virtue or Lion Banner of Universal Light, might be an in to the Subtle Light of Flames of Universal Jewels or the Banner of Oceans of Qualities of Universal Sounds. Cd open my February window and hear waves below bushtit chatter or starling gossip & jet engine wash. Maybe wait for a day when (through practice practice practice) could envision hearing the Pleasing Voice of Universal Awareness or the Undeified Treasury of Light of Oceans of Cloudlike Sounds.

Could make a topknot of that. Cd imagine it instead of a whorl of pheromones or a goatskin jailcell in which to feel the beatdown of bruxism. Could envision a Light Banner of Fragrant Flames each morning, before yoga & truckgrowl before slaughter and dehydration before the animal inside aware of extensive root systems & their eloquent oceans of concentrations that sometimes emit the scent of magnolia blossoms or jalapeño or jasmine.

Pick a vow  
at least as radiant  
as the first leafshoots  
of the February  
Indian Plum.



2:32P - 2.23.12

Lucile

illustration: Ant Parker

actually live?

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... bioregion or

I am facilitating a six week course starting next weekend, Poetics as Cosmology where we get into these issues and others. See:

<https://paulenelson.com/2020/08/23/poetics-as-cosmology/>

## **C**REATIVITY AND THE FULLY DEVELOPED BARD

I.

### **THE MULTI-DECADE RESEARCH PROJECT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR WRITING & POETRY**

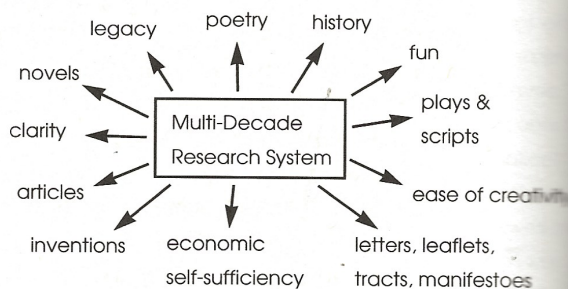
A multi-decade research project  
can be a wondrous structure  
to strengthen your art

It can kiss your work  
Help you dare

be part of the history  
of your region.

After all, a career lasts 60 or 70 years  
and a multi-decade research system  
of proper magnitude and design  
can assist

in bundles  
of projects  
year after year.





## ❧ *Oppositional Poetics* ❧

*“wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?”*

*(what is the use of poets in a bereft time?)*

—HÖLDERLIN FROM “BREAD & WINE”

HOW DO WE NOW NAVIGATE a new chaos of possibility? Our languages and investigations of utopias, prehistoric caves, history's revision from a peoples' point of view, i.e. the invasion of Turtle Island (“These were the violent beginnings of an intricate system of technology, business, politics, and culture that would dominate the world for the next five centuries”). How to navigate the “horbins” or holocausts in memory, out of memory, and to come? Is it conceivable? Dare we say oppositional is a spiritual poetics? How to navigate mythological poetic wars, planetary finitude, unfathomable sickness, starvation, and death. How to navigate the new savage state? As writers what's the task? More letters to immured powermongers? New hope in a fresh, less cynical “administration”? Putting our energy into a “candidate”? Total candor? Total renunciation? The Crips and Bloods, the newspapers say, orchestrate a kind of truce after the L.A. Insurrection—people-to-people we are made. My best friend and I argue about that word: insurrection. Want to get the facts straight. Is it simply a “frustration”? A looting? You think “riot” is a better nomer? Some of us think since January 17, 1990, everything's markedly different. My niece had “communist” smeared across her high school locker for refusing to salute the flag during Desert Storm. No, never sleep. You must go against the grain for the benefit of others.

As the Muse said to Hilda Doolittle, “Write, write or die.”

## **Brenda Hillman: Ecopoetics: A Draft for Angie**

<https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/3.-Brenda-Hillman-8.4.17-6.49.mp3>

### **Ecopoetics Manifesto: A Draft for Angie**

A— At times a poem might enact qualities brought from Romantic poetry, through Baudelaire, to modernism & beyond— freedom of form, expressivity, & content— taking these to a radical intensity, with uncertainty, complexity, contradiction;

B— such a poem employs knowledge from diverse disciplines—

including scientific vocabularies, but it does not privilege only the

human. Research includes rural & urban wilds as well as knowledge from all cultures;

creative forms bring together earth & spirit, rejecting no sources, including the personal;

C—its energies shuttle across binaries: realism/non-realism, rationality/irrationality, refuting received authority;

D— such poem like an animal could graze or hunt in its time, exploring each word, carrying symbolic rhythms, syntax and images directly between the dream and the myth; the imagination does not reject the spirit world;

E— then a poem is its own action, performing practical miracles:

1. “the miracle of language roots” — to return with lexical adventures
2. “the miracle of perception”— to honor the senses
3. “the miracle of nameless feeling”— to reflect the weight of the subjective, the contours of emotion
4. “the miracle of the social world”— to enter into collective bargaining with the political and the social

F— & though powerless to halt the destruction of bioregions, the poem can be brought away from the computer. The poet can familiarize herself with her

bioregion, to engage in activism in addition to writing, because what cannot be accomplished through art can be addressed in acts of resistance so the planet won't die of the human.

From *Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire*, with permission from Wesleyan University Press, 2013.

Brenda Hillman is the author of ten collections of poetry: *White Dress*, *Fortress*, *Death Tractates*, *Bright Existence*, *Loose Sugar*, *Cascadia*, *Pieces of Air in the Epic*, *Practical Water*, for which she won the LA Times Book Award for Poetry, *Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire*, which received the 2014 Griffin Poetry Prize and the Northern California Book Award for Poetry; and her most recent *Extra Hidden Life*, *Among the Days*. In 2016 she was named Academy of American Poets Chancellor. Among other awards Hillman has received are the 2012 Academy of American Poets Fellowship, the 2005 William Carlos Williams Prize for poetry, and Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation.