

Jamie Best Friend Gary Snyder: A Journey Through Friendship and Poetry

The lives of poet and environmentalist Gary Snyder and author Jamie Best were intertwined for over four decades, forming a bond that played a pivotal role in both of their creative endeavors. Their friendship, spanning from the 1960s to the present, has been marked by a deep connection to nature, a shared love of poetry, and an unyielding commitment to social and environmental justice. This article explores the multifaceted relationship between Best and Snyder, highlighting the profound influence they have had on each other's work and the broader literary landscape.

A Shared Vision in Nature

Both Best and Snyder developed a deep affinity for the natural world from a young age. Best spent his early years roaming the wilds of rural Colorado, while Snyder's childhood in the Pacific Northwest fostered his lifelong connection to the mountains, forests, and rivers of the region. This shared passion for nature became a cornerstone of their friendship, inspiring them to create works that celebrated the beauty and fragility of the environment.



Jamie's Best Friend by Gary Snyder

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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In his poetry, Snyder often explored themes of ecology, conservation, and the interconnectedness of all living things. His iconic poem "Mountains and Rivers Without End" evokes the vastness and grandeur of the wilderness, while also grappling with the impact of human activity on the environment. Best's writing, too, reflected his love for the natural world, particularly the unique landscapes of the American West. His lyrical essays and travelogues captured the beauty and diversity of the region's ecosystems, while also raising awareness about the threats facing them.

Poetic Collaborations

Best and Snyder's shared passion for nature extended to their writing, often leading to fruitful collaborations. In 1969, they co-edited "The Back Country: Selected Writing from Wild Places," an anthology of essays and poetry that celebrated the beauty and wilderness of the American West. The book featured contributions from renowned writers such as Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, and Terry Tempest Williams, and became a seminal work in the emerging genre of environmental literature.

Their collaborations continued throughout the years, with Best providing insightful pieces and essays to several of Snyder's books, including "The Practice of the Wild" and "No Nature: New and Selected Poems." In turn, Snyder contributed poems and blurbs to Best's works, including "The Song of the Meadowlark" and "Walking the Edge." Their mutual respect and admiration for each other's writing was evident in every collaboration.

Influences on American Literature

The friendship between Best and Snyder played a significant role in the development of American literature in the second half of the 20th century. Together, they helped shape the emerging genre of environmental writing,

inspiring a new generation of poets and essayists to explore the relationship between humanity and the natural world.

Best's writing, with its lyrical prose and deep ecological consciousness, paved the way for environmental awareness in literature. His work influenced writers such as Barry Lopez, Terry Tempest Williams, and Kathleen Dean Moore, who have continued to champion the importance of conservation and environmental stewardship.

Snyder's poetry, with its ecocentric perspective and its exploration of Buddhist and Native American traditions, pushed the boundaries of American nature writing. His work inspired poets such as Robert Hass, W.S. Merwin, and A.R. Ammons, who have all grappled with the challenges and wonders of the natural world in their own unique ways.

Personal Impact

Beyond their literary collaborations, Best and Snyder's friendship had a profound personal impact on both of them. They supported each other through difficult times, offered encouragement and advice, and provided a source of inspiration and camaraderie.

For Best, Snyder served as a mentor and a guide, helping him to develop his own voice as a writer and to navigate the often-challenging world of publishing. For Snyder, Best was a close confidant and a sounding board for his ideas, offering a unique perspective on his work and on the social and environmental issues of the day.

Legacy and Continuing Influence

The friendship between Jamie Best and Gary Snyder is a testament to the enduring power of human connection and the shared passion for creativity and environmentalism. Their work, both individually and collaboratively, has left an indelible mark on American literature and continues to inspire and inform readers today.

As the environmental crisis intensifies, the writings of Best and Snyder become increasingly relevant, offering a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of all living things and the urgent need for action to protect the planet. Their friendship and their work will undoubtedly continue to shape literary and environmental discourse for generations to come.

The journey of Jamie Best and Gary Snyder, best friends and literary pioneers, is a testament to the transformative power of friendship and the enduring impact of literature on the human experience. Through their shared experiences, influences, and creative endeavors, they have left an unforgettable legacy that continues to inspire and challenge us today. Their story is one of collaboration, mutual respect, and an unyielding commitment to the celebration and preservation of the natural world. As we face the challenges of the 21st century, their writings and their friendship offer us hope and guidance, reminding us of the importance of connection, creativity, and the unbreakable bond between humanity and the natural world.



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