

Toast: Are We Done Yet?

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coastal property into flood plains that could not be developed. So it made such studies illegal.

More Rocky Mountain Fires Coming

Researchers say that a "fire deficit" has accumulated in the West over the past 100 years. Today's burn rates fall well below the burn rates of the last three thousand years. As the West continues to warm, that deficit

will trigger fires that are fiercer and harder to contain. "The rate of biomass burning should be much higher," said the lead climatologist in the recently released study.

Patrick J. Bartlein, Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Oregon claims "fire should be more common and widespread than it has been. Fire activity hasn't grown with the warming climate because since about 1900 Westerners have worked hard to keep fire out. The divergence between climate and fire activity is unsustainable." Bartlein added, "Eventually, nature will catch up."

The study used cores of sediments extracted from the bottom of mountain lakes to study patterns of natural fire. These sediments contain layers of charcoal particles that fell from smoke plumes or were carried into lakes by streams after wildfires. These bands can be read like a timeline. Combined with other data, they allow scientists to reconstruct 3,000 years of wildfire history in the West.

The west had more fires when its climate was warmer and drier, during, for example the Medieval Climate warming from about 950 to 1250.

There was far less fire during the cool and moist Little Ice Age from 1400 to 1700.

In the last 100 years, fire activity plummeted, even as a strong signal of global warming from human activities emerged. Wildfires during most of the 20th century were almost as infrequent as they were during the Little Ice Age, about 400 years ago. However, only a century ago, fires were as frequent as they were about 800 years ago, during the warm and dry Medieval Climate Anomaly. "In other words, humans caused fires to shift from their 1,000-year maximum to their 1,000-year minimum in less than 100 years."

Recent trends suggest the fire deficit is now being paid back. Since the 1980s, fire frequency in the West has increased more than 300 percent, and the annual acreage burned has jumped 500 percent.

"Policymakers and others need to re-evaluate how we think of the past century to allow us to adjust and prepare for the future," the study's several authors finally concluded.



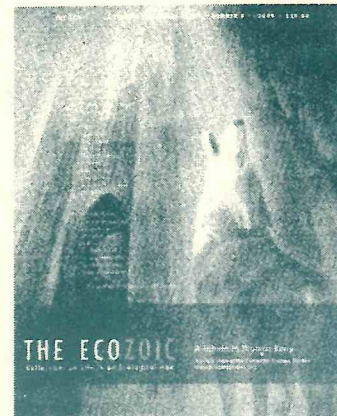
A Review of Recent Books

THE ECOZOIC REFLECTIONS ON LIFE IN AN ECOLOGICAL AGE: A TRIBUTE TO THOMAS BERRY, COMPILED AND PUBLISHED BY THE CENTER FOR ECOZOIC STUDIES, 2516 WINNINGHAM ROAD CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA, 27516, \$20.00, WWW.ECOZOICSTUDIES.ORG.

The Ecozoic is an anthology of tributes to Father Thomas Berry, a priest of the Passionist Religious Order of

the Catholic Church, whose presence and writings made a transformative impression on untold numbers of people. Transformative? Yes.

The book contains reflections, memories, poems from 138 individuals, including Planet Drum Foundation's founder Peter Berg. The word "ecozoic" is used over and over again



people's lives. Father Berry, a truly remarkable man, departed from his physical body on June 1, 2009 but he left a profound legacy of hope, inspiration, possibilities, a road map, and sage advice for all of humanity: *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story* with Brian Swimme, *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future*, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the 21st Century*, plus others and a myriad of lectures and articles.

As I began reading this book, I found myself setting it aside in order to read one of Berry's seminal works, *The Dream of the Earth*, published in 1988. His wasn't a dream about the earth but rather of Earth itself: an outline, a plan, a methodology highlighting a way for humans to move forward from the chaotic ending of the destructive Cenozoic Age into the amazing, regenerative possibilities of the Ecozoic Age. A time for we humans to begin viewing ourselves as one species among many species with a vital responsibility to the whole Earth Universe community.

In Berry's words, "The Universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects." "Through us humans,

underscore the dramatic change Berry himself and his philosophies created in peo-

the Universe reflects on itself." Think about that statement. It is a profound, deeply thought-provoking idea. It's no wonder Berry's ideas, and his enthusiastic expression of them, carried such a strong resonance.

The Ecozoic includes Berry's obituary and elegies delivered at his funeral mass at Green Mountain Monastery in Greensboro, Vermont on June 8, 2009. Also "An Intellectual Biography of Thomas Berry" compiled by Mary Evelyn Tucker, a long time student, friend, and associate, that outlines the process by which Thomas Berry acquired, filled out and elaborated his very original, inspiring, many-faceted philosophy.

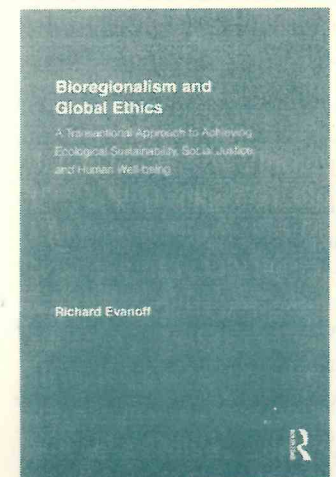
The Ecozoic is well worth reading and provides a clear and moving understanding of how Thomas Berry inspired so many. It is very likely to lead you to read his works, as it did me. His books are available through the Thomas Berry Foundation, website: www.thomasberry.org, and Amazon.com.

— Jean Lindgren

EVANOFF, RICHARD. BIOREGIONALISM AND GLOBAL ETHICS: A TRANSACTIONAL APPROACH TO ACHIEVING ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND HUMAN WELL-BEING. NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 2011. 285 PP. \$125.00

There is a time lag between the activism and radical ideas of the founders of social movements and the absorption of those ideas into academia. For bioregionalism, this lag time has been about twenty-five years, if one wants to roughly date the movement to 1973 with the founding of Planet Drum, and its first academic consoli-

dation to Michael Vincent McGinnis's 1999 edited collection, *Bioregionalism*. Kirkpatrick Sale's 1985 *Dwellers in the Land*, published by Sierra Club books, popularized the movement for a wide audience. Even as the term bioregionalism has become eclipsed in public consciousness by sustainability, bioregionalism is making inroads into academia, as evidenced by Robert L. Thayer's *LifePlace* (2003), Richard



Evanoff's *Bioregionalism and Global Ethics* (2011), and *The Bioregional Imagination* (2012), co-edited by Tom Lynch,

Cheryll Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster. Although many bioregionalists may be skeptical of academia ("That's academic!" codes for intellect, bereft of action), I believe that we need bioregionally-oriented people making a difference in all walks of life, from politicians to urban planners, to poets, to professors, the latter entrusted with educating future generations.

Evanoff's book speaks primarily to environmental philosophers, specifically environmental ethicists. To oversimplify two thousand years of debate, philosophers have been divided on the fundamental question of whether humans are part of nature or whether humans are separate from nature. Shifting the terms somewhat,

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Evanoff draws from social scientist Dieter Steiner's "human ecological triangle" to argue that the relevant triad is person-society-environment, and that the three are structurally linked. This transactional framework posits humans and nature as being in a dialectical relationship, each affecting the other while preserving a measure of autonomy. Having defended this model, Evanoff can then distinguish between a dualistically-based environmental ethic, which provides arguments for why natural areas should be preserved, and a dialectically-based bioregional ethic, concerned with how human social practices interact with natural environments.

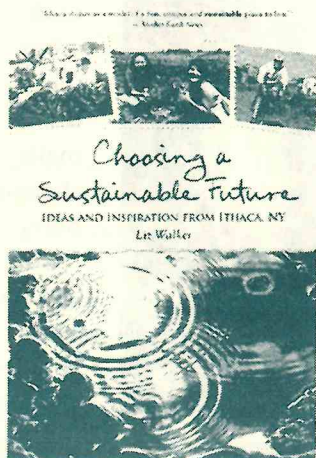
Why focus on ethics at all? Evanoff believes that "current trends towards globalization are creating entirely new social and environmental problems which require cross-cultural dialogue toward the creation of a new 'global ethic.'" As the subtitle of the book indicates, Evanoff argues that such an ethic must concern itself with achieving ecological sustainability, social justice both within and between cultures, and human well-being. Evanoff views these three goals as being systemically linked, and he sees a bioregional approach as our best hope for achieving them. He contrasts the dominant development paradigm with a bioregional paradigm, the former aiming for high economic growth on a global scale, the latter envisioning "economically self-sufficient and politically decentralized communities delinked from the global market but confederated at appropriate levels to address problems that transcend cultural borders."

Evanoff's exposition of a bioregional paradigm is indebted to the ideas of Peter Berg, Gary Snyder, and Kirkpatrick Sale. Where he goes beyond these early advocates is in his in-depth critique of globalization, detailing how it is not only ecologically unsustainable, but is structurally dependent on social injustice, as global elites and developing worlds dominate both nature and non-elites to fuel their own overconsumptive lifestyles. Evanoff's lucid and meticulously documented synthesis will not only enable a bioregional perspective to influence important conversations in the academic community, but will also serve as a valuable resource for readers to self-educate. His staggering 43-page bibliography cites 929 key works, helpfully categorized into sections on bioregionalism, capitalism and its critics, coevolution, decentralization, development, economics, environmental limits, globalization, indigenous cultures, natural science, philosophy, politics, quality of life, schools of ecological thought, social construction of nature, and social science.

— Cheryl Glotfelty

WALKER, LIZ, CHOOSING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: IDEAS AND INSPIRATION FROM ITHACA, N.Y., NEW SOCIETY PUBLISHERS, 2010. 288 PAGES. \$15.49.

While Walker explains early on that this book is not a comprehensive examination of Ithaca's projects, she has covered a significant portion of the community's transformative projects. *Choosing a Sustainable Future* spills over with practical examples of the countless ways Ithaca is creatively asserting itself as a pioneer in the sustainability revolution. From green building and



changing city planning strategies and values to case histories addressing racism, local economy,

and alternative media routes, this is packed with fine insights on how everyday people are choosing sustainability. From local food cultures and a living economy to watershed organizing, local government initiatives, health, education, and so much more, Walker details just how Ithaca is going about celebrating cultural change in a myriad of life-affirming ways.

Having founded the award-winning EcoVillage at Ithaca, the author reinforces the idea that there are so many opportunities and practical solutions for sustainability that the necessary paradigm shift is certainly not lacking for viable examples. It is not a failure of imagination we are suffering from—rather, it remains a personal and collective choice: are we each willing to fully express "sustainability" in our own lives, or are we too comfortable compromising our futures for immediate gratification. *Choosing a Sustainable Future* provides a model blueprint and specific tools for any movement and community willing to live up to its potential and face the crisis head on.

-- Matt Switzer

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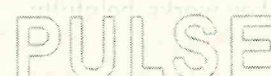
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