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Whole Terrain: Reflective Environmental Practice.

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There is plenty of good information available on environmental careers, at least for people who want the facts delivered dispassionately. But, for those who treasure the passion (yet want thoughtful perspective), the offerings are more limited. *Whole Terrain*, a journal of "reflective environmental practice" is one of the most refreshing. Published annually by Antioch New England Graduate School in Keene, New Hampshire, this dignified and beautifully written publication is the first I've seen that explores environmental vocation-- i.e. calling--in a way that honors the human spirit, the living earth, and the complexity of the challenges faced by environmental professionals.

Juicy, tough-minded, and sophisticated, the journal grapples with the realities of work-for-the-earth and work-for-a-living, through first-person accounts, poetry, and think-pieces of consistent quality. It brings hard questions of ethics and strategy to the surface in a manner that empowers readers to take their own answers seriously. drawing on a spectrum of spiritual, psychological and social perspectives, *Whole Terrain* reflects the ecological world view that is expressed in poet Gary Snyder's words:

Our skills and works are but tiny reflections of the world that is innately and loosely orderly. There is nothing like stepping away from the road and heading for anew part of the watershed. Not for the sake of newness, but for the sense of coming home to our whole terrain.

Whole Terrain contains accounts of personal metamorphosis, such as Philip Clark's shift from clergyman to gardener (1993). There are sobering tales of experiences in challenging the powers and principalities, such as Dwight Welch's saga as a whistle blower in the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Pesticide Programs (1994). There are inquiries that go against the grain of activist truisms, such as David Rothenberg's 1993 essay, "A Joy of the World, Inexhaustible as Air," which probes under the surface of the idea that being closer to nature will automatically make us happier.

In speaking with such a strong voice for earth and spirit, the journal predictably falls short of representing certain sectors of the population that must ultimately be part of the solution, such as the major political parties and the corporate world. The 1994 issue, entitled "Environmental Ethics at Work," devotes only one essay directly to exploring what it will take to create a sustainable economy. Steve Chase, a founding member of the self-described "left" South End Press collective, offers a well-reasoned, informative but predictable introduction to ecological economics. Focusing on the many structural biases against sustainable business behavior, he neglects to mention a single company that has found economic benefits (such as

increased market share, or cost savings resulting from pollution prevention) through environmental responsibility, although cases (from 3M to Patagonia) abound.

For the most part, though, the essays in *Whole Terrain* are neither ideological nor predictable. They are, above all, personal: a dialogue among members of a committed community. For example, Connie Lasher's masterful concluding essay to the 1992 journal, "Comprehending Hope," addresses one of the hardest topics of all for serious environmentalists: how to sustain the gaze and draw creative energy from the situation rather than becoming paralyzed. In her quest for a spiritual framework powerful enough for this age, she draws on feminism, and the mystical traditions of Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity to write:

Prophetic and mystical responses represent a spiritual counter-current that seeks to recontextualize and renew society and the religious institutions that appease it. The mystics and the prophets have always been "voices crying in the wilderness." The poignant accuracy of that metaphor opens the opportunity for reflective environmental practice to be informed by these people, whose lives and visions have persisted as poet Adrienne Rich says, "age after age" in "reconstituting the world." (p. 51)

Heavy stuff, but always life-affirming. The spirit of *WHOLE TERRAIN* is well summarized by urban planner Peter Ryner, who wraps up a 1992 essay on the frustrations of local government work this way: "Never stop learning. Remember this stuff is for real. Get to work Laugh when you can, cry if you must, be as strong and courageous as you can, don't reject any ideas out of hand, learn from your mistakes, and most of all, don't give up."(p. 48)

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