

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CENTER FOR ECOZOIC STUDIES

By Herman Greene

Twenty years ago, I sat at the kitchen table of David Cook and Joanna Haymore, the leaders of the Piedmont Bioregional Institute, and asked if I could form the Center for Ecozoic Studies as a program of PBI. Thankfully, they said yes. The ideas for the Center for Ecozoic Studies had come from work I had done with Sue Tideman and Albert Hardy and I have always thought of the three of us as the founders of CES. On January 1, 2000, I invited supporters to a dinner at my home with Thomas Berry speaking. This was the official beginning of CES.



Center for Ecozoic Studies

*Seeking Integral Community in an
Ecological-Cultural Age*

There is a backstory to CES. I met Thomas in 1982 when he preached in a church I belonged to in Brooklyn, New York. At about the same time I read his paper on “The Spirituality of the Earth.” My life has never been the same since. At the time I was engaged in an intense practice of law in New York City and had a young family. I had little time for outside efforts.

In 1992 I moved to Raleigh, North Carolina. I had decided it was time for me to move back to my home state. In Brooklyn I had also met Jim Berry, Thomas’s brother, and I knew he lived in Raleigh and ran a center with the unusual name of “Center for Reflection on the Second Law” (CFRSL) that was related to Thomas’s work. I was eager to meet Jim and was able to do so a year or two after I arrived. Through Jim I was able to meet Thomas when he retired to Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1995. This began a long friendship, one in which I was able to meet with Thomas almost monthly for the next fourteen years.

I joined the board of CFRSL and that was the base for my ecozoic work for several years. In early 1996, I wrote Thomas a letter suggesting the formation of “The Berry Society.” I had been a member of the Jung Society for quite some time, and I imagined a similar society focused on Thomas’s work. Thomas would not hear of this and cautioned me not to “push the river.” Still game, I soon wrote another letter to him where I suggested the formation of “The Ecozoic Society.” In response to this, Jim Berry reported to me that Thomas said “The ecozoic society is not some little group in Chapel Hill.” Still game, I worked with Sue and Albert in 1997 to develop a handbook for “Support Groups for an Ecozoic Society” and distributed it. The handbook contained a design for a periodic meeting where people could share their experiences with nature, engage in an ecozoic study, and end with reflections on what actions they would take after leaving the meeting. A few support groups formed.

In the summer of 1999, the idea came to me to form a center for ecozoic studies. I wrote a paper on what the center would do and with only a few changes it still guides our work. The original paper is available [here](#). As described above, the center began on January 1, 2000.

Our first project and the one CES is perhaps best known for was publishing *The Ecozoic Reader: Critical Reflection, Story and Shared Dream Experience of an Ecological Age*. The first issue, that of fall 2000, had this nifty picture on the cover:



Further the issue had one of our most important papers in it, “Thomas Berry’s Great Work,” a review of *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*. We continued publishing *The Ecozoic Reader* until 2007. Our final issue was on “The Wisdom of Women,” which was our most popular issue ever.

In 2008 we began publishing *The Ecozoic Journal: Reflections on Life for an Ecological-Cultural Age*. We have published five issues:

1. Cosmology and the Ecozoic Society;
2. A Tribute to Thomas Berry (containing 151 Tributes to Thomas, an obituary by Margaret Berry, reports of Thomas’s Three Funeral Services, and an intellectual biography of Thomas);
3. What Is Ecozoic?;
4. Thomas Berry’s Work: Development, Difference, Importance, Applications (containing 26 scholarly papers based on presentation given at an academic conference by that name held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); and

5. *The Ecozoic Way: The Foundational Papers of the Center for Ecozoic Studies* (published earlier this year and containing the key idea that CES has worked with over the last 20 years).

The sixth and perhaps final issue of this journal will be published early in 2020 on “The Living Legacy of Thomas Berry: Stories for the Great Work.”

In addition, CES has published an online magazine since 2007. From 2007 to 2017 it was called *Ecozoic Musings: Chronicling the Transition from Economic-Industrial to Ecological-Cultural Societies*. Since 2017 it has been called *The Ecozoic Review: News, Muse, Reviews, and Practices for an Ecological-Cultural Age*.

Over two hundred authors have published their essays, reviews, and poetry in our publications. This is consistent with one of the early tasks we set for CES: “To enable the sharing of critical reflections, stories, and dream experiences concerning the Ecozoic Era.”

CES has also held numerous events including events with Joanna Macy, Matthew Fox, and Barbara Marx Hubbard.

Herman Greene has made many ecozoic presentations in the United States and also in China (six trips), Korea, Japan (two trips), India (two trips), Austria, the United Kingdom, Poland, the Azores, and Brazil, and he has published ecozoic papers in several academic journals.

Officers, directors, volunteers, and members of CES have engaged in myriad activities. We have limited our email list (approximately 1,100 people) to those who have active interest and engagement in work that is related to Thomas’s teachings. Most of our constituents have a connection with one or more of the following communities—Thomas Berry people, the process-relational philosophies community, Teilhardians, Earth Charter people, spiritual ecology people, and people who are working on deep sustainability. We believe our most important task is sustaining people in the Great Work.

For some time we have conducted our work based on four categories: (1) publications, (2) education and events, (3) arts and action, and (4) global services (constituent services and internal operations). The third category has largely concerned activities we undertake in connection with other groups. This has become increasingly important as we are now working closely with the Earth Law Center, the Institute for Ecological Civilization, and the International Process Network. We have one current project of special importance which is working with the Earth Law Center on the first legal casebook on Earth law.



Alice Loyd and Herman Greene

I fear to single out anyone for their contributions to CES because so many have helped. I cannot resist, however, thanking Alice Loyd for her long, faithful, inspired work and remembering with special fondness Susannah Tuttle, who volunteered full-time for a whole year with as an intern CES when we were first getting started. I am also especially appreciative of what I have learned from working with Arturo Escobar, of the generous support and counsel Jim Peacock has given, and of Bill Peck's sage advice. I am also very thankful for Laura Baldwin and Sandi Greene who have handled the administrative parts of CES and for the design work of Katie Irons Dyer and Martha Kelder who together gave us our logo.

On December 7, 2019, 23 people gathered in Chapel Hill to celebrate the 20th anniversary of CES and the work of Alice Loyd.



A good time was had by all.