

Clear Creek: Toward a Natural Philosophy

Erik Reece

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Erik Reece's memoir *Clear Creek* covers his bucolic second life in the countryside, laying forth a vision of living in and alongside nature.

Reece removed himself to the woods in the style of Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*—while also rejecting Thoreau's purist principles, “smug moral superiority,” and efforts to convert others to his lifestyle. He did not believe that city people led lives of quiet desperation; rather, his goal was authenticity, and he hoped to lead a more deliberate life. Thus, he immersed himself in the “wild grapevine, the wild ginger, the wild rushing water” around a home on Clear Creek. There, he sat with his concerns about environmental degradation against a backdrop of pristine woodland and old barns.

An ode to pastoral lifestyles, the book is filled with descriptions of rustic living on a daily basis alongside black-and-white photographs that illuminate its setting in time with Reece's rich descriptions of singing birds, other wildlife, and plants coming alive after a rain. And in addition to recording birds chirping and leaves crunching underfoot, Reece covers his chores, hikes through the woods, and sightings of neighbors. The book proceeds at the same languid pace, moving through meditations on nature and one's environmental footprint. Reece's reflections on inner landscapes compared to outer landscapes and on the active life versus the contemplative life are compelling, as are his profound reflections on humanity's place in the natural world.

Featuring palpable descriptions of rustic living, the philosophical treatise *Clear Creek* envisions a sustainable lifestyle that embraces the natural world.

JOSEPH S. PETE (September / October 2023)

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