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1998

**Review of *Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place*  
Edited by William Vitek and Wes Jackson**

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Gilreath-Mullen, Tisha, "Review of *Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place* Edited by William Vitek and Wes Jackson" (1998). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1290.

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*Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place.* Edited by William Vitek and Wes Jackson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. Works cited, index. xiii + 285 pp. \$35.00 cloth, \$17.00 paper.

Let me begin by stating that *Rooted in the Land* is not an anthology that deals exclusively with the Great Plains. It includes new and previously published essays dealing with a sense of place and community in states as far away from the Plains as Massachusetts, Vermont, and Kentucky. Nevertheless, as a work of environmental literature, *Rooted in the Land* should serve Great Plains scholars as an exemplary text, offering a variety of perspectives on dealing with the environmental impact of a consumptive society.

William Vitek and Wes Jackson are clear in their volume's goals: first, to address the assumption that nature is best left alone and that wild landscapes are those in which humans are only visitors; and second, to provide a platform from which to discuss the importance of human communities rooted in a storied landscape. All of the essays included share the importance of a placed human community as their central theme, and most agree that

with changes in community attitudes toward the health of the land it might be possible for a culture simultaneously to benefit land and community. Brian Donahue in his essay "Community Farming in Massachusetts," for instance, talks extensively about Weston, Massachusetts, a town outside Boston that successfully integrated a concept of community-owned land, or "commons," back into its culture. The positive results for Weston have included the preservation of its town center from "development"; the encouragement of community farming, offering families an opportunity to involve themselves directly and intimately with the land; and a harvest of organic produce helping to ensure that Weston continues its tradition of self-reliance. Eric Zencey's "The Rootless Professors" differs from most of the anthology's pieces in its lament over an appalling lack of identification with place among those in academia forced to relocate according to job offers rather than knowledge or love of a particular landscape.

*Rooted in the Land* works well as an integrated text offering a fresh perspective on the interrelationships between humans and the land they inhabit. The essays are clear in suggesting that while some environments are healthier left wild, others may actually benefit from a community's conscientious and careful habitation.

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