

REVIEW

A Review of “*Wilding Ecologies, Walking-with Glacier: An Educational Novella*”

Review Reference

Malone, K., Blenkinsop, S., Jickling, B., Morse, M. (2024). *Wilding Ecologies, Walking-with Glacier: An Educational Novella*. Palgrave Macmillan

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Wilding Ecologies, Walking-with Glacier: An Educational Novella invites readers to accompany the authors, fourteen contributors, as well as the Hardangerjøkulen glacier in Norway, and its more-than-human inhabitants on a creative curation of tales and imagery. It is an honest, at times intimate, collection of stories that are informative and ‘touch’ the corporeal and imagined experiences of *being* in this place, weaved as entanglements of wonder, curiosity, grief, complexities, unknowing and humbleness. There is a temporal scale in this wild ecological novella that is present to these precarious times of climate change and the subsequent drastic retreat of glaciers, both at the micro level of sensory, embodied encounters and the macro level of geological time scales. The authors navigate through the paradoxes of human induced catastrophic events where nature is in a perpetual process of transformation.

Wild pedagogy is at the heart of this educational novella. As a nascent idea since 2014, an international group of educators have engaged with *wild pedagogies* through “ongoing and immersive travelling dialogues” (Malone, et al., 2024, p. 20) in a series of gatherings, or colloquia in various locations around the world. The authors, having contributed to the scholarship in environmental education over many years, acknowledge that education must change radically to respond to ecological crises. This novella aims to rupture anthropocentrism, in terms of what the authors identify as a problem of *control*, that positions the human as separate from nature and having power over it.

Wilding ecologies, as the authors claim, is a means to relinquish this control, to make profound changes from the personal, to the wider educational sphere, that is undertaken in a range of ways. Firstly, the mode of movement through this landscape is by walking, which has a long tradition in Norway. The “walking” genre is well evidenced historically in the ramblings of poets, philosophers and nature writers, and demonstrates the “intensity” of human and other-than human “experience.” Robert Macfarlane (2019) who is often cited in this novella, offers depth and clarity as this quotation illustrates when “blue” ice is witnessed:

[Ice] remembers and it tells-tells us that we live on a fickle planet, capable of swift shifts and rapid reversals. Ice has a memory and the colour of this memory is blue.

(Macfarlane, 2019, p. 338 cited in Malone, et al., 2024, p.43).

“Walking-with” gives intent to this critical noticing, that is embodied and sensorial. Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman (2018; 2017) have been important contributors to critical walking methodologies in the public pedagogy spaces and brief mention is given to this, in terms of how walking is an “immediate and tangible” experience.

The novella was inspired by historical iterations of this storytelling style, including Bocaccio’s (n.d.) *Decameron*. As wild pedagogies and climate change are entangled in these stories, different commentaries drawn from science and literature are included. A curation of tales represented as journal entries, prose, narratives, information, poetry and images, all occurring *with* Glacier provide a novel approach in environmental education literature.

The chapters are akin to provocations: “witnessing-with Glacier,” “weeping-with Glacier.” Then a pause in walking occurs to spend time at Arne Næss’s (ecophilosopher and deep ecologist) cabin, *Tvergastein*, and finally, reflections gathered from these three days to consider what next in the Chapter “Dreaming-with Glacier.” Culminating as provocations for educators, to reflect upon and engage with in their teaching are set out in the Appendix as *Eight Touchstones of Practice*.

My read was “slow” as each impression or description held its own meaning. Time was required to *read-with* the encounters and the spatial arrangement of some pages aided in these pauses. However, along the way I observed some questions arise in my anticipation of what a “re-wilding” of pedagogy means in terms of making profound change in education. The authors expressed the intention to frame their experiences “as wonder and enchantment rather than the grief of eco-nostalgia or lost ecological possibilities” (Malone, et al., 2024, p. 8) so as not to get stranded on the “perilous edge” of climate catastrophe, that can cause disconnection from nature, a switching off or averting one’s gaze, to the disheartening realities. However, the contributors experienced the difficulty in “walking-with” the contradictions and challenges of anthropogenetic causes of a glacier disappearing.

I felt open to a space that was breathing for me, at one with a bitter taste of destruction. My own trauma was laid out here, into the ears of others, into the landscape that shared my sorrow . . . a disappearing glacier due to human-induced climate change. In that moment I felt the helpless weight of betrayal.

Journal Entry, Part 2-Erika Katzi (Malone, et al., p. 74)

Grief and loss were present in their collective eco-witnessing, as well as feeling humble in the presence of the enormous scale, both in time and space, of this glacier. However, observing and witnessing appeared at times more like “spectatorial viewing” as acknowledged by one of the authors:

I am touched by the glacier’s grandeur and seeming timelessness, its slow patience, incredible power, and deep wisdom. But that is not the only story here. In fact, it is the story of the cursory glance, the cultural cliché, the first-time visitor and the Instagram click.

Journal Entry, Part 2—Sean Blenkinsop (Malone, et al., p. 77)

Another challenge is the limitation of textual representation, and how to give “voice” to the more-than-human world. A contributor, acknowledged this:

Whose tears does this glacier shed? Perhaps the dead lemmings locked in the ice. Or the rock lain bare by the life waters evaporating before our eyes. Or humanity recognizing its collective undoing.

Journal Entry, Part 2—Lee Beavington (Malone, et al., p. 76).

The paradox of being human amid the more-than-human, are evident across the pages. Yet the language used has the tendency to anthropomorphise the very world they treat as beyond human. Attentive listening-with the more-than-human world is emphasised as a way of “witnessing.” However, as Robinson (2020) observes, we each carry listening privilege, listening biases and

listening ability that are never wholly positive or negative. Referred to as “critical listening positionality” it highlights how to attune “to the particular filters of race, class, gender, and between listening body and listened-to sound” (Decter, 2022, p. 193).

Relevant to this critical listening is how place is positioned. The authors attend to representing the place in diverse ways, across time and space, of “being in place.” However, as part of critical walking methodologies (Springgay & Truman, 2022, p. 173), critical place inquiry demands *explicit and political* attention to place, which is evident in the novella in relation to environmental degradation. For instance, the tension of competing concepts of being “out of place” while simultaneously situated and in relation to place are apparent but less so social-cultural aspects.

What contribution does this educational novella make to environmental education? Rapid retreat of ice has been with us for a long time and society has changed dramatically. In 2025 it is alarming to witness, not only the ice retreats, but retreating of political/social/environmental/cultural justice. The retreat of student voices in climate action, as they were systematically silenced. We are on precipitous edges of change and while I was moved by some of the rich descriptions in this novella, I do agree with Peter Renshaw’s (2021, p. 291) book review of Jickling, et al., (2018) *Wild Pedagogies*, identifying the “paradox in advocating for urgent action and the radical remaking of education, while detached in the privileged time/space” which in this colloquia, was at Finse and the Hardangerjøkulen glacier in Norway. Whilst the slow, embodied encounters with-Glacier are beautifully portrayed, there is a distance from the dramatic weather events, floods and fire, here in Australia.

The hard work and effort in the “deep witnessing” that occurred must be acknowledged. Inspired and to some extent, informed by the lifetime of “attentive” work by Arne Næss, the authors offered “conceptual possibilities” that included relatedness, decentring and embodying, enacting and decolonising. Some of these concepts have been part of environmental philosophical discourses and environmental education (Payne, 2020) for a long time, but the context within which they have emerged in a particular time and place offers fresh perspectives. The thought provoking nature of this educational novella makes a useful addition to the critical reflexive discourses for environmental educators.

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