

BOOK REVIEW

Wild Pedagogies, edited by Bob Jickling, Sean Blenkinsop, Nora Timmerman, Michael De Danann Sitka-Sage, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, xx 140., €41.59 (hbk). ISBN: 978-3-319-90175-6

The collective behind *Wild Pedagogies: Touchstones for Re-Negotiating Education and the Environment in the Anthropocene* have produced a timely and valuable book which provides a much needed prompt for environmental educators to revisit their philosophies and focus. At the time of the book's publication, a seismic shift was occurring across the globe – a building youth-led movement for action on climate breakdown and ecological collapse, in the form of Youth and School Strikes for Climate, and Extinction Rebellion, amongst others. It is into this arena, of social change and a growing sense of crisis and loss that *Wild Pedagogies* arrived.

The central proposition of this book is that the concept of wilderness needs to be revisited at a time when so many are losing touch with ecology and place; it positions itself to act as an antidote to the extinction of experience (Soga and Gaston 2016), and provides a response to a growing desire for empowerment and purposeful action. The authors call for a 're-negotiation and renewal of education', and the book provides an urgent call for a new attentiveness to the wild, while promoting a very anthropological – and realistic view of landscape. So, too, it shapes its narrative around the notion that to be 'wild' is to be self-willed and free from unnecessary constraint. This clever bridging of concepts immediately draws those of us in who seek to imagine education differently – to follow the will of the child and to immerse ourselves into the rhythms of the more-than-human world as a central aspect of our education practice.

The journey documented by the book is provided by the Crex Crex – the name given to a sail ship (also the taxonomic term for a Corncrake) picking its way through the Hebridian islands off the west coast of Scotland with a crew of thinkers, writers, explorers and educators, together known as 'the Crex Crex collective'. The collective keep a ship's log which form their reflections and stories of the voyage, and which in large part populate the pages of *Wild Pedagogies*.

This is a book about journeying (Harper, Carpenter, and Segal 2011). It is about a journey through and into the land and sea, as well as a temporal journey (a deep time perspective is maintained as landscape and seascape provide a narrative of discovery through storytelling and archaeological findings). These dual components of travel combined with an intentionality lead to the book serving as a chronicle of sorts, documenting the ways in which the crew of the *Crex Crex* were granted new perspectives on landscape, ancestry and ecology.

Wild Pedagogies offers us something which is new and fascinating – while at the same time resembling a return to familiar methodologies and approaches. In a sense, I felt that this is where the book –and the journeys, conversations and relationships behind it – found its foundation. The juncture between the old and the new – an intergenerational call to attentiveness, connection and action. A blending of philosophies, but a more urgent and decisive call for these things than previous attempts which have come in the decades before.

Dealing with diffuse concepts, ideas and theories within environmentalism more generally – the book fields a discussion in chapter two on wilderness expertly – giving balance to a difficult topic, yet which for such a book could not be shied away from. Later in the book, the earlier theoretical discussions on pedagogy, philosophical forays into ecology and wilderness, and ephemeral accounts of landscape are brought together to bear upon the question of ‘so what?’ In this, the fifth chapter we are provided with six touchstones for practice – stepping into a practical domain while keeping pace with the earlier sections. This chapter reads as an invitation – to try things out, to experiment and be open to what might emerge as we play with the various components of *Wild Pedagogy*. In the final chapter, a variety of case studies are provided, satisfying the urge for a more tangible grasp of how this might all look in practice. The authors are careful to state that this is not a project in completion – and across the course of the meandering and sauntering chapter ‘On Education’ (Chapter 4) issues of conformity and structure are meditated on, providing a philosophical openness and flexibility consummate with the wonder and exploration invoked elsewhere in the book.

Yes, the reader is left with questions. What would *Wild Pedagogies* look like in an urban setting, and how, more precisely, should the Wild Pedagogue “navigate these spaces and not fall into human-centric, colonial ways of being” (p.44). Is the degree of transformation

and deepening of experience which is provided through the journeys of the Crex Crex only possible through the provocation of awe and wonder – and indeed the impressive resources utilised for such journeys. If so, who does and who doesn't it include? One can't help thinking – as with so much in the field of experiential and adventure education – that it is a privilege to see with new eyes, and to be tuned into the landscape in such a way as we experience through the pages of this book. These, though, are not new questions and predicaments – they have been voiced by educators grappling with the transformative possibilities of alternative visions of education (Zembylas and McGlynn 2012; Kraftl 2013; Selby and Kagawa 2014). For the critical reader, the book will provide many avenues of thought and paths to travel – spurred on by the generous referencing. What this book does readily offer is a detailed study, reflection and inspiration for those of us who perhaps feel the world has moved on since the 1970s, but environmental education has not (Huckle and Wals 2015). *Wild Pedagogies* holds at its heart deep insight, honesty and humility – altogether, an alternate *re-negotiated* way of experiencing landscape, a refreshing take on scholarship, and an essentially hopeful companion for a future-facing environmental education movement with everything to lose.

References

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