



REVIEW

A review of ‘Learning to Confront Ecological Precarity: Engaging with More-Than-Human Worlds’

Jukes, S. (2023). *Learning to confront ecological precarity: Engaging with more-than-human worlds*. Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

Review Author

Kathryn Riley 

Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada
Email: kathryn.riley@umanitoba.ca

Learning to confront ecological precarity can be conceived of as an educational toolbox that seeks to promote more sustainable worlds, as a glimmer of hope in these challenging social and ecological times, or perhaps both at the same time and in equal measure. Along any or all of these paths, Jukes’ book offers engaging and inspiring stories to help Outdoor and Environmental Education (OEE) academics, policy makers, practitioners and recreators to engage differently and affirmatively with more-than-human worlds. Philosophical, theoretical and methodological rigour that encompasses postqualitative, posthumanist and new materialist inquiry is consistently weaved throughout the book, as Jukes expertly crafts a decolonial reading journey through mountain, forest and river-scapes in south-east Australia. Jukes’ stories grapple with ghosts and monsters of a colonial heritage, experiments with waste and remake pedagogies and climate change as a result of relentless commodification and exploitation of natural resources, and machinic assemblages, technologies and arts-based practices in OEE to generate hope and activism beyond disciplinary boundaries.

While OEE is certainly entangled with neoliberal, colonial and capitalist trajectories of Western education models in the twenty-first century, OEE is also a site with its own unique set of tensions that include the historically situated, culturally located and socially mediated discourses of anthropocentric and androcentric framings of adventure in the outdoors. Jukes cleverly points to problems with the pervasive and ubiquitous focus on the mechanisms of the recreational movement at hand, suggesting that an instrumentalist focus on movement pragmatics in OEE continues to separate the human explorer from the world they are exploring. This is dangerous territory in these times of global warming, climate change, ecological disrepair, social injustices and necropolitics of death and destruction (Braidotti, 2019). Ultimately, if the human is understood as outside of, and separate from, worldly ecologies and positioned in what Jukes refers to throughout the book as hierarchical anthropocentrism, human exceptionalism and bounded individualism, then there is a little room for different stories of place-based encounters to emerge.

To counter these constraining, disciplining and limiting “isms” in the pursuit of ecological justice, Jukes picks up some important posthumanist and new materialist conversations in OEE scholarship to *do* OEE research and practice differently. Employing an immanent praxiography “as an emergent mode of inquiry that does not separate theory and practice, ontology and epistemology or human

and more-than-human worlds” (p. 8), Jukes brings binary classifications into entangled/differentiated relationships through discursive *and* material forces in worldmaking. Thus, Jukes’ use of immanent praxiography works to deconstruct mountain/forest/river-scapes (or places encountered in the book) understood as empty and blank sites awaiting discursive (social) inscriptions through the colonial imaginary and simultaneously reconstructs mountain/forest/river-scapes to be understood as lively and vibrant co-actors in worldmaking. Yet Jukes does more than de/reconstruct notions of -scapes and places from a birds-eye-view; but through embodied and embedded storytelling, homes in on specific place-based pedagogical inquiries that troubles, disrupts and messes with the status-quo in OEE and adopts generative and productive decolonial pedagogies for multispecies worldings. In each chapter, Jukes critically (and creatively) questions whose knowledges, experiences and worlds are inadvertently, or on purpose, prioritised in OEE pedagogies, consistently forming questions around whose worlds are we attempting to make more livable and whose temporal horizons are our futures composed of. Here, the ethics of whose stories matter come into play, as Jukes brings to light the asymmetrical flows that shape, inform and influence the relational space.

As a book that is deeply enriched with many theoretical and practical insights from a diverse range of scholarship that spans philosophy, methodology, sociology, ecology, biology, policy, amongst others, this book brings forth stories of ecological recuperation and repair work that simultaneously nurtures complex entanglements, while also activating response-ability to configurations of power and territory for good OEE pedagogies. This book is important for a wide audience that encompasses pre/in service teachers and postsecondary institution instructors in environmental sustainability education, climate change education, place-based education and outdoor education, amongst interdisciplinary practitioners; school and university administrators interested in upending the “business as usual” approach to Western education, in addition to curriculum policy makers and postgraduate researchers. Yet because this book is crafted in a way that speaks to ecosystem and multispecies vulnerability and threats, it is a book that is relevant for each individual person interested in changing narratives of ecological crises that abound across the planet.

I bring some prior knowledge and certain theory/practice dispositions to engage affirmatively with Jukes’ scholarship, as a postqualitative researcher focused on posthumanism and new materialism in place/land-based education in my professional practices at the University of Manitoba. However, once Pandora’s box of post-inquiry is opened, one cannot help but look for continued solidarity in radical relationality amongst peers. To enact ethical response-ability in dismantling human hubris and imagining alternative futures, we must attend to the relational tissue. We must continue to strive to build a fierce pack full of wildly spirited communities that come together because they know that not only is there safety in numbers but allyship can provoke fresh and diverse conversations in opening to new possibilities for the here and now (Riley, 2023).

Affected by the productive possibilities, or *potentia*, generated through the stories in Jukes’ book, I was pulled into assemblages and worldings of hope, as different to current worldings composed of too many impoverished systems that proliferate social and ecological precarity (Braidotti, 2013). Thus, there is not much to critique in Jukes’ book. Yet I do sit with some uncomfortable tensions in reading some accounts from a feminist standpoint. Perhaps these tensions arise through old ghosts that haunt my feminine and feminist subjectivities; pushing me to a time that my femaleness had no place in OEE sites (there is much trauma to unpack there!). Here I meet the resistance, or *potestas*, of unbelonging in OEE sites as a woman. Yet, as Jukes reminds us throughout the book, diffractively reading phenomena through, and with, each other is to not only appreciate difference and distinctions between categories, borders and boundaries but to actively attend to difference and distinctions in worldmaking practices. Therefore, dwelling in the midst of joy, wonder and delight *and* discomfort, such diffractive approaches to research and practice in OEE invites us, as humans, to turn our attention to the relationships between the

categories, boundaries and borders in understanding that it is the thread of the relationships that holds us all together — albeit differently.

(Re)making our *own* selves time and time again within present-moment becoming-withs with all other planetary inhabitants, is the ethic and practice that I think Jukes intends, when he invites us to *learn* to confront ecological precarity and *engage* with more-than-human worlds. As learning and engaging are indeed verbs, they suggest a performative doing, an action beyond a mere witnessing of the ruins. For those who are seeking hope for relational and sustainable futurity within a (re)configuring of different temporal horizons, I thoroughly recommend reading Jukes' book.

Acknowledgements. Living, working and playing on Treaty One/Red River Territory and the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and on the homeland of the Métis Nation, I pay my respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this land; land that always was and will always be First Peoples' land and may we continue to walk together towards truth and reconciliation.

Competing interests. None.

References

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Author Biography

Dr. Kathryn Riley is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. As a past teacher of Physical, Health, and Outdoor Environmental Education, Kathryn's research is primarily focused on relational ways of knowing, being, thinking, doing and feeling, pedagogies for (w)holistic well-being and an anticolonial praxis to advance relational and sustainable solidarities with Land/Country/Place. Kathryn recently published her Ph.D. dissertation as a book titled, *(Re)Storying human/earth relationships in environmental education: Becoming (partially) posthumanist*.