

provide the opportunity for environmental educationists to include this region in our consideration of regional and global sustainability. 🌱

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Malcolm Plant (1998) *Education for the Environment: stimulating practice*. Dereham, Norfolk (UK): Peter Francis Publishers. ISBN 1 870167 30 9 £24.95 (hb)

Reviewing this book interested me for several reasons. First, the title—which echoes the title of an earlier work by John Fien (1993)—is consistent with an approach to environmental education that I also support, and Malcolm Plant acknowledges John Huckle as an inspiration for this orientation (as do Fien and I). Secondly, Plant teaches in a Master of Arts program in Environmental Education by distance education, while I teach in a Master of Education program in Environmental Education by distance education. Thirdly, Plant is involved in a collaborative teaching and research project with universities in South Africa, as am I (albeit in a different project). Fourthly, he professes an interest in environment, gender and development issues, as do I (see A. Gough 1997, 1999). I found a fifth hook for my interest in the book's Preface where Plant offers three purposes for writing the book: to share with others his enthusiasm for environmental education and conservation; to describe how the MA course is helping to meet the professional and environmental interests of educators in other parts of the world; and to argue for a particular approach to environmental education (reflecting critically on the socio-political origins of environment and development issues).

I regret that Plant succeeds only in achieving the second of these purposes. He subverts his first purpose by representing his enthusiasm for environmental education as pessimism. His third purpose—arguing for a particular approach to environmental education—is again cast in negative terms: he discusses the difficulties of enacting a socially critical approach to environmental education and argues against a postmodernist approach without arguing *for* an alternative. Valorising critical theory and diminishing a postmodernist approach is consistent with Huckle's (1999) more recent work, but many others see considerable merit in postmodernist approaches (see, for example, A. Gough 1997, N. Gough 1994, Sauve 1999). However, the strength of the students' writings in Part 2 make the book worth reading.

Plant's book is divided into two sections. The first, *Ideas and Issues*, is where changing nature, enigmatic nature, sustainability, environmentalism, development, and postmodernity and environmental education are discussed (pp. 1-86). The second, *Stimulating Practice*, considers the challenge for environmental education (pp. 89-101), then focuses on the MA course (pp. 102-115), including MA

students' writings to illustrate their involvement in reflective practice and socially critical forms of environmental education in their diverse professional and cultural contexts (pp. 116-167), and concludes with a final reflection.

The structure of Chapter 9 (Students' Writings), in which eight of the students contribute 50 pages to the text (but are acknowledged only in their respective section titles), is similar to Palmer's (1998) approach, where 60 pages of global scene reports are contributed by others. Perhaps this is a new approach to publishing, but it is not one with which I would feel comfortable if I were an author of one of the 'sections'.

Nevertheless, the students' stories are very worthy of wider dissemination and I regret that they have not also appeared in journals that might reach larger audiences. Topics covered include a reflection on using Earth Education materials with students (Irene Popiolek), an essay on the implications for environmental education of postmodernism's 'retreat from the real' (Helen Perkins), a discussion of the challenges faced in encouraging local communities in the Columbia Amazon to use natural resources sustainably (Sarita Kendall), a reflection on being environmentally educated and educating in Tokyo (Charles Paxton), and responses to world politics and the global environment (Susan Tyzack).

Plant professes an interest in gender issues, but I was disappointed that the only discussion of gender comes in the form of less than two pages on ecofeminism as 'a conspicuous strand of environmentalism' (pp. 52-53). But, Plant's understanding of ecofeminism seems somewhat superficial in that he presents it as a totalising discourse rather than recognising that ecofeminism has many forms—such as those discussed by Merchant (1992) who is cited in Plant's references.

I was also disappointed by some sloppiness in regard to the accuracy of the references and the index as well as in the editing of the main text. For example, Henry Giroux writes with Peter McLaren, not 'McClaren', A. Gough and N. Gough are two different people (but all 'Gough' citations are included under N. Gough in the index), and 'this module is appears in Section 9.9' (p. 156) is not grammatically correct. Two almost identical references to N. Gough (1993), and identical paragraphs excerpted from this source, are repeated on pages 84 and 134.

I recommend this book to anyone who might be interested in the work undertaken by students in the MA program at Nottingham Trent University. However, the book's cost in Australia (around AUD\$70) means that it is more likely to be a library acquisition rather than an individual purchase.

## References

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