

## Reviews

Frédérique Apffel-Marglin. (2011). *Subversive Spiritualities: How Rituals Enact the World*. Oxford University Press. 255pp.

In her new book, Frédérique Apffel-Marglin brings together a comprehensive historical understanding of how Euro-American epistemologies, ontologies, methodologies and practices (and combinations of these) have impacted not only mainstream academic disciplines and research practices, but also Indigenous peoples' lives in the Andes and High Amazon. Interlineated within this historical chronology of Euro-American intellectual traditions are the author's own two decades of interrelationships with Andean and High Amazon peoples, including cultural-ritualistic practices, as a colleague, friend, community member, and co-researcher. While well-versed in historical Euro-American intellectual foundations and frameworks, including historical hegemonic discourses and practices, Apffel-Marglin chooses to exculpate herself from essentialized settler norms relating to Indigeneity. Deprofessionalization, as an intellectual and spiritual transformation from settler socio-economic values and lifestyle to Indigenous lifespaces, is of critical importance in terms of Indigenizing self-empowerment and self-determination initiatives, and with it comes a rapprochement with land, spirit, and being.

The author's understanding of ritualized Andean and Amazonian spiritualities comes not from Western notions of researching and coming to "know" and contain and speak for Other—specifically, in "the field"—but from her active participation within community activities. This is a testament to her own holistic worldview and her long-time commitment to local community wellbeing. She speaks of her journey from being a classically trained anthropologist, in which Other is "informant" and placed into an objectivized space, to learning how to engage with reciprocal protocols of Indigenous community members, thereby engaging "with" co-researchers in such a way that all are in the subjective case and the active voice, with power relations more in dynamic balance.

As with her earlier book with Indigenous NGO, PRATEC [Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas or Andean Project for Peasant Technologies], *Spirit of regeneration: Andean cultures confronting Western notions of development* (1998), in which the chapters are written by Andean people, Apffel-Marglin presents a comprehensive historical foundation of mainstream intellectual traditions—in this case, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, religion, science, economics—and Indigenous knowledges and practices. The author situates her ideas about Indigenous ritual against a complex historical chronology and intertextual deconstruction of settler religious and secular hegemonies.

This book is particularly strong in its historical development of political, religious and scientific protocols developed in Europe, including the development of academic and intellectual disciplines, using rationalist reductionist thinking, which seeks to "know" and control the world through language, mathematics,

science and religion. The author's deconstruction of science, using a combination of the histories of science and reason, is especially powerful, particularly her engagement with quantum physics.

Apffel-Marglin maps Western religious and secular contexts of knowledge-making and how these have influenced modernity, including contemporary academic ways of knowing, validating and measuring knowing. She carefully integrates the history of Western science over the past five hundred years and religion over the past millennium, including how these have profoundly impacted European political, economic and educational (and subsequently colonized) knowledge systems.

The author excoriates the privilege and process of prevailing Euro-American ways of knowing, being, and doing, especially as constructed by Western illuminati/intelligensia for the "betterment" of Indigenous Peoples to reach "modern" levels of scientific, rationalist, and political understanding. She does this by first setting in historical profile Western social, economic and intellectual development, then in parallel, tangentially sharing her knowledge of and experience with Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and practices, including rituals. In this way, rather than reacting to Euro-American hegemonic models and systems as default positions needing modifications, she brings forward Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, as contextualized within particular geographies and demographies, including the other-than-human, as central through lines. Her narrative of the historical-political-religious-scientific constructions of the Euro-settler/invaser contrasts noticeably with Indigenous holistic practices, which are in the form of conversations and rituals.

A few things that really stand out in Apffel-Marglin's book include her relating of religious (Catholic-Protestant) intellectual histories to scientific histories (Newtonian-quantum physics) and how this allows for the removal of agency from the natural world and the situating of what-is-important through representational languaging-thought systems. Ritual and spirit are put into the category of other-than-reason within mainstream Western thought systems and as such, are deemed suspect, if not dangerous to the state and church, and by extension to individual economic and spiritual well-being.

This book is similar in spirit to the PRATEC book and they work together in a seamless, brilliant narrative harmony that does justice to relationships between the peoples of the Andes, the Upper Amazon, the spirit beings of those places, and newcomers, including those who only learn about these relationalities through texts. *Subversive spiritualities: How rituals enact the world* offers ways to think about "rekindling" links between humans and the other-than-human world.

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Sophie McCall. (2011). *First Person Plural: Aboriginal Storytelling and the Ethics of Collaborative Authorship*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press. 268 pp.

McCall's *First person plural* is an attempt at placing the voice of the author within collaborative research. Published in 2011, the book is a powerful exploration of "voice" in collaborative texts or told-to narratives. Thematically divided into six chapters, this methodological text elaborates on the capturing of voices of Aboriginal people by (usually) non-Indigenous writers who act as mediators, authors, collaborators or translators of Aboriginal narratives and places them in the context of larger political debates. The voice appropriation and ownership debates of the 1980s and 1990s compelled Indigenous people to reassess their roles in the production of texts and other collaborative works. McCall's examinations of the functions Aboriginal narratives play in literary and political sovereignty, appropriation, and land claims as well as in the media calls to mind Spivak's (1999) notion of "the Native informant" (pp. 6, 49). By focusing on the processes of mediation and collaboration, McCall attempts to challenge the colonial positionality of the singular voice thereby questioning the "discourses of authenticity" (p. 5). The author's description of the numerous tasks of [non-] Indigenous scholars in collaborations and how such 'told-to narratives' (p. 16) are located within the written and visual key political events of the last few decades, including the Mackenzie Pipeline Inquiry, the Oka Crisis, the *Delagamuukw* case, and the re-presentation of the Sayisi Dene relocation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. McCall acknowledges that although non-Aboriginal authors of told-to narratives like Berger, Brody (Chapter 2) and Bilgen-Reinart (Chapter 4) have opened up the space for Aboriginal voices, in many cases those voices are placed in a specific discursive exchange where the position of the author's role is often overlooked. This collaboration often juxtaposes the author's location in relation to the material s/he writes about, thus the positionality of the voice plays an important role in the formation of knowledge. McCall exemplifies that binary paradox in ethnographic reports like those of Brody, Berger and Cruikshank, in media re-presentations of Obomsawin and in the different stories shared with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

The methods of collaborative authorship are essential tools to any researcher working with narratives and stories, specifically where stories are recorded orally and where their meaning is 'interpreted' in the larger socio-political framework. The notion of narratives and voices are essential in decolonizing methodologies. As a non-Indigenous scholar working with an Aboriginal community, I often question my role in the collaborative research and have found the book to be helpful in attempting to place the researcher's voice alongside the numerous stories witnessed in the research process. Since ethical research in Native Studies often conflicts with the narrow political and scholarly confines of discourse and academic practices, I would recommend this book to anyone carrying out ethnographic research. McCall's binary of oral vs. written and teller

vs. recorder (p. 152) evokes the distinct ways oral utterances can be evidenced through different texts—including landscapes and wampum belts. McCall's inspection of *adaawk* and *kungax* in the *Delgamuukw* case as performative evidence conveyed by words as well as by "the contexts of tellings and re-tellings" (p. 154) is a useful tool in not only scholarship, but also in the classroom. Just as a reader/listener/researcher can explore the circumstances of the oral narrative and thus remove the shifting relations between recorder, translator, editor, the teacher/instructor/professor can also "share" the collaborative space in the classroom where knowledge is guided by the ethical responsibility of communication and decolonization where distinct [Aboriginal] knowledge can be accommodated alongside the "expert." Articulation of Aboriginal voices as continuing to exist in non-written formats allows for a discursive space in the classroom. Viewing McCall's book as highly relevant to Native or Indigenous Studies only is a limitation of her analysis in its application to other disciplines where 'The Others' are often left spoken for, like Said's (1994) "Oriental woman" (p. 6). McCall's nuanced text is extremely useful in decolonizing collaborations and ought to be read in methodology courses across disciplines. I recommend it very highly.

## References

Said, E. (1994). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Spivak, G.C. (1999). *A critique of postcolonial reason: Toward a history of the vanishing present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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Seonaigh MacPherson. (2011). *Education and Sustainability: Learning across the Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Divide*. New York: Routledge. 292 pp.

After having gone through MacPherson's *Education and sustainability: Learning across the Diaspora, Indigenous, and minority divide*, I found myself in a position of awe and shock. It ignited a fire within me, making me aware of my past background and present situation, where I stand as a member of a Diaspora myself. Further, I have always been interested in how minority languages die out and cultures go extinct, as I have spent over two decades working on language and linguistics.

MacPherson critically examines the sensitive issues of migration, education,

development, language, culture, social justice, environmental crisis and sustainability challenge. Then she investigates how education addresses them. The book depicts the voice of immigrants and of the Tibetan Diaspora. It also includes her personal observation and experience of working with Tibetan communities. At times, the author sounds idealistic and vague with extraneous details, whereas at other times she is very realistic and precise.

The crux of the book states that human beings “live in the aftermath, the effects of distant and indecipherable causes” (p. 13). The book critically talks about culture and time, modernity, what preceded modernity, and then shares concerns about what survives and what does not. It impressively deals with how cultures and environment intersect. The emphasis lies on negotiating to meet our needs and limit our desires to rectify the compelling yet enigmatic threat to the wellbeing of present and future generations, for which we need cooperation and collaboration across nation states, disciplines, communities, languages, and cultures. With this focus in mind, the book is divided into three parts.

Part I deals with what biodiversity, bio-linguistic diversity, and bio-cultural diversity mean, how they are interrelated, and what keeps them at stake. The central premise is that bio-cultural and bio-linguistic diversity constitutes a form of consolidated knowledge in the biosphere-ethnosphere. Many languages and cultures go extinct due to forced assimilation policies. This causes the loss of not only languages and cultures, but also a loss of ecological information that includes knowledge about our world, human history, and adaptation. Highlighting the importance of the world’s Indigenous languages, MacPherson states, “languages don’t just store memories; they are memories” (p. 30). This reminds me of my own over two decades of experience teaching ESL. On the one hand, there is a rapid spread of the English language across the world, and on the other, minority languages are on the verge of extinction. Citing Crystal (2000) and LoBianco (2000), MacPherson estimates the possible demise of 50% to 90% of human languages in this century. What is of importance here is that changing language means changing our perspectives of the world.

Part II addresses how integrated and intricate education and sustainability are. It critically explores how modern education has proven itself as an institution of assimilation and extinction, and illustrates how greater academic excellence causes greater vulnerability to language and culture change. The author notices a paradox of false consciousness in the present education system, and considers migration, education, teaching, learning, identity, and language education as sustainability challenges. The author argues that there are conflicting and competing issues of sustainability and integration in the context of educating people in multicultural scenarios. This part of the book also includes case studies, black and white photographs, tables, and charts. Together they illustrate the author’s research on the education system in monasteries and Tibetan schools, where the author observes how education and sustainability interact within Buddhist perspectives.

Part III recommends some ways to maintain interdependence within the multi-environments in which we all are nested. McPherson describes how education can address sustainability challenges posed by the growing population, migration, and human consumption. The first step is to move from “the shadow of national economic citizenship education agenda to develop an international or global ecological citizenship education agenda to guide the means and ends of education” (p. 229). This shift requires some degree of change in students and teachers in order to accommodate other perspectives, cultures, and languages. Such accommodation offers opportunities to Diaspora, indigenous, and minority communities for their democratic participation in educational decision-making.

Educators interested in language and culture, education and sustainability, and teaching and learning in Buddhist monasteries might find this work informative and insightful. The book is set in a wider context of bringing the Eastern and the Western worldviews together to achieve greater goals of learning to love and loving to learn, because “being human is at the heart of what it means to be civilized” (p. 4).

## References

- Crystal, D. (2000). *Language death*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- LoBianco, J. (2000). Multiliteracies and multilinguism. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 92-106). New York: Routledge.

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- Peter Kahn. (2011). *Technological nature: Adaptation and the future of human life*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. 248 pp.

Though wrapped in one cover, *Technological nature*, written by University of Washington psychology professor Peter Kahn, is really two books on the same topic. As defined by Kahn, the book sets out to investigate “technologies that in various ways mediate, augment or simulate the natural world” (p.xiii) and attempts to answer if it matters for the physical and psychological wellbeing of our species that we are replacing actual nature with a technological substitute. Kahn, who describes his work as taking the voice of a scientist, environmentalist, technologist and humanist, writes that he attempts to answer this question from an “empirical, scientific standpoint” (p.xv).

This notion of technology replacing firsthand experience in the more-than-human world (to the detriment of humanity) has become something of a cause

célèbre within the environmental popular press. Terms like “nature-deficit disorder” (Louv, 2008) have been popularized and captured the imaginations of educators. So further work to evidence the impact on technology (and technological nature, more specifically) is of obvious value to those interested in environmental education.

Kahn’s answer to his basic question is a qualified yes: nature is better than technological nature, but technological nature is better than no nature at all. Buttressing his conclusion is the re-telling of empirical work previously published in peer-reviewed journals. These seven chapters create one of the two books I mention above. The training that Kahn received as a psychologist is evident throughout the chapters that describe his research: two chapters reporting on the impact of large-screen televisions projecting live outdoor views into rooms without windows; four studies undertaken with humans and a robotic dog; and one study on a garden accessible through the Internet and the human community that sprung up around it. With reasonable detail (again, this is not the primary research itself), Kahn lays out the methods, findings and conclusions of projects conducted over seven years. Implicitly, Kahn is trying to provide sufficient evidence to answer his broad question about human’s physical and psychological wellbeing.

As a researcher, I can appreciate this work, but as a reader I did not find it that engaging. As someone interested in threads of thought informing current environmental education practice, I was much more interested in Kahn’s introductory and concluding chapters: work that makes up the second book within *Technological nature*. Curiously given his affirmed perspective as a scientist interested in empirical work, these chapters are much more exploratory and theoretical in nature. This approach (description of studies bordered by writings more speculative in nature) reminds me very much of Kahn’s 1999 book *The human relationship with nature*.

Speculative, however, is not necessarily a bad word. Nor are the ideas that Kahn writes about in these chapters somehow less valid than the ideas presented in the middle of *Technological nature*. In the first three chapters, Kahn outlines the theoretical framework for his research. The final two chapters look to apply the findings of his work to practical steps or solutions.

The book opens with a case study of the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, based on anthropological work of the Marshall family. It is offered as an example of what our species’ relationship with the natural world might have looked like, offering core truths of what it is to be human in relationship with the natural world. The Bushmen’s story is fascinating and their affiliation to the natural world is certainly generative and evocative, but I did worry about Kahn essentializing millennia of a species’ experience into one case study of a cultural group. This leads to one criticism of the book: Kahn, on multiple occasions, pitches his work at the level of species as if to say the conclusions made here are applicable anywhere there is a *Homo sapien* to be found. Without

an explicit mention of culture, I'm not so easily convinced that his findings are so universally applicable.

Unexpected, but welcomed, was Kahn's analysis and critique of Biophilia in chapter two. Kahn touches on some important problems with the theory—the lack of fit for non-living components of the environment; experience in the natural world is unified with both negative and positive experiences; and the theory's underlying mechanistic orientation—and coins the new term “human-nature interaction” (p.24) to replace it. Chapter three explores and unpacks what Kahn imagines about technology. Key is the understanding that technology is not implicitly linked with sophisticated inventions, rather it is “any human artifact that assists [us] to achieve an effect in the world” (p.28). Those interested in environmental education and technology would find this chapter valuable for its perspective.

In the concluding chapters, Kahn first expands on his notion of “environmental generational amnesia” which he also wrote about in his 1999 work. Frankly, this chapter offered nothing new to the theory but does offer six solutions. Many of these solutions read like hunches and, in fact, offer ideas for future research. Kahn closes the book with ruminations on the future of human life given our ever-increasing reliance on technology.

*Technological nature* is a worthwhile read for both environmental practitioners and researchers. Keeping in mind that Kahn sees everything through a psychologist's lens and that the entire book is rendered in anthropocentric terms, *Technological nature* still offers readers two related yet distinct narratives: the descriptions and results of seven studies and, much more engaging for me, food for thought on our culture's relationship to technology and the natural world.

## References

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- Louv, R. (2008). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.

*Gavan P.L. Watson graduated from York University with a PhD in environmental education. He now works at the University of Guelph and downloads as many nature-related apps to his smart phone as possible.*

Veronica Gaylie. (2011). *Roots and Research in Urban School Gardens*. Bern: Peter Lang Publishing. 195 pp.

As I am currently involved in a research project that includes an urban school garden, I was most interested in reading Gaylie's book, *Roots and research in urban school gardens*. This book is Veronica Gaylie's second book on school gardens (see *The learning garden: Ecology, teaching, and transformation*, 2009). As an Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia and a published poet, Gaylie expresses a strong interest in urban gardening through her poetry and writing (see, for example, *The Learning Garden BLOG* and her work in *Ditch, the poetry that matters*). *Urban school gardens* is an informative narrative connecting research and practice from both a historical and present-day view. It is written for academics, teachers, and anyone interested in urban school gardening as a practice in support of environmental action, ecoliteracy, learning, community, place, sustainability, or social justice.

Gaylie explores the role urban school gardens can play in shaping teaching and learning. She views the urban school garden as a "bridge between environmental action and thought. A small-scale response to global issues around access to food and land ... cultural ideas of shared space and mutual support for the organic built environment" (back cover). Beginning with a historical and research overview of urban school gardens—"Urban School Gardens: History, Pedagogy, Practice" (pp. 17 – 46)—Gaylie then steps into a more detailed analysis of urban school gardens based on four case studies of urban school gardens: "Southern California: Gardens in the Desert" (pp. 47 – 78); "Northern California: Vision and Practice" (pp. 79 – 107); "The Northwest: Practice and Spirit" (pp. 108 – 132); and "West Coast, Canada: Garden as Community" (pp. 133 – 159). The author concludes with a summary of her findings and a review of the value of the urban school garden.

Within each case study, Gaylie draws on prior research, a historical perspective, and the writings of environmental authors, such as Orr and Bowers, to explore the central tenets of her thesis—that the "urban school garden represents a cultural, pedagogical and practical shift in priorities towards the earth" (p. 1). Gaylie argues that urban school gardens are a "small scale response" (p. 1) to larger environmental issues and sustainability. "As a form of urban agriculture, the tangible cultivation of local place offers a source of food and a connection to the earth that inspires new ways to think, learn, and live and invites new connections between school and community" (p. 1). At each of the case study locations, Gaylie collects multiple sources of qualitative data to provide evidence for her thesis, such as teacher interviews, past histories, and student interviews and writing. The case study chapters close with oftentimes powerful student data—their poetry, writing, and words—and Gaylie's conclusions. Additionally, each case study centres primarily on one aspect of her thesis, for example, social justice, the importance of place, or community.

Gaylie writes a compelling narrative exploring the value of urban school gardens, not only for teaching and learning, but also for connecting children with nature and place, and building community, especially for schools and neighbourhoods in the inner cities and/or schools that have access to fewer socio-economic resources. Gaylie writes, “an urban school garden symbolizes both social and environmental awareness; how a region values and preserves its common green space defines the underlying values that guides a community’s approach to land stewardship” (p. 15).

While skillfully written and illustrated, I found Gaylie’s analysis to be, at times, ambiguous. I struggled to connect the words of the students to the author’s interpreted meaning. For example, within the following cited student quotes, I was not certain how the data demonstrated that “the students gained a sense of *empowerment* and joy from being in the space itself” (p. 130), although the sense of joy was definitely evident:

If you’re there you just feel happier, Cuz if you’re inside it’s all bricks and math.

Here, you walk around and see different stuff in different spots, (There’s a spider!  
There’s the food!)

The [sic] is the best spot, just look at the plants.

Most of the time, however, the student and teacher data clearly, often beautifully, supported the author’s research claims. Gaylie writes, “as [the students] wrote in the garden, they constantly moved from local to universal ecological awareness with a sense of creativity, freedom and agility” (p. 152).

*Body of Water*

The bodies of water I know are the puddles.

It looks like mini lakes.

It sounds like a rain drop, I step on it.

It smells like mud.

The body of water I know is a puddle

that looks like the three great lakes of Ontario.

–Rosetta, Grade 6

Though appreciation and awareness for the environment gained through the students’ garden experiences does not necessarily translate to agency and consequent action, Gaylie provides examples of where agency came into being, particularly within the community as a whole.

Perhaps a missing piece in this book for many Canadian and northern USA readers is an exploration of how urban school gardens play out in colder climates, where for most of the school year the garden is snow-covered, and growing food during the school year is difficult or near impossible. What possibilities exist for urban school gardens in these types of places? How can the predominantly snow-covered gardens shape teaching and learning or build community?

Overall, I would recommend Gaylie's book to academics, teachers or school-community activists interested in urban school gardens. It provides a starting place for considering and thinking about the varied implications and value of urban school gardens.

## References

Gaylie, V. (2009). *The learning garden: Ecology, teaching, and transformation*. New York: Peter Lang.

Ditch, the poetry that matters. <<http://www.ditchpoetry.com/veronicagaylie.htm>> .

The Learning Garden BLOG. <<http://learninggarden.blogspot.ca/>> .

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Dilafruz Williams & Jonathan Brown. (2012). *Learning Gardens and Sustainability Education: Bringing Life to Schools and Schools to Life*. New York: Routledge. 238 pp.

As one of the most comprehensive books on school gardens from the United States to date, *Learning gardens and sustainability education: Bringing life to schools and schools to life* by Dilafruz Williams and Jonathan Brown seeks to establish the renaissance of school gardening as a vital space for academic research. The authors' tone of passionate and profound conviction throughout the book also contributes powerful and inspirational "compost" to the diverse grass-roots initiatives for garden-based education that are re-emerging across North America and around the world.

Williams and Brown's book is for academics and educators who seek to "bring life to schools and schools to life" by transforming the metaphors and materials of education. Instead of mechanistic, individualistic, and compartmentalized approaches to education and, in particular, schooling, the authors draw upon their years of garden-based education experience and research to provide compelling arguments for placing "living soil" at the heart of educational discourses and practices.

In addition to the authors' extensive experience, the book synthesizes their review of 48 empirical studies in the area of garden-based education, as well as science education, health, nutrition, intergenerational learning, and so on. Further, the authors visited over 80 school gardens and the book provides brief case studies of school gardens in four school districts in the United States: Chicago, Denver, Portland, and San Francisco. Based on this extensive research, the authors' inclusion of well-organized reference and resource sections at the end of the book provide a significant entry point for educators and academics

interested in deepening their understanding of this interdisciplinary field of education research.

The structure of the book is in the three parts, of which I found the first and third to be the most compelling. The first part introduces the theoretical concepts that inform the authors' understanding of school gardening. The focus herein is primarily to introduce the metaphor of living soil, provide a brief history of school gardening, as well as to engage in a careful review of the complexities associated with place-based education and ecological thinking. The second part expands on the seven areas of school gardening that the authors describe as "ecological thinking" and offer these as alternative foundations for sustainability education. These seven approaches are: cultivating a sense of place; fostering curiosity and wonder; discovering rhythm and scale; valuing biocultural diversity; embracing practical experience; nurturing interconnectedness; and awakening the senses. In the third part of the book, the authors turn to three practitioners—a teacher, a principal, and a school superintendent—to share their experiences and reflections on school gardening.

It is the authors' emphasis on the power of metaphors that simultaneously intrigued and troubled me while reading the book. According to Williams and Brown,

In the movement toward sustainability, we will need both material and metaphoric regeneration: the living soil of learning gardens represents both the physical plane of application and the metaphysical material for developing an ecologically grounded metaphor for education. At a time when education is commonly compared to a "race" and schools are characterized alternatively as "knowledge factories" or "drop-out factories," we need a new metaphoric language with which to describe schools as life-serving and life-enhancing entities. (p. 200)

Clearly, living soil is an attractive and inviting metaphor that encourages revitalized relationships with the material and social world. However, as the movement for school gardens enters into academia and continues to grow, I hope to see more sustained questioning around the very root metaphors and concepts that are so central to garden-based education. For instance, some of the questions that were provoked in reading this book include: In which ways is soil also a problematic metaphor in current and historical contexts of settler colonialism, nationalism, globalization or eugenics? How have gardens been positioned as a "universal idea" (Waters, 2008), suggesting that direct knowledge and experience of gardens or nature is possible, regardless of race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, etc.? And how does the anti-technological tenor of much garden-based education writing work to reify the very human/nature dualisms this movement seeks to disrupt?

While these difficult questions remain largely unaddressed and unanswered in Williams and Brown's work, this book, alongside Veronica Gaylie's (2009, 2010) recent publications, marks crucial and timely efforts to not only bring schools to life but to also bring academic inquiry to life. The hopeful dedication

of the authors to theorize, support, and build learning gardens is critical at this juncture in human and ecological history. My personal hope is that, inasmuch as school gardens have emerged from grassroots initiatives, and as the authors attest, “No two school learning gardens are the same” (p. 67), the theorizing of school gardening may similarly emerge from diverse intellectual “soils.” This book contributes vitally to the growing community of garden-based educators and researchers around the world.

## References

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- Gaylie, V. (2011). *Roots and research in urban school gardens*. New York: Peter Lang.
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