

This page is intentionally left blank. The authors have designed the article to be read on side-by-side facing pages. If you are viewing the journal on a screen, it may be helpful to enable a page view in your browser or PDF reader that positions two pages side by side, rather than a continuous downward scroll which is common for reading PDF files. If you wish to print this article, we suggest double sided printing, and excluding this page so that page 13 is the first page of the printed article.

# Experiments With Lyric Philosophy and the Wilding of Educational Research

Bob Jickling, Lakehead University, Canada, & Marcus Morse, La Trobe University, Australia

## **Abstract**

*This project engages Jan Zwicky's lyric philosophy to reach into terrain beyond the bounds of logico-linguistic analysis. The work in this paper, composed primarily of pinhole photographs and written responses to place, consists of a series of ontological experiments made with participants during a Wild Pedagogies gathering in Finse, Norway, in August 2019. Through photographic experiences in the landscape surrounding the Hardangerjøkulen glacier, paired with written text, these experiments interrogate ways to represent places and ideas. In conducting this research, we began with an informal walking workshop on pinhole photography, followed by the making and developing of pictures in-situ. The written expressions of the work are composed of short evocative representations of experience that seek to pivot in the moment and work toward a series of linked, lyric arguments.*

## **Résumé**

*Le projet met à contribution la philosophie lyrique de Jan Zwicky pour atteindre un terrain de réflexion qui dépasse les frontières de l'analyse logico-linguistique. Le présent travail, composé principalement de photographies par sténopé et de textes produits en réaction à un lieu particulier, rapporte une série d'expériences ontologiques réalisées par les participants d'un colloque sur le thème des pédagogies de la nature tenu à Finse, en Norvège, en août 2019. En combinant écriture et expérimentations photographiques ayant pour objet le paysage entourant le glacier Hardangerjøkulen, différentes façons de représenter les lieux et les idées sont explorées. Dans le cadre de la présente recherche, nous avons d'abord organisé une randonnée pendant laquelle s'est donné un atelier informel sur la photographie par sténopé, suivi de la prise et du développement de photographies in situ. Les textes accompagnant les œuvres photographiques constituent de courtes représentations évocatrices d'une expérience qui cherche à s'appuyer sur le moment pour créer une série d'arguments lyriques reliés entre eux.*

**Keywords:** lyric philosophy, Wild Pedagogy, environmental education, pinhole photography, Jan Zwicky

**Mots-clés :** philosophie lyrique, pédagogies de la nature, éducation à l'environnement, photographie par sténopé, Jan Zwicky

## Introduction

We traverse new terrain as Earth moves between geological epochs—between the Holocene and the Anthropocene. The Earth is writing a new geo-story, and humans are largely bystanders who barely seem to have noticed. We are living on an increasingly threadbare planet and we—especially the most privileged—cannot continue do the same things—perpetuate the same relationships—and have a viable future for all. This is a predicament to which education must respond.

This work begins to address two concerns. The first is a need to problematize issues of control—both methodological and epistemological. We see a need for research methodologies that consciously break from the parallel and often hidden authorities that tend to control both research and human relationships within a more-than-human world (see for example, Blenkinsop et al., 2019; Crex Crex Collective, 2018). Second, we see a need to address the limitations of philosophy as constrained by linguistics and logic. To this end, we riff from the lyric philosophy developed by Canadian philosopher Jan Zwicky (1992, 2003, 2015). This riff takes shape as a small research experiment that offers an avenue forward for researchers who are determined to try something different. We fear that without bold moves that seek to represent existential experience in new ways, research and education will be hamstrung in their attempts to reveal radical breaks from the status quo. New ways to conduct research are needed.

In this paper, we use paired pages as described in Zwicky's work (see for example, 1992, 2003). However, in this project, the left-hand pages are written responses to the images arising through physical experiences in the place, at the moment of photography. The right-hand pages consist of photographs taken with a pinhole camera. At times, the writing arises from the fresh experience of making photographs. At other times, the experience of *being present* inspires the photography.

This research took place during a week-long Wild Pedagogies gathering in August 2019, in Finse, Norway, and the landscape surrounding the Hardangerjøkulen glacier. We began with an informal walking workshop on pinhole photography, including the making of pictures, as well as developing them in-situ. Concurrently, participants were invited to write within the place. Place mattered; we theorized that each place has its own character, its own agential relations, and its own voice (Crex Crex Collective, 2018). These qualities, then, were uniquely imprinted within the experiences of participants, incorporated in their conversations, and reflected in their photographs and writing.

## Viewing the Work

The following pages are designed to be viewed as pairs—text on the left and pinhole photographs on the right. Because this paper is published digitally, viewers will need to find imaginative ways to achieve this simultaneous pairing. We encourage viewing lyrics and corresponding photographs side by side.

Together, these pairings invite readers to explore patterned resonances in the world and to probe ontological positioning in spaces beyond what linguistic expression and artistic representation might singularly provide. The representation of this in side-by-side pairings seeks to engage the connoisseur—the reader of text and viewer of images—with our experiment. Lyric arguments will arise from the work on their own terms, with each connoisseur. Outcomes will be expressive and individual (Eisner, 1985). For this reason, we resist providing interpretations of the paired narratives. Pinhole photographs, and poems, are always a bit wild.

Looking In

Every mossy rock  
with a story  
to tell. Get down  
here where you can  
really see.

*Stacy Boe Miller*

\*\*\*

Reciprocal movement  
In the breeze  
Listening for stories  
Stored in this place

*Marcus Morse*

\*\*\*

A calm before the storm  
An oasis  
A sliver of silence  
    A ripple in the pond  
A haven of rock and stone  
    sheep and wool  
    reflection blowing in the wind

*Joshua David Bennett*

Looking In



Cotton Grass

Cotton friends, wave above tundra.  
Stems pierce the same moss  
I rest upon  
sharing the damp—the warm breeze  
on our cheeks.

*Bob Jickling*

\*\*\*

This cotton forest,  
ruffled by Norwegian wind,  
keeps my eyes dancing.

Lee Beavington

\*\*\*

Cotton grass seeds know two lives,  
fertile darkness and sun-swept delight.

*Lee Beavington*

\*\*\*

We bend ourselves  
to the sun when we see  
the sun. We eat  
what the morning gives.  
we point,  
for you,  
to where the wind is going.

*Stacy Boe Miller*

Cotton Grass





*Resting on Rocks Left*

Resting on Rocks

Nesting clouds  
lyrical foraging  
cloudberry jamming  
common worlding

*Karen Malone*

\*\*\*

Sheepbell clang tied  
to chewing  
lichen. Baaaa

*Bob Jickling*

\*\*\*

I know  
a mountain  
where little,  
white flags  
grow. Wind  
shakes their slender  
bodies and asks,  
*Are you ready?*

*Stacy Boe Miller*

Resting on Rocks



Weeping Glacier

Every part of the river is both a beginning and an end.

*Lee Beavington*

\*\*\*

Midglacier melts  
Marianne's tears.

*Bob Jickling*

\*\*\*

Glacial meltwater  
rushing the past  
past

*Estella Kuchta*

\*\*\*

Somewhere a rock  
raises its face  
above water.

*Stacy Boe Miller*

\*\*\*

Earth veins tap my heart  
stream ceremony takes shape  
body of the clouds

*Lee Beavington*

Weeping Glacier



*I've Seen a Ghost Left*

I've Seen a Ghost

I've seen a ghost.

*Erika Kazi*

\*\*\*

I can't keep myself  
from the glacier. Secret  
faces of pale stones.

*Stacy Boe Miller*

\*\*\*

Movement, flow  
Frozen in time  
Go

*Deb Matlock*

\*\*\*

The rhythms of the earth  
Dance in souls  
Keeping heartbeats  
Alive

*Deb Matlock*

I've Seen a Ghost



Melting Glacier

The wind refusing to chant its sylvan hymn.

*Stacy Boe Miller*

\*\*\*

Drawn to the edgework,  
slippage,  
friction  
wind.  
What stories  
shape this place?

*Marcus Morse*

\*\*\*

Here are my prayers.  
Muddy feet of a goddess.  
Sorry I'm so late.

*Stacy Boe Miller*

\*\*\*

Crying ice  
Creating emptiness  
The End?

*Sean Blenkinsop*

Melting Glacier





*Marianne's Rock Left*

Marianne's Rock

Everything moves in the wind here—  
petals, paths, people, intent.  
Wind swirls the silt-point of balance  
of thousand-tonne stones  
left-alones waiting.  
Stability so unsteady.

*Chris Beeman*

\* \* \*

Among fields of boulders  
I am free and light

*Estella Kuchta*

Marianne's Rock



*In Arne's Chair Left*

## In Arne's Chair

Wrapped in fog . . .  
I try to remember what was

*Estella Kuchta*

\*\*\*

Gray eats everything I was going to say.

Stacy Boe Miller

\*\*\*

In this chair  
by the window one last time.  
Check the fire, get the wood, be the story  
written by this place  
one last time.

*Bob Jickling*

In Arne's Chair



## Afterword

### *A Few Thoughts on Methodology*

We have organized this paper with an unorthodox sequence for two reasons. First, since the above work is primarily artistic, yet intersecting with philosophy, we feel that it should be able stand on its own. It should be appreciated as it is. So, this is a kind of “spoiler alert.” The reader may want to stop now. In this era of contemporary exhaustion, characterized by what Rosi Braidotti describes as “theory fatigue” (2019), this could be a good end point. Why spoil a good thing? So, step out now if you like; we won’t be offended.

If you’re still reading, we can say that there are two reasons for including this Afterword. First, for those who similarly feel that, in these times, we cannot continue to rely on the same approaches to research—to continue to do the same things—we would like to provide a larger accounting of ourselves and our approach.

Second, we are also responding to Braidotti’s (2019) related challenge. She optimistically claims that the quotidian exhaustion felt by so many academics is not a pathological state that needs to be cured; rather, she sees it as a transformative threshold that calls for less fatigue and more conceptual creativity. What we have attempted through the Wild Pedagogies gathering in Finse has been to assemble a group of willing people, grounded for a time in a particular place, with particular more-than-human collaborators, to experiment with the expectations of academia. In a community-building exercise, our companions engaged in the playful actions proposed by this project, and they transgressed conventional norms. So, in the spirit of cultivating ever-more-creative transgression, and some wilding of research, we provide a little more methodological background.

### *Lyric Philosophy*

For Jan Zwicky, philosophy is too narrowly categorized when thought of as just logico-linguistic analysis. Thus, her lyric form of philosophy attempts to arrive at an understanding of experiences that affect us as beings with bodies and emotions. Thus, for her and for this project, it ceases to be useful to distinguish between art and philosophy (Zwicky, 2015).

Zwicky’s artful approach to lyric composition is to carefully arrange elements of her experiences as side-by-side comparisons—or duons. In representational terms, this is generally presented as a *left-hand page* that consists of a philosophical aphorism, or fragments of text, and a *right-hand page* that may consist of quotations from other scholars, geometric proofs, or even pieces of sheet music. The creative tensions between these paired pages can then open up a space that invites the reader to perceive *resonances* with their own experiences and imagination—to gain a sense of something

more than might be individually expressed (Lee, 2002, 2010). Thus, readers are invited to realize an impression of some shared ontological experience unconditioned by language.

Understanding is the sudden and simultaneous realization that aspects of the represented experience resonate with similar experiences of the connoisseur. This constitutes what Zwicky calls a lyric argument that attempts to assist others to see what we have seen, felt, and experienced (2015). In research terms, validity is in this phenomenological resonance. And, we maintain that there is verisimilitude in resonance.

### *The Right-Hand Side—Pinhole Photographs*

Pinhole photography is more than a historical artefact. In a rapidly digitizing era, it offers another way of experiencing the world. It uses a simple camera with a small hole instead of a lens to allow light to reach photosensitive paper, and it employs a photographer who is, in varying degrees, present during the artistic process (see for example, Jickling, 2015; Morse et al., 2018). The process places sensuous demands on the imagination and, indeed, on a participant-artist's whole being. Pinhole photographers literally feel their way across the landscape—sensing movements in the vegetation and changing light. They must learn to see without staring through a viewfinder. And, this encourages ontological repositioning.

Without a viewfinder, lens, or light meter, a different kind of attention is required. Pinhole photography invites people to slow down, attend to, and listen to the place where they are present—physically, sensually, and emotionally.

### *The Left-Hand Side—Atoms of Delight*

Participants were invited write about the lived experience of being in a place while making images, thus tilting the experiment toward phenomenological interpretation, and an artistic connective-aesthetic first conceived by Suzi Gablik (1992). For Gablik, this meant renewing our connective being in the world by making art that would inhabit environmental and social practices and would be politically responsive. Thus, the aesthetics of the process are as important as the aesthetics of the products. In following this lead, we hope to evoke openings, opportunities—or even radical shifts—in ways of capturing written aspects of intimacy within a time and a place.

Participants were, thus, encouraged to write with concise and evocative expression. In the foreword to Alec Finlay's collection of poems, *Atoms of Delight* (2000), a model for our approach, Kenneth White speaks of the tiny poems:

They delight through their simplicity and the pure intensity of concision, and through openness, wit and humour. These different forms are not ultimately rhetorical devices, but utterances within the moment that can be apprehended and felt. The

poems pivot. The one-word poems and haiku turn in a similar way, suggesting the mind dancing from one perception to another—recalling once again the origins of haiku in the single gesture of hand and brush over ink and paper, or, as Bachelard describes, “a flicker of the soul.” (p. 25-26)

Similarly, Zwicky speaks about how our attention responds to particularities. This cotton grass, this glacier, this rock, this chair. She says we are pierced with presence: “The this strikes us like a shaft of light. A bolt of *thisness*.” (In Jickling, 2015, p 152.)

While written responses in our project take different forms, they are all short, sometimes hastily written, but these little atoms attempt to catch a glimpse of the *raw* experience of a few moments in time and place—and their own *thisness*. They dance amongst perceptions. And they evoke feelings. Their concise forms strike us as perfect expressions for wild travellers, where cumbersome writing can burden an instant of insight or awakening.

### A Parting Thought

We claim there is something *wild* in the lyric arguments presented in this paper. Analytic evaluation of such lyric pairings can, according to Zwicky, frequently block understanding. To this she adds, “to begin to understand how our understanding can be limited by fear, by a will to mastery, by a need to control, is to begin the learning/unlearning that constitutes the practice of lyric philosophy” (2015, p. 18). For these reasons, we believe that Wild Pedagogies and lyric philosophy can open new terrain in environmental education research by offering educators and researchers alternative ways of thinking and being in the world.

### Acknowledgments

We acknowledge our partners, both in this paper and in the larger Wild Pedagogies gathering in Finse, Norway. We were 29 humans who gathered and built a community of like-minded souls with shared interests, common worries, and overlapping approaches to research. But, we were not alone; we had research collaborators in the place itself—the creeks, lakes, rocks and glaciers—human histories, the lemmings, the lichen, and the ancient vegetation that was revealed as the glaciers melted and then was eaten by spiders foraging at the edges of the ice. So, we thank these collaborators—human and more-than-human. All have contributed to this work. We also give extra thanks to the collaborating authors represented here, and thanks to everyone who drifted in and out of various photography mini-workshops. It is not possible to identify every one of them with accuracy. However, we will acknowledge the indefatigable efforts of Marianne Presthus Heggen to photograph an important rock—and to share *her*

Finse with us all. The first seven pairings each play collective homage to this place, and our vast collaboration.

The eighth pairing pays homage to a different collaboration: one between a place high on the flank of the nearby mountain, Hallingskarvet, Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, and his cabin, Tvergastein. This collaboration bloomed for a lifetime—and endures. Many Wild Pedagogies participants know of Næss through his writings (for example, Næss, 1988). In such a knowing, we are limited to the logico-linguistic Næss, with an occasional splash of the poetic. At this mountain cabin, though, we could *feel* Arne Næss's presence and know him more. Knowing and feeling are, too often, carelessly separated. For many of us at Tvergastein, there was a healing of the trauma this separation creates. At this place we also learned how, in declining years, Arne Næss returned one last time to re-inhabit *his* place, with more feeling than memory—with the kind of knowing that can happen when person and place become one *Place*. We recognize this acknowledgement is becoming perilously close to the kind of analysis eschewed earlier in this paper. So, we finish by thanking Aage Jensen for bringing us to Tvergastein, and Per Ingvar Haukeland for sharing his stories of friendship with Arne Næss.

### Notes on Contributors

**Bob Jickling** is Professor Emeritus at Lakehead University with interests in environmental philosophy; environmental, experiential, and outdoor education; and philosophy of education. His most recent book is *Wild Pedagogies: Touchstones for Re-Negotiating Education and the Environment in the Anthropocene* in which he and others of the Crex Crex Collective attempt to find openings for radical re-visioning of education. His forthcoming book is titled *Environmental Ethics: A Sourcebook for Educators*. As a long-time wilderness traveller, much of his inspiration is derived from the landscape of his home in Canada's Yukon. Contact: bob.jickling@lakeheadu.ca

**Marcus Morse** is Senior Lecturer and Program Convenor for Outdoor Environmental Education, in the School of Education, at La Trobe University, Australia. He grew up in Tasmania, where he spent extended time on the island's rivers, coastlines, and mountains to develop a love for being in wild places. Marcus has a passion for extended journeys, and his research interests are in the areas of outdoor environmental education, community engagement projects, place-based education, and Wild Pedagogies. Contact: m.morse@latrobe.edu.au



## References

- Blenkinsop, S., Jickling, B., Morse, M., & Jensen, A. (2019). Wild pedagogies: Six touchstones for childhoodnature theory and practice. In A. Cutter-Mackenzie, K. Malone and E. Barratt Hacking (eds.) *Research Handbook on Childhoodnature: Assemblages of Childhood and Nature Research* (pp. 451-468). Springer International Handbooks of Education.
- Braidotti, R. (2019). *Posthuman knowledge*. UK: Polity Press.
- Crex Crex Collective. (2018). Six touchstones for wild pedagogies in practice. In B. Jickling, S. Blenkinsop, N. Timmerman and M. De Danann Sitka-Sage (eds.) *Wild Pedagogies: Touchstones for Re-Negotiating Education and the Environment in the Anthropocene* (pp. 77-107). Palgrave Macmillan
- Eisner, E. (1985). *The educational imagination* (2nd ed.). Macmillan.
- Finlay, A. (Ed). (2000). *Atoms of delight: An anthology of Scottish haiku and short poems*. Morning Star Publications.
- Gablik, S. (1992). Connective aesthetics. *American Art*, 6(2), 2-7.
- Jickling, B. (2015) Self-willed learning: Experiments in wild pedagogy. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 10, 149–161
- Lee, D. (2002). Body music: Notes on rhythm in poetry. In, T. Lilburn (Ed.), *Thinking and singing: Poetry & the practice of philosophy* (pp. 19-58). Cormorant Books.
- Lee, D. (2010). The music of thinking: The structural logic of “Lyric Philosophy.” In M. Dickinson & C. Goulet (Eds.), *Lyric ecology: An appreciation of the work of Jan Zwicky* (pp. 19-39). Cormorant Books.
- Morse, M., Jickling, B., & Morse, P. (2018). Views from a pinhole: Experiments in Wild Pedagogy on the Franklin River. *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education*, 21(3) 255-275.
- Næss, A. (1988). “Self realization: An ecological approach to being in the world.” In J. Seed, J. Macy, P. Fleming, & A. Næss (eds.) *Thinking like a mountain: Towards a council of all beings* (pp. 19–30). New Society Publishers.
- Zwicky, J. (1992). *Lyric philosophy*. University of Toronto Press.
- Zwicky, J. (2003). *Wisdom and metaphor*. Gaspereau Press.
- Zwicky, J. (2015). What is lyric philosophy? In J. Zwicky, *Alkibiades’ love: Essays in philosophy* (pp. 3-18). McGill-Queens University Press.