

**THE NATURE OF TRANSFORMATION: ENVIRONMENTAL, ADULT AND POPULAR EDUCATION**

Darlene E. Clover, Shirley Follen, and Budd Hall (1998). Toronto: Transformative Learning Centre.

This exposition of transformational education emerges from a wealth of experience gathered by a trio of educators over the past 6 years. Clover, Follen, and Hall reflect on the challenge of developing “a more holistic ecologically focused education with, by, for and about adults” (p. 1) through the multiple lenses of adult, environmental, popular, and feminist education. They complement their theoretical discussion of these philosophies with concrete examples of strategies from around the globe, which brings these perspectives to life for others working with adults in different contexts.

The principal objective behind this book is threefold: (a) to facilitate the reflective process of self-awareness in adult learners, (b) to emphasize the influence that the educational environment plays in this articulation of voice, and (c) to translate awareness of humanity’s place in the world into concrete environmental action. As Clover, Follen, and Hall point out, most existing outdoor education curricula have focused on children and youth. This text offers ideas for extending environmental education into adult education, so that adults too can reconnect and relearn through nature. Such a collection is welcome at a time when many adult educators in Canada and abroad are faced with the need to build awareness of humanity’s impact on the physical and social world around them. The authors link the process of finding one’s voice and place in society to the importance of giving voice to issues, situations, and forces which cannot speak for themselves, such as ecosystems, forests, and bodies of water. Thus it is imperative that feminist principles such as reflection, inclusion of daily and socio-cultural realities, and personal experience become integral parts of learning. I am uncertain why the term feminist education is not noted in the title; nevertheless, within the body of the text, it is presented as one of the four principal threads informing the authors’ approach to education.

The three authors are each active in environmental education through various forms of adult education and community development. They introduce and close their book with a clear and engaging presentation of their backgrounds, goals and experiences leading up to this compilation of their work. Although divided into six chapters, *The Nature of Transformation* can be viewed in three sections: theory, practical examples, and reflections. The first two chapters introduce the theory and definitions of adult, popular, feminist, and environmental education, and explain how they may combine in practice. The bulk of this discussion is rather straightforward; each educational philosophy is highlighted and points to supporting research, but does not analyze deeply. The authors also highlight issues such as the importance of planning and preparation,

understanding the context of the class or workshop to be held, and the joys and pitfalls of working as a team of facilitators. The authors work from a position which assumes that their audience already accepts these proposed definitions of educational theory, and then use those definitions to set the scene for the innovative practicality of the following chapters. The book is useful, then, as a practical guide to developing creative strategies around an ecology of adult learning, but it does not provide a detailed analysis of the educational philosophies in question.

The subsequent two chapters present a wide variety of activities (with an emphasis on time, purpose, requirements, and procedures) designed to promote a further understanding of the interdependence of humans and the environment. For me, these two chapters, in particular, are the most valuable. The authors make a concerted effort to integrate the four philosophies of education in the reality of the workshop or classroom. The activities vary in theme and include: ecological awareness, articulation of self and values, learning through nature and one's own histories, introduction of specific learning theories, and community building. The integrity of these activities is strengthened by the fact that the authors have taken pains to include ideas from around the world and from their own experience; all the activities have withstood the test of actual experience.

In the final two chapters, Clover, Follen, and Hall describe some of their experiences with their environmental workshops. I appreciate the candor with which they discuss workshops that ran smoothly, as well as those that did not, and their reflections on why this is so. There is no guarantee or assumption that encouraging this kind of learning is necessarily easy or always welcome. The text concludes with a list of resources and sources of information, plus the appendices of sample workshop agendas. This inclusion is very helpful and reflects a generous sharing of knowledge. It is encouraging to witness this kind of open cooperation, a generosity that echoes the authors' foundational values of community and connectedness.

The authors address one fear in particular throughout the book in a way which I find especially helpful, as I have experienced the same trepidation. Many of the proposed activities ask adults to participate in ways they may find *unusual* or difficult in an educational or social setting: storytelling, drawing, sharing personal experiences, or even speaking in a group. I found myself squirming at the thought of asking adults to do some of these things, which could initially seem affected, childish, or overwhelming. It was a comfort to read that the authors have heard these fears from other educators and participants, and can still assure me that I would be surprised at the positive reactions of participants once they grow accustomed to the idea and have established some relationships within the group. The three authors are also quick to point out that it is equally important to have researched the group of learners in question and to be

extremely sensitive to individual needs. Nevertheless, it intrigues me to ponder what may happen when we as educators choose to push the limits of immediate comfort of learners and of ourselves and try some of these alternative methods.

*The Nature of Transformation* is a witness to some of the ways Clover, Follen, and Hall have developed an ecologically focused means of adult education. They clearly meet their goal of achieving this with and for adults: the inclusion of many individual voices is evident throughout the work. This text is a very practical collection of ideas that have grown out of the experience of many educators and participants. It does not set itself up as a customary academic work of analysis, although it does discuss some theory and includes references. The layout is also accessible, with short paragraphs of theory interspersed with sections written in point form. This kind of format adds to the workbook quality of this project, so that readers are left with a richness of practical suggestions delivered in a concise manner. The text also, unfortunately, includes a number of editing errors, which is distracting to the reader. Still, I see this book as a very useful and informative workshop guide or activity book.

The authors express a desire that the knowledge outlined in the book would flow from and be part of the experience of learning together with workshop participants. As such, they write in a tone which maintains the voices of the people they have worked with, instead of turning to a more academic voice, which is sometimes exclusive or elitist. I would, however, recommend that readers look beyond this book for deeper discussion of adult, feminist, environmental, and popular education. This text is more of a resource to turn to for concrete ideas for any educator who hopes to address or build an awareness of feminist and environmental issues in the classroom or community. Along with Clover, Follen, and Hall, I hope that these issues become integral to educational curricula overall and look forward to incorporating some of the ideas in my own practice.

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### ***FATHER JIMMY: LIFE AND TIMES OF JIMMY TOMPKINS***

Jim Lotz and Michael R. Welton (1997). Wreck Cove, Cape Breton Island, NS: Breton Books.

Largely because of the nostalgic, thoroughly romantic and somewhat uncritical 1976 National Film Board film *Moses Coady*, adult educators in Canada (and, to a certain extent, overseas) are more-or-less acquainted with Coady's cousin, the abrasive, irascible, nagging, cranky, inquisitive and altogether marvelous Jimmy Tompkins. Whether intended or not, this book disrupts the myth that the Antigonish movement was all Coady's doing. Lotz and