

## Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

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### **Provoking Curriculum Studies: Strong Poetry and Arts of the Possible in Education**

Edited by Nicholas Ng-A-Fook, Awad Ibrahim, and Giuliano Reis

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### **Reviewed by/ Revu par**

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### *Homophily*

*Arts of the possible within education: Playful singing in the midst of life: Voices that are  
neither torn nor worn.*

*What seems urgent is the recovery of the fullness of language.*

*BUT everybody claimed to know with certainty all they needed to know.*

*BUT in order to foster scholarly relevance in education, we need language and concepts  
and perspectives that will awaken us to new ways of seeing and knowing and  
being and becoming.*

*promote more wonder.*

*communication, craft and creativity...they resist intellectual conformity.*

*stylish academic writers often play around with language*

*pair of ox*

*pair of pocks*

*pair of quacks*

*pair of rocks*

*always failing to fit in.*

*LOL, Mashup, pop culture OR philosophy, scholarly, academy  
Greek, old, apologetics, prophetic OR Facebook, Google, boy, Best Buy*

*What do scholars want?*

*fame, glory, homage, honours*

*YET Scholars should embrace poetry...roar with Rortian gusto for robust possibilities not yet imagined.*

I (first reviewer) was so moved by Carl Leggo's call to strong poetry that I felt it only fitting, in this poetry-infused chapter, to begin this review with a mash-up-style found poem taken directly from Leggo's words. I wanted to "reimagine" this first chapter of this edited collection, as the text so eloquently proposes we as educators and researchers re-imagine our work. The text asks us to lean on the affordances of poetry — a genre that can help us work through "the limits of language" (p. 117). I wanted to distill the chapter's essence (which ultimately holds within it the essence of the entire book) into my own unique poem. But I also wanted to make reference to Lisa Farley's chapter on "Copy and Creativity" as, like her Grade 3 self, I felt the "impulse to imitate the words of another" (p. 126). In this way I "make from the painful fact of one's dependence on existing modes of representation something that feels authentic and unique to the self" (p. 131).

This text is a transformative read calling scholars, academics, educators, researchers to look inward and to reflect on the possible when we make space for the creative, for the voices of the marginalized and yet to be heard, when we consider the space between the curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum-as-lived — ultimately, when we humanize education and the academy. The book is thoughtfully divided into four parts that deal uniquely with the role of poetry and the poetic in a system so institutionalized and planned. Within this system, poetry is a multipurpose tool adapted for different reasons in different contexts, but called upon because of its unique ability to offer a different perspective, to capture an essence not relatable in plain text, to express the ineffable. This is

evident from the poetic re-telling of teacher trauma through digital storytelling in chapter 11 (a therapeutic, dream-like practice of re-living negative experiences, bringing them forward to the conscious mind and ultimately processing the trauma) to becoming aware and mindful of our interior and exterior lives as teachers in Chapters 10 and 14 to the critical and exploratory work of poetry in Part II: Traumatizing Moments in Education: The Painfully Undesired. Here, poetry serves as a spotlight to critically investigate those who have been marginalized in Canadian society, the myth of our nation, political issues in other parts of the world (i.e. the Arab Spring) and the masked racism that runs prolific in the online world. Part IV, Stories We Live By: Desiring Curricular Moments of Hope concludes the text, repeating common themes and words within its pages, echoing other chapters and reinforcing the message — poetry = perspective, mindfulness, newness, criticality, visibility, space. In this section, Scott Hughes has a chapter titled, “Lessons of Delight”. In this, he shares that it is only in writing he finds “new ways to talk about curriculum, schooling and children” (p. 247). Diane Watt picks up on this theme in her chapter titled, “A Dissertation / Not a Dissertation Working the Tensioned Spaces of Aokian Discourse” in which she walks the line between the established institution, the established ways of doing education and the new tools available and the new voices waiting to be heard — for me, a curricular moment of hope.

This text is dense with meaning, with calls to action, with suggestions of how poetry can be leveraged in our personal and public lives, in our classrooms, in our roles as educators and in our research methods. It is comprehensive and beautifully written, communicated through a collection of poems, poetic language and poetic methods. Something of the deeply human experience has been lost in the curriculum (as outlined in Clausen’s chapter, “From Vigour to Rigour: Tensionality and Ontario’s Unbalanced Curriculum”) and the more removed we have become from ourselves as teachers and researchers the more we need the poetic as a pathway back to mindfulness, inward reflection — connection to that which makes us human. *Provoking Curriculum Studies* asks us to a return to these sensibilities and provides the reader, a fellow poet, with a way back.