

Collaborative Writing as an Exercise of Poetic Resistance in Teacher Education

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A Brief Reflection on Collaborative Writing
and Poetic Resistance in Teacher Education

Our reflections that follow in this paper are intended to exemplify engagement with difficulty and existential challenges in teacher education through poetic forms, a theme originally suggested by the 2013 Provoking Curriculum Conference. The reference to poeticizing suggests that we speak and write differently in response to provocations that unsettle taken-for-grantedness and indifference to hope and possibility that things

can be other than they are. In our case, as illustrated in our previously published work (Lund, Panayotidis, Smits, & Towers, 2012), there was an attempt to find a language to describe innovative practices in teacher education. The narratives contained in that book illustrate experiences related to working within a radically construed teacher education program, one for which there was not yet, from our perspectives at least, an established and settled curriculum.

The ongoing conversation about our work as represented in this paper is not about that program per se, but admittedly the program provides a significant background in the development of our ongoing work in teacher education. A fuller discussion of the program is contained in the reference above, but there are some elements of it that are germane to our current discussion that I will outline briefly here.

The teacher education program in question was the Master of Teaching (MT), a two-year after degree program leading to a B.Ed.¹ The program was designed to encourage inquiry-based learning, and eschewed traditional “courses” for seminars of relatively small sizes encouraging both individual and collaborative inquiry into field experiences, curriculum, school culture, and social and cultural issues related to understanding the role of the teacher. Field experiences were integrated with on-campus work throughout the two years of the program. Other novel features of the program included field experiences in non-traditional community agencies and an optional international school experience in the fourth semester.

In terms of assessment of students' work, the MT program used a pass/fail format and narrative evaluations. At least in its earlier configuration, students were encouraged to express learning through interdisciplinary and multi-representational formats, in recognition of the complex layers of interpreting and beginning to understand teaching practice. A compelling aspect of the program for many of us who worked in it was the attempt to build it around the idea of teaching as a form of practical judgement, and that learning about teaching and becoming a teacher required experiencing and understanding the exercise of judgement in pedagogical contexts. Hence, the importance of inquiry as a basis for learning professional practice was central to the program's structure and ethos.²

In reflecting back on my own experience in the MT program it is interesting that the four authors of this paper were "new" faculty members in the early years of the program. Perhaps not having any history in the faculty and its earlier iterations offered us an openness to think about and practice teacher education. Certainly the program was a provocation in terms of raising questions and issues related to our work as teacher educators. Not least, in terms of the topic of this paper, are questions about forms of resistance to prevailing and stubborn norms of institutional practice, and what it means to take up inquiry—and how such inquiry is narrated.

In my further contribution to this discussion, I want to outline just a few things, consistent with the challenge of narrating practice, which we refer to here as poetizing, by focusing on what the exercise of writing

about our experiences in the MT program entailed, what kind of “making” it represented. Gadamer (2007) reminds us of the double meaning of *poiesis*, the root of the word poetry. In Gadamer’s words, *poiesis* “means, first of all, ‘to make,’ that is, the construction or production of something that did not exist before” (p. 201). In this sense of the word, we were engaged in the “making” of a book, a tangible and material project that entailed considerable mental and physical effort and commitment over time. At the same time, we were engaged in the “making” of a new program, attempting to realize something in practice that yet lacked the language to fully describe and understand what it is we were doing.

Our efforts and ongoing work, as we want to further elaborate here, exemplify this struggle to “make” something, and to represent our struggles in language that challenges of practice in teacher education provoked: a language that was less about the technical aspects of program development, but more oriented to deeper issues, such as dealing with disappointment, melancholy, narrating difference, embodied learning, and the responsibilities of being teacher educators. Our earlier work, as noted above, illustrated inquiries into some of the responsibilities inherent in being a teacher educator: how we understand students, how we take up understandings and enact programs, developing ethical responses and pedagogies for addressing difference, and the meaning and relevance of research to the larger project of teaching and curriculum. An overarching concern is that of how, to paraphrase Judith Butler (2005), we give account of ourselves, and how we assign language to our efforts and responsibilities.

Such efforts at language and forms of inquiry suggest the second meaning of poiesis, which refers not to the making of things (and programs in our case) but the creation of a text. Gadamer (2007) writes that, “in this making whole worlds are able to rise up out of nothingness, and nonbeing comes to being. This is almost more than making” (p. 201). What this meaning of poiesis suggests is that while the book as an object is a completed thing, now to be shelved along with others, the writing we attempted and the words that were created to try to provide meaning to our experiences remain incomplete, open to further interpretation and, indeed, contested.

Where we struggle to articulate possibilities that do not yet exist, where assumed truths and conceptual structures fail to grasp what we experience, an effort of “strong poetry” (Rorty, 1989) is required, to say things in ways that are new or different: a “production in words never used before” (p. 28). In our recently published book (Lund et al., 2012), we set out to say something differently, both about teacher education, and also how we might narrate in collaborative terms, experiences which were the results of provocations—institutional, theoretic, practical, and emotional—and how we might bind those moments of experience into an historical account.

Citing Aristotle’s concept of Time, the Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk (2010) makes the distinction between the experience of single moments and events that fill our daily lives, work and otherwise. But simply a recounting of events is not history nor gives it a sense of narrative. Rather, “time is the line that links these indivisible moments” (p. 287). While we

experienced many singular and challenging events, and each of these is important and “indivisible,” they are not the story as a whole. So this is one element of our experience: “to think historically about [our] experiences of teacher education, and... the problem of memory when institutional change can occlude... how practice may be understood differently” (Lund et al., 2012, p. 79). The exercise of poiesis is thus a commitment to articulating historical boundaries as at once limiting, but also as an invitation to expand those boundaries through inquiry.

The nature of inquiry in which we engaged thus represents a struggle to find new languages to narrate the kinds of difficulties inherent in teacher education. Inquiry in that sense represents an attempt to become more aware of the limits of thought and structures that frame our work as teacher educators, and as John Caputo (1987) reminds us, obstacles to understanding cannot be ameliorated by “the formulation of hard and irrevocable rules” (pp. 212–213). Caputo perhaps allows us to grasp what we were trying to do in resisting closure and certainty: as we are trying to illustrate here, to see our work as a form of poiesis, as a constant struggle to keep something open and think beyond and outside of established frames of apprehension.

Reflecting now on our experiences, it is interesting to note the struggles of working to establish a program that was in many ways against the norms of convention. However, although our program was “new,” it was still haunted in a sense with ways of thinking and conceptualizing that perhaps stymied different possibilities for understanding practice and purpose. “The concepts in which thinking is formulated stand silhouetted

like dark shadows on a wall,” Gadamer (1977) evocatively writes (p. 35). Poiesis in this sense is not a simple accounting, but a challenging way to think about giving accounts for our actions. On the one hand we inherit and must work within structures—and forms of language—that precede us. Yet we always have the responsibility to find new language, and to take up the tasks of renewal.

Reading back through our collaborative inquiries, we can see the attempt to recollect something lost, perhaps a melancholic response to provocations that in the end defeated good intentions. But in the spirit of poiesis, recollecting, as Gadamer (1977) reminds us, is not to repeat something previously known, but rather, “the recollection of something previously asked” (p. 35). For me, that includes continuing to ask what teacher education is about, what purposes it serves, and how we may engage in a project that is oriented to a renewal of the world. Gadamer’s injunction is hopeful in this sense: it is not that we know everything through our inquiry. Indeed, it is to accept the modesty that inquiry requires: “that there is no higher principle than this: holding oneself open to the conversation” (p. 36).

Jo Towers

An Accidental Radical

In his opening contribution, Hans reflects on the kind of “making” that our collaborative writing represents. Taking his provocation as my starting point, and with the theme of our paper—poetic resistance—in mind, I want to extend his reflections to focus on a different kind of

making—an *autopoietic* kind—a self-making. The experience of working within the radical and controversial Master of Teaching (MT) teacher education program that forms the backdrop to this article, and indeed the experience of the ten-year collaborative writing project that has brought us to this point, helped shape the self that I am, and am becoming. This shift moves us from poiesis to *autopoiesis* (Maturana & Varela, 1992). While the writing that allowed us to interrogate the program, and indeed the program itself, is now “finished,” the ideas, dilemmas, challenges, joys, disruptions, and *aporias* these affordances provoked are still very much alive and continue to transform my understanding of the field of teacher education.

Our collaborative writing inquiries began as a critical thinking-through of the qualities of lived experiences as instructors within an innovative and now defunct teacher education program. While each of us brought different curriculum specializations and diverse life histories to the MT program, our collaborative, critical thinking-through of our experiences necessarily called upon each of us to reinterpret our own experience in the light of others’ experiences. Autopoiesis, or self-making, announces an orientation to the critical importance of this understanding of self in relation to others and one’s environment. In this framing, it is understood that one’s self emerges *in relation* to the other and that, simultaneously, one’s environment is itself an autopoietic system—the self and other co-emerge. As we strive to make sense of our engagements with the world, our sense of the world does not come to us fully formed. We have to *make* sense and this making is autopoietic—self-making. In

sensing (making sense of) our situation we make something of ourselves—we become something more.

Our collaborative writing has drawn its sustenance from our experiences working within a radically construed teacher education program that—in its language, form, and curriculum—challenged prevailing norms of educational practice. The strong attachment to the interpretive sensibility needed to thrive as a teacher educator within the kind of teacher education program that was the program became a defining feature of ourselves. We became noticeable. And because the MT program was radical in its rejection of certain commonplaces of teacher education, we³ somehow became our faculty's radicals.

I, for one, did not know that this was what I was signing up for when I naively signed the contract to become a faculty member at this university. I'd grown up the oldest child of divorced parents—thrust into the role of go-between and peace-broker—and was a timid and highly compliant child in school. Becoming a teacher had helped me to show through my practice (but still not speak about) the kind of things I thought were important in education and, later, graduate studies had taught me to be more comfortable presenting my ideas, but suddenly I was not only thrust into teaching within a radically different teacher education program but also drawn, from my very first year as an Assistant Professor, into active involvement in shaping the curriculum and vision for the MT program that was, at that time, just emerging from its prototype phase and rolling out to full capacity. I was therefore called upon to speak for and on behalf of the principles of a program that was the site of contestation and,

sometimes, hostile attack. Certainly, the MT program reinforced my beliefs and allowed me to practice authentically, but it was the connection to Lisa, Darren, and Hans (and, earlier in our process, Anne Phelan)—through the collaborative writing project that we document here—that allowed me to understand my experience more deeply and to become comfortable with my role of radicalism and resistance.

Indeed, our collaborative writing has served for us as a kind of resistance, reclaiming, re-storying, and historical accounting through our encounters with others. In our work, including the presentation on which this article is based, we have taken seriously “the idea of writing and re-writing curriculum theory as an act of strong poetry,” as articulated in the conference call for papers (Panayotidis, Lund, Towers, & Smits, 2013). Such writing allowed us to show the possibility of an “other” in teacher education—one that included program structures that honoured students’ life experiences and a pedagogy (e.g., of inquiry) that matched the ideas being promulgated within its curriculum. The program set out to do things differently. Responding to Aoki’s reminder that curriculum discourse flounders when it relies on the dominant, technical forms of rationality (Aoki, Pinar, & Irwin, 2005), we, in our collaborative writing, set out to say something differently—to use the example of one teacher education program to provoke, and to use narrative, interpretive, and poetic structures to do so. Such writing is a form of resistance to normative forces, those that both seek to constrict academic writing itself and seek to limit what is understood as ‘effective’ teacher education. Such writing is also necessarily reflexive and personal. Hayles (1999) points out that

reflexivity in writing confuses the boundaries we impose on the world:

When Kurt Gödel invented a method of coding that allowed statements of number theory also to function as statements *about* number theory, he entangled that which generates the system with the system. When M. C. Escher drew two hands drawing each other, he took that which is presumed to generate the picture—the sketching hand—and made it part of the picture it draws. When Jorge Luis Borges in “The Circular Ruins” imagines a narrator who creates a student through his dreaming only to discover that he himself is being dreamed by another, the system generating a reality is shown to be part of the reality it makes. (p. 8)

In our work, we actively entangled the system generating our lives in the program with our lives in the program. That is, despite beliefs that aligned wholeheartedly with the program’s principles and philosophy, in our writing we deliberately interrogated the program’s structures, and our own practices within it, publicly troubling its complications and limitations (Smits et al., 2008; Lund et al., 2012) rather than seeking to disentangle ourselves from it and draw attention away from its flaws.

As we reflect on the dismantling of the program, then, we recognize that we are complicit in the demise of the very ideas and ideals we mourn (though we maintain that the work of teacher education must include the active interrogation of existing practice—a stance that those who cling to traditional practices seem to resist). And yet, at the same time, autopoiesis

affords us the recognition that, as we make sense of our loss, we can reconceive of the world as one in which the conditions for a rebirth of a radical construing of teacher education are already in place. We are able to re-make ourselves, through our writing and through our ongoing practices that are made sensible through such writing. Having been released from the administrative responsibilities of operationalizing a radical program that was continually under attack means that we are no longer engaged in the exhausting work of resisting challenges to the existence of the that program and instead can take up a different form of resistance—one in which the radical is again in its more usual (and perhaps more comfortable, perhaps even necessary) role on the outside, as challenger of institutional normativity rather than protector. We are, therefore, in a way, already embodying the reconstruing of our ideas as we continue to teach new teachers the art of poetic resistance.

E. Lisa Panayotidis

Poiesis and the Performative Body

The body is our general medium for having a world.

(Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 169).

The body is the research instrument... you put it under the same regimes, controls, rules and regulations, urgencies and problems as the people you're trying to understand. (Paul Willis, interviewed by Sassatelli & Santoro, 2009, p. 274).

As Hans and Jo have already noted, our collective thinking and writing was borne out of our resistance to forms (and institutional hegemonic

discourses) of *techne* that sought to strictly prescribe what it meant to prepare new teachers for the profession. Our praxis gave rise to our *poiesis*, and *poiesis* spurred us toward ethical action and collaborative writing. We wrote about our difficulties and challenges against encroaching calls for a narrow and dubious form of teacher preparation. We wrote and presented together on the themes of nostalgia, loss, displacement (Lund, Panayotidis, Phelan, Towers, & Smits, 2003), and the exercise of power in the name of administrative efficiencies. We also wrote of hope, renewal, joy and the possibilities such words could evoke. Our desire to re-imagine—through our writing and collaboration—dissonance and disjunction as productive couplings were, at least in my mind, worthy acts of critical interpretation in the midst of educational change.

Yet what I remember most profoundly about this time was not only our deep and abiding fellowship in the face of professional struggle, but the tension that ensued and was lived most palpably in the body. Living, working, teaching, and collaborating in these institutional spaces forged an otherness through which we bodily performed the tension of this poetic resistance (Smits et al., 2008). The inquiring and experiencing body forged an active and cyclical process of anguish and rejuvenation, mirroring larger internal anxieties in our faculty and among our colleagues (as well as the broader professional educational community of which we are a part) about the relative merits of continuity and change. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) evocatively reminds us, “the body is our general medium for having a world” (p. 169). So what does it mean to complicate our thinking of *poesies* as a bodily act?

Reflecting on poetic resistance and the call for strong poets there is another context in which I want to enlarge our sense of poiesis as an elemental process of productive making, particularly as it manifested itself during the first decade of our work together. I comment on what we might call a “poiesis of emotional resonance”—that bodily exhilaration, excitement, and emotional angst that I encountered as I wrote alongside my colleagues. Against the Platonic and Cartesian dualities (soul-mind/body) that confronted me—the thinking and experiencing body, with its emotive gendered gestures, feelings, and desires—I was allowed a different way to know and understand the complexity of the professional practices I was writing about. That body—*my* body—in turn, poetically re-inscribed those practices in multiple and diverse ways, suggesting how emotional suffering may serve as the “very site of the capacity to effect change” (Reddy, 2001, p. 470).

It was not until recently, however, in paying attention to my students’ discussion of dis-ease, that I began to remember the often diseased body that voiced its complex aporias, about our embodied encounters and interactions in teacher education and the world we hoped to enact through it (Panayotidis, 2009). Such “body memory” or “kinesthetic memory” as it has been termed represents a powerful way to interpret memory as more than a cognitive process. Koch, Fuchs, Sunma, and Muller (2012) conceive of “memory as embodied... memory is not a set of information somewhere in the brain, but the totality of the embodied subject’s dispositions” (p. 2). Beyond theorization “body memory” is used today to psychologically treat forms of childhood trauma and post-traumatic

stress. "The body is the research instrument," Willis (2009) argues. "You put it under the same regimes, controls, rules and regulations, urgencies and problems as the people you're trying to understand" (p. 274).

The body has a long and complex history in Western culture. Contrastingly, Eastern and Indigenous traditions have a more holistic view of the mind/body divide. Merleau-Ponty (1962), Heidegger (1962; 1971) and Foucault (1975) among others have theorized the primacy of the body as both a social and physical phenomenon in all our experiential encounters. The body signifies our location relative to others and is subject to dominant cultural discourses that organize our lived experiences and meaning-making in the world. As "it is by the means of the body that space is perceived and produced" (Lefebvre, 1991), the body is thus construed as active and intentional. It is a prime vehicle of everyday communication that is capable of invading experiences and forging our identities and subjectivities. Increasingly, scholars have conceptualized embodiment as recognizing the way we experience, enact and perform our identities and bodily experience of self in particular in spaces and places. As a result, embodiment and spatiality are inextricably linked. Probyn (1991) draws on Deleuze's metaphor of the "fold" and the "pleat," to understand "the doubledness of the body... constituted in the doubledness of body and self." She notes: "Body and self seem impossible to untwine; they are pleated together" (p. 119).

While we reflect on our poiesis of writing and collaborating we must not minimize the texture of our corporeal (or "corporealities" more accurately) presence and its embodied performance, now simply a

historical trace and a figment of our respective recollections. For interspersed throughout our writing were academic and community presentations, class discussions, faculty meetings, and committees, and always quiet moments of conversation over coffee. Speaking, for me, was a “bodily act,” fraught with uncontained emotion, that carried, as Jo notes, its own precarious effects. Rising to speak at faculty meetings brought redness to my face and heat to my body. My voice would shake and my words would come out stumbling like a syncopated prose. The pre- and post-anxiety of meeting brought on by such collegial encounters brought on migraine headaches. After a time I started to attend meetings infrequently. Hans, who was at the time our Associate Dean for Teacher Preparation, noticed this.

Our writing was, in part, about resisting formative definitions, rules, and regulations of objectivity and rationalism. Marked by gender, age, race, and ideology (among other significations) our bodies are socially inscribed, defined, contested, and (mostly) personally experienced, mutably contingent, and ultimately transformed in and through our encounters with each other. Shaped through Foucault’s bureaucratic notions of power, controls, and regulation, our bodies were at once a vehicle for/of suppression and resistance. We were invited to stand guard against emotive possibilities in the academe, but resisted. Although pedagogical, the body and our embodied practices are crucially linked to our learning, research, and academic work; a certain form of passion and emotion in the academy has always been suspect—reductively construed as a gendered lack of confidence, academic assurance, and authority. It is

simplistically cast as the problem of the non-rational and non-normative (essentialist) feminine self. Paradoxically, cultural studies (Dixon, 2003; Reddy, 2001; Roper 2005)—often emerging from *within* the academy itself—illustrate that a vital and interlaced historicity binds emotion and gender identities and subjectivities. Eschewing positivist/empirical precepts of “natural” and “private,” emotions are shown to be socially produced and mediated, forging emotional cultures and emotional regimes through and across a range of geographic and cultural temporalities. Bodies—diversely and differently—act and are acted upon in time and space. In short, the poiesis of this book was not merely an intellectual exercise or a disembodied act, but one deeply and viscerally embedded in the body and in the world. Poiesis and the physicality of its production and consumption can never be separated.

Darren E. Lund

Provoking Pedagogies of the Possible: Responding to Backlash

Like my fellow writers, situated within a faculty that had ventured into an innovative inquiry-based teacher education program, I have also struggled with the various resulting tensions, ruptures, and contradictions. In its many forms, the backlash and resistance we felt, and which we have documented and disentangled in our past writing, have inevitably taken their toll on each of us as my colleagues attest above. Our collaborative responses were a form of poiesis, and have been shared in and beyond academic venues like this; they have been about our creative

and generative response to tensions and fragmentation, the sources of which have been varied.

In our daily work, each of us addressed the various emotional reactions to a program that refused to issue letter grades for academic work, but instead, issued students more personalized narrative assessments. Unable to scramble for the A+, our students were forced to find other ways to measure the value of their work, and the reason for attaining a university education. At the same time, we also examined with them more personally what it means to become a teacher, and to begin evaluating and assessing students of their own.

My colleagues and I also responded to ongoing forms of internal faculty resistance to the MT program that took away traditional sources of pedagogic authority and privilege, and handed some of the task of locating and assessing strong models of practice, and enacting the curriculum, back into the hands of students. The learner-focused approach also meant that the lived experiences and self-reflections of students would become a focus, a way to ensure that all learning and teaching began with a heightened awareness of self. Some of our colleagues resisted this model, some venting at faculty meetings, some insisting on lecturing in their seminar classes, and some even continuing to issue letter grades. Our collected writings about the program (Lund et al., 2012) represents our own poetic “speaking-back” to this resistance to a radically construed approach to teacher education that—in its language, form, and curriculum—challenged prevailing norms of practice.

In our collaborative text we confront the difficult work of teacher education, addressing specific challenges, complex demands, and forms of resistance that are prevalent everywhere. Other difficulties have included how “the field” accepts or rejects aspects of our work, how we attend to issues of ethics and recognition, deal with the complexities of learning professional practice, and take into account the larger, historical project of teacher education. Within my own practice I often encounter resistance to raising issues of power and privilege in teacher education classrooms. Like other social justice educators, I have faced a range of external forms of resistance, including letters to my Dean and university president seeking my dismissal, ongoing hate mail, written death threats, and a nuisance lawsuit. From practicing teachers and administrators I have also faced roadblocks, including dismissal of human rights concerns, denial of discrimination, and marginalization of these issues in conservative school settings. As Solomon and Singer (2011) document, disempowered equity educators report “a lack of available resources and conflicts with other teachers, administrators, and community members as further obstacles to their attempts to create and teach within an inclusive school environment” (p. 111).

For teacher educators focusing on human rights, offering a critical pedagogy framework that questions schooling as an inherently inequitable institution means encountering students who have not been accustomed to thinking of themselves as being part of a system that empowers some dominant players at the expense of others. For most of our pre-service teacher education students who uncritically “love school”

and “love all children” this can be an unsettling time. Students who have been taught that achieving a form of colour-blindness is the ideal are told they need to unlearn past lessons, and attune themselves anew to a social justice framework that looks at hidden forms of unearned privilege and the invisible components of oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

A recent edited volume by Gorski, Zenkov, Osei-Kofi, and Sapp (2013) focuses specifically on strategies for overcoming some of the cognitive “bottlenecks” that prevent students from coming to a critical understanding of some key “threshold concepts” in social justice. The editors recall their own frustrations in attempting to find strategies that work for helping students understand hegemony, deficit ideology, white privilege, patriarchy, and heteronormativity, among others:

We have struggled, tripped, reformulated our pedagogies, read incessantly, interviewed our students, and engaged in action research. We have attempted, in most every conceivable way, to ensure that our students appreciate the foundational concepts and competencies—the threshold concepts and competencies—that will bolster their development as equity- and social-justice minded educators... and... we sometimes have felt as though we may never quite get there. (p. 2)

Indeed, this perennially unfinished nature of our work—along with the tentative and imperfect means of raising awareness and personal insights—means that we will always be striving for what we imagine is

possible: a better world. And so it was with our collective ongoing challenges with enacting an innovative teacher education program.

Each semester, I seek innovative and student-generated ways to initiate meaningful dialogue on issues of social justice, but I understand that there will inevitably be moments in the classroom when new information and alternative understandings of unchallenged, dominant worldviews will be introduced. Offering students a critical review of specific aspects of their own lives through a social justice lens—one that locates and analyzes social privileges determined by hierarchies of power that marginalize others—will be emotionally troubling at times. Though these moments are unsettling, they are what Kumashiro (2009) describes as creating a controlled and deliberate kind of “crisis” for students in relation to promoting equity, namely, “a state of emotional discomfort and disorientation that calls on students to make some change” (p. 30). It is this invitation to new learning that offers students important breakthroughs in understanding their own roles in challenging oppression.

Sometimes this provocation to students will come in the form of a satirical film, a critical reading, a song or piece of poetry, a thoughtful YouTube clip, or a powerful narrative or visual representation of a concept perhaps related to hegemony, colonialism, racism, ableism, heterosexism, or sexism. We may engage together in a workshop, a focused activity, an embodied role-play, or a theatrical performance. Whatever issues arise, and regardless of the specific content, the inevitable discomfort will leave each of us seeking additional information and explanation, and a way to

make sense of our experience that leads us to activism and our own creative forms of poetic resistance.

Likewise, with the polyvocal writing that has included the gathering of critical reflections from admired colleagues, the authors herein engaged in a collective enterprise that took us somewhere new, and challenged our own assumptions about *possibilities* in teacher education. This conversation is just the beginning and—despite the inevitable forms of backlash we will continue to face in our ongoing work to make our current teacher education program as provocative, educative, and meaningful as it can be—we look forward to continuing this poetic radicalism. Together we will continue to speak out for crafting ways of teaching that fully engage our values, our commitments, and our embodied selves.

Coda

In closing, we recapitulate some of the opening motifs of this text—poiesis, poetry, and resistance—now deepened by each of the discussions that followed. We began by articulating poiesis as a commitment to articulating historical boundaries as offering both limitations, and also invitations, to expand those boundaries through inquiry. In our work within the MT teacher education program, and also in our collaborative writing for this article, we deliberately strove to render teacher education practices more complex, and therefore more amenable to poeticizing, through our inquiries.

The MT program that provoked our inquiries, and gave shape to the kinds of stories we wanted to tell about it, recently met a rather abrupt

end. There were many reasons for the program's demise, which include both internal and external factors. Internally there were issues related to programmatic concerns and the preparation for teaching. Perhaps the MT program was not sustainable in economic terms. Certainly there were external pressures from the larger community in terms of stakeholders' expectations for teacher preparation. Not least, there were struggles about legitimacy and what counts as teaching and knowledge about teaching in the university itself.

However, as mentioned above, our focus for this paper is not on a specific program, but rather, on what we can understand and narrate as inquiry into the work of teacher education. One way to understand our experiences is in terms of a struggle with "traditional" conceptions and practices of teacher education, whether or not there are unshakeable truths about practices, and how we understand them. Caputo (1987) reminds us, referring to Gadamer's hermeneutics, which assumed "unchanging truth can always be understood *differently* and that there are no grounds for saying it is understood *better* by one of its finite bearers than it is by another" (p. 111; emphasis in original).

The important idea that things can always be understood differently—but not necessarily better—is a challenge to programs which are often constructed with this sense of we can do things better. The idea that things can be better is a deeply ingrained notion in our modernist sense of progress. But as our experiences show us, there is always a "distance between the space of experience and the horizon of expectations" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 297). The distance between our experiences and the

“horizon of expectations” is, however, also a productive space—a space for poiesis as we have attempted to illustrate above. What we mean by “resistance” then is not resistance to particular programs or particular regimes of truth, but rather, how we keep up the space of possibility for understanding *differently*, and what that offers us in terms of our responsibilities as teacher educators.

Hence, while we struggled to articulate possibilities for teacher education and self-study that could describe what we experienced, we adopted an effort of “strong poetry” (Rorty, 1989, p. 28) as we tried to speak, think, and write the world anew. The nature of inquiry in which we engaged, therefore, represents a struggle to find new language—a poetry of resistance—to narrate the kinds of difficulties inherent in teacher education. Here, we have also drawn attention to how we tried to narrate, in collaborative terms, experiences that were the results of individual provocations, and how our collective process of writing and thinking together enabled us to bind those disparate moments of experience into an historical account that in a sense now stands for (i.e., has “made” evident) the teacher education program we worked within. This “making” has both constructed the program in which we were engaged *and* marked us as educators in very particular ways, which our above narratives elucidate. Collaborative writing, then, serves for us as a kind of resistance, reclaiming, re-storying, and historical accounting through encounters with others.

Endnotes

¹ The name of the program, Master of Teaching, was in itself a provocation that created some backlash and negative responses; the designation included the word “master,” intended to distinguish it from other B.Ed. program, but it was not a “Master’s” or graduate program. So in part the name created confusion for students and negative responses from practising teachers, some of whom questioned whether graduating teacher candidates could be called “masters of teaching.”

² We will briefly address the MT program’s demise in the Coda of this paper. However, it is worthwhile to point out here that the inquiry strategies and collaborative work in which the authors of this paper engaged reflected the difficulty not only of building and sustaining a program, but perhaps more so, in challenging the very frames of how teaching can be best understood. We also consider what that means for learning, and as discussed further below, how we understand the work of teacher education, including the form and substance of our own inquiries and our own identities as teacher educators.

³ I mean to include here all those who, in various ways, both inside and outside our faculty, championed the principles, language, form, and curriculum of the MT program.

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