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## Education and/as Art: A Found Poetry Suite

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### Abstract

Embracing *metaphor as method* (Prendergast, 2005; see also Prendergast, 2006a, 2006b, 2008a), which I suggest is a key characteristic of thinking poetically and doing poetic inquiry, is the process conveyed in this suite of found poems. The investigation began with a cross-disciplinary scholarly database search on the term “education as art” that asked: How has education been conceived as artful over time? This search led to (sadly but unsurprisingly) very few sources that explicitly employ this metaphor. However, what was discovered was powerful enough to warrant interpretation through poetic transcription and representation in a suite of found poems. These poems reveal the frustration, even rage, of those who wish to re-vision education as artful. They also reveal hopeful (perhaps utopian) views of what education could look like if re-conceived as the enculturation of artists. These found poems were presented as part of a keynote lecture to Ph.D. education students at the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal in April of 2011.

## **imagination**

we live in lands  
of what might be  
and  
what might have been

worlds  
far greater  
of more import  
than the world  
of what is

imagination  
turns lust  
into love  
the need for shelter  
into construction  
and industry  
converts food-taking  
into dining  
(but turns some  
into gluttons)

by virtue  
of imagination  
human life oscillates  
a vague median line  
(what we might call  
natural animality)

it soars above

in ideals, science,

art, religion

it drops below

in crimes, cruelties,

injustices, perversions

the work of actuality

is imagination's legacy

it is only

with imagination

we get away

from everything

but the bloom of the rose

early in the morning

it takes imagination

to think of

being free

(Broudy, 1972/1994, pp. 12-14)

## **Art as education/Education as art**

during one very unfortunate  
moment in history  
Philistines  
in positions of power  
decided to isolate

art

from

education

art

(metadiscipline of knowledge)

was degraded

to today's definition:

discipline and craft

focused on

the production

of objects

(few manufacturers/

many buyers)

a dispensable

entertainment

rather than

a way of thinking

redesign this structure:

underline the relationship

between artist and public  
incorporate the visitor  
into the creative process  
equip the consumer  
to become the creator

reclaim art  
as a methodology  
for knowledge  
stimulating  
the intelligence

a profound revision  
of the social function  
of art

(Camnitzer, 2009, p. 230)

**art and education**

art and education  
are not different things;  
they are different  
specifications  
of a common activity

(Camnitzer, 2009, p. 234)

**the fact is**

the fact is:

we have to  
introduce art  
into education

as a pedagogical method  
as a methodology  
to acquire knowledge

the fact is:

we have to  
hone the rigor  
in creation  
and  
improve communication  
with the public

the fact is:

there is no  
real education  
without art

no true art  
without education

the fact is:

the artist  
who cannot survive  
in the market

goes to teach  
without knowing how

the fact is:  
the teacher  
who runs out of  
ideas  
doesn't dare  
to go to art  
to get them

the fact  
(the tragic fact)  
is:  
we socially accept  
one can teach  
    without rigor  
one makes art  
    by divine appointment

(Camnitzer, 2009, p. 235)



**transparency**

transparency  
is a fundamental  
ingredient  
in true pedagogy

we have to become  
*educator-artists*

we have to become  
*artist-educators*

another country:  
doing away  
with borderlines  
pushing  
in the same direction

(Camnitzer, 2009, pp. 236, 237)

### **education as art and discipline**

education so conceived

(very far from

being a performance

of learner

as

passive spectator)

the subject

detains, fixes thought,

feeds interest,

giving color

to excitement

resembles

very closely

the attitude

of artist

to material

(the complex relation

of submission

and mastery)

the discipline

of art

emerges

**likelihood**

there is no more  
a likelihood  
of finding  
a recipe  
for education  
than finding  
an infallible method  
for making  
painters  
or  
poets

(Black, 1944, p. 294)

**education as art**

human experience

is layered

mechanical

behaviors/beliefs

require no

investment/intelligence

(our hearts beat

we learn to walk

we believe the sun

will rise tomorrow)

the mechanics

of our world

breathing and

pumping blood

we must learn

to perform

to adopt

we call this

training

intelligent behaviours

call for

drawing a conclusion

forming an intention  
achieving understanding  
conceiving a new creation

we must learn  
the alphabet  
    before we read  
to spell  
    before poetry  
to add  
and subtract  
    before proving  
to hold  
a pencil  
    before we draw  
to play scales  
    before Mozart

what is most  
worth learning?

a conception  
of the good  
    constituted  
    at the level  
        of community

(Alexander, 2003, p. 9)

## **teaching**

teaching  
not only  
transmits  
old ideas,  
it creates  
    new ones

not only  
predetermined  
feelings  
and norms  
[but] also  
    new attitudes  
    and practices

teaching  
is generative  
not (merely)  
reproductive

recalls the past  
but also  
pushes the limits  
    criticizes  
    explores  
    examines  
education  
as

creative

or

artistic

activity

to transmit

and

transform

to initiate

visions of

the good:

that which

we cherish

most

at the boundaries

of culture

(expanding

and testing)

nurturing

good people

(Alexander, 2003, pp. 9-10)

## **artful teachers**

artful teachers  
of all subjects  
(like sculptors  
and painters)  
study and find  
creative ways  
to expand  
their discipline

artful teachers  
attend  
to their audience  
(like dancers  
on a stage)  
most fruitfully  
to be engaged

artful teachers  
aware of  
the classroom  
space (like actors  
in a theater)  
in which they  
move  
the roles and faces  
they represent  
artful teachers  
choose language



(like writers, like  
a blank page)  
care-fully

artful teachers  
abandon intended  
melody (like  
jazz musicians)  
to explore an  
unexpected theme

artful teachers  
break the boundaries  
(like art)  
and  
    set us free

(Davis, 2005, p. 193)

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## About the Author

Dr. Monica Prendergast is Assistant Professor of Drama/Theatre Education at the University of Victoria. Her research interests include; arts-based and practice-based research, critical pedagogies, performance theories and poetic inquiry. She is co-editor of *Poetic Inquiry* (Sense, 2009) and *Applied Theatre* (Intellect, 2009). She has also co-edited two themed journal issues on poetic inquiry methods (*Educational Insights* [2009] and *Creative Approaches to Research* [2012]), and is currently co-editor of the *Canadian Journal of Practice-Based Research in Theatre*. Forthcoming books include a monograph on utopian thinking in drama/theatre education, a co-authored handbook on applied drama facilitation and a co-edited poetic inquiry collection.

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