

ESSAY REVIEW

Listening to teachers, learning about teaching

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Storytelling is a powerful part of every culture, religion and education system. More recently it has been 'everywhere' in educational research (Greene, 1991). Teachers have always shared stories about their practice, informally in staffrooms and social gatherings, more formally in professional discussions and research. Stories are used by teachers for a multitude of reasons: to share pedagogical understandings; to debrief from difficult situations; to entertain; to build relationships; to develop identity; to make sense of experiences and so on. In *Teachers' Voices: Storytelling and Possibility* Freema Elbaz- Luwisch takes the reader on a fascinating and optimistic journey into the world of teacher storytelling and the personal and pedagogic possibilities of listening carefully to teachers' voices. Elbaz-Luwisch identifies the central questions as: How are teachers' identities elaborated through storytelling? How can they come to speak and tell their stories in the language of an internally persuasive discourse that has the power to question and challenge existing educational arrangements? (p. 223).

This book makes a significant contribution to research into teachers' experiences and it is a 'must read' for a variety of audiences. It can be read on a number of levels. Experienced researchers will be interested in the variety of methods that the author draws on to deepen understanding of narrative inquiry and teachers' lived experience; those just beginning to explore the realms of narrative research will find this book a valuable resource as it provides a thorough explanation of the theoretical development of narrative inquiry and ways of writing; practicing teachers will appreciate the fact that such an integral part of their lives, storytelling, can be imbued with such pedagogical possibilities.

Teachers' storytelling is not just about sharing experiences that affirm warm feelings or provide cathartic opportunities; in fact some stories are exceedingly painful. While all reflective work in teacher education has a therapeutic aspect (Heikkinen, 2002, p. 127) and the act of simply sharing experiences can be very valuable for teachers there is a more significant question. Why are teachers' stories important as educational research? Elbaz-Luwisch notes that over the past twenty years many researchers have seen storytelling 'as an interactive process which constitutes the site of the production of teacher knowledge' (p. x). Arguments for the use of narrative methods for teacher research have tended to focus on the capacity for stories to 'fit the complexity of teachers' work and the indeterminacy and richness of teachers' experiences' (Moilanen, 2002, p. 91). As 'data' stories are unique. The teacher as story teller has control over the way the story is told, what material is foregrounded, the ordering of events. Unlike a straightforward interview, even a dialogic one, the teacher as story teller is responsible for what is shared. This provides an enormous richness, a unique insight into the heart of the teaching experience and the events that shape identity. The researcher may edit and reshape the story but the initial story is delivered from the teacher's perspective.

From an educational perspective it is well understood that students remember and learn well from stories. Indeed, many religions have relied on this mode of teaching. It is possible that storying, restorying and analyzing stories in educational research may provide a powerful bridge between the academy and schools. It is possible that narrative methods are a truly effective way of getting the research message 'out' and shared more broadly in the education community. Elbaz-Luwisch shares the stories of many teachers and provides the reader with opportunities to understand the 'nuances and intrinsic multiplicity of meanings that constitute the world of teaching' (Carter, 1993, p. 6).

'No choice but to go in close...' (p. 29)

This book is timely and ambitious. It is carefully constructed and thoroughly theorized. It is deeply thoughtful. Elbaz-Luwisch draws on the many parts of her academic and teaching life to create a book that negotiates some challenging academic terrain. As she notes, 'focusing on the personal was until recently a problematic undertaking in research in education and teaching (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997)' (p. 29). I suspect that many people researching the 'personal' in teaching are well aware that it is still a contentious and heavily critiqued realm. Through this book, Elbaz-Luwisch makes a major contribution to supporting the argument for researching closely, indeed each chapter offers possibilities for reaching a deeper understanding of teachers, teaching, schooling, systems, cultures and conflict through listening carefully to teachers' stories. The stories of teachers are told in a variety of ways and the author is conscious of the need to be deeply attentive to their voices. The complexity of teaching is highlighted and explored.

The reader is an important part of the book and early on is invited to 'share in the project by bringing his or her own understanding and interpretive lenses to the narrative material...' (p. 23). The author's voice is clearly heard and the reader is alerted to this: 'I share with the reader (perhaps too much?) my own thoughts, feelings, hesitations, and worries at various points in the work' (p. xiii). In fact, the author's own stories and responses add a challenge and beauty that are rarely found in academic writing. The reader shares in the author's experiences and constant reflexivity. The stories of teachers are shared through careful constructions, reconstructions and analyses. Central themes are woven throughout the chapters and some stories are revisited in different ways.

At all times the purpose is clear:

The purpose of the book is to reflect back to the field a multidimensional, multivoiced portrayal of teaching as it is, bringing our attention to both the complexity and the possibility inherent in the work of teachers. Approaching teaching in this way, as multi-voiced, allows us to hear possibilities for change and development in the stories of teachers and classrooms. (p. ix)

As a teacher education academic who has recently returned to school teaching, I found *Teachers' Voices: Storytelling and possibility* profoundly engaging. I had been struggling to build a bridge between the academic world and the school teaching world. Years of practitioner research and a narrative based doctoral thesis had equipped me for listening to teachers' voices and writing in different ways but working as a classroom teacher does not offer much space for listening to others or even reflecting on my own practice. This book provided an opportunity to connect my 'worlds' and to rethink many

aspects of my practice. Beautifully written and resonating on many levels, the book offers ways to make meaning from teachers' stories that go beyond the obvious. It gives teachers ways to explore and make sense of their experiences; and it gives teacher educators ways to open further conversations with teachers, supervising mentors and university staff; it provides ways to make connections between school and university through challenging the authoritative discourses and encouraging the development of an internally persuasive discourse (Bakhtin, 1981).

School teachers have long been research participants and their stories have been told in many ways. Researchers have listened to teachers' voices and some have honored the stories carefully, (Brown, 2006; 2008). Some have not. Elbaz-Luwisch argues for a particular reason for listening attentively:

Listening to teachers' stories, one gains access to the values, beliefs and concerns that motivate their work. Exploring this multifaceted knowledge more fully through attention to the way that teachers' stories are told, their language and imagery, their drama or repetitiveness, one can disclose the underlying conceptualizations and reconceptualizations of the educational situation and come to a better understanding of how teachers do their work and why. (p. xi)

Elbaz-Luwisch acknowledges the scope and complexity of the task in early discussion of the theoretical framing of her work: 'Perhaps it is foolhardy, yet I attempt the task of being hopeful and critical at the same time, drawing on the notion of a "language of possibility" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). She draws on a range of writers who have explored 'the language of possibility for education in diverse ways': Maxine Greene (1995) imagination and the arts; O'Sullivan (1999) listening to teachers and to other voices resonating around them; bell hooks and the 'radical possibility of taking love as an operative principle in education'; Klafki (1995) examining curriculum critically with a focus on teaching as a moral and reflective practice aimed at making meaning with students; and Connelly and Clandinin's notion of narrative inquiry which brings 'a language of possibility into being by making educational research a fully relational and educative endeavor'. (p. xix)

There is much to value in this book. It is on my third re-reading of the entire book that I am fully aware of the courage and passion that inspired it. The following pages serve to explicate some of the arguments, approaches and gems found in *Teachers' Voices: Storytelling and Possibility*. The book deserves to be read in its entirety, but of course individual chapters have value in themselves. The reader is required to engage, to think, to sometimes be disturbed and to enjoy this text. It is intriguing to see how Elbaz-Luwisch draws on so many examples from literature to add a different dimension to the arguments. I have only two main criticisms. I worry about the place of men in narrative inquiry. Certainly there are some men's stories told but there are not many. This deserves further exploration by educational researchers generally. On a technical level, it would have been useful to include a subject index along with the author index.

'Flexible ways to enrich one's understanding' (p. 109)

The book is divided into nine chapters, some separated by dialogic 'interludes'. The interludes are curious and effective. They are presented as scripts but function almost as poems or musical pieces

with refrains. They 'pick up some of the teachers' voices and set them off against theoretical voices in ways that are meant to echo what came before and prefigure what will follow, in a manner that is playful as well as purposive' (p. xiii). Each chapter has a central theme or topic which is explored through a critique of relevant literature and a particular investigation into different teachers' stories.

Some themes are evident throughout the book. Elbaz-Luwisch argues passionately for the development in teachers of an 'internally persuasive discourse' (Bakhtin, 1981) in writing and understanding teachers' stories as a challenge to the dominant authoritative discourses. She explains 'internally persuasive discourse' as 'one which can engage with theory, not just using the authoritative discourse to legitimate one's position but drawing on it in flexible ways to enrich one's understanding' (p. 109). The complexity of teaching is a central concern and this book offers some new ways of exploring that complexity. The importance of dialogue and the multivoiced way of understanding teaching is explored in many chapters. We tell stories which position us in particular ways and through examining the stories carefully we are able to elicit new insights and challenge old ones. The value of concrete experience, of feeling and imagination, emotion and body in teaching is honored throughout this book. Elbaz-Luwisch notes: 'The ability to listen to the voices of one's own body is hardly attended to in teacher education or in discussions about teaching' (p. 113).

The vitality of writing as inquiry is continually explored:

'Teaching, I found, was easier and more alive when emotion is allowed in: feelings, confusion, surprise, laughter and tears all contribute to enrich the learning experience. In the learning that arises from personal writing, the emotional and cognitive cannot be separated, and the learner is fully engaged in the inquiry with all her senses' (p. 111).

Interwoven throughout the book are the themes of conflict and change. Stories around cultural differences and lived experience offer unique insights for the reader. Elbaz-Luwisch draws on her extensive experience working in coexistence and multicultural classes to provide powerful stories about difference and similarities across cultural boundaries. She teaches at the University of Haifa in Israel and some of the most powerful stories in the book come from the students in these classes. Jewish immigrants, Israelis, Palestinian Israelis, Christians and Druze all share stories. From an outsider's perspective these stories are deeply moving and powerful. They also show Elbaz-Luwisch's courage in working with complexity and her enormous skill as a teacher.

Early on in the book, Elbaz-Luwisch notes that 'one of the reasons that teaching is so complex is that it can- and should- be thoughtful, artful and practical at the same time' (p. xii). Five chapters out of nine have subtitles 'arts and practices of...' which highlight the various aspects of storytelling by which teacher identity is shaped.

'Good stories teach us how to live...' (p. 67)

In the first chapter, *Teaching Story as Dialogue*, Nina tells her story about a difficult situation in a class. The story is interwoven with commentary and gradually the reader is introduced to the idea that there are many ways to tell a story, many voices to be heard from a single teacher. Bakhtin's

concept of 'polyphony' is explored as Nina's story is read in different ways: as a teacher of language versus an educator; as a mother; a student; a fighter for girls and as a teacher who failed. Elbaz-Luwisch goes on to discuss how analyzing the different voices is integral to understanding the various identities each of us has. She argues for the importance of shaping an internally persuasive discourse in addition to understanding and interrogating the authoritative discourses available to educators. It is argued that Bakhtin's understanding of voice and the distinction between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, is 'not just a device for making sense of a particular teaching story, but a powerful lens for understanding the work of teaching...focusing attention on the full complexities of speech and conversation in which people are engaged in working out their changing understandings of their work and life' (p. 19).

The second chapter provides an outstanding explanation and critique of narrative ways of researching and writing. This is one of the strongest chapters in the book and it is essential reading for anyone beginning their journey into narrative methods of research. The chapter is entitled *Narrative Identity and Narrative Method: Arts and Practices of Attentiveness*. Elbaz-Luwisch has long been a champion of attentiveness in teaching and research (Elbaz, 1981; 1992) and this chapter draws together much of her research in the area. She notes: 'Story telling is a part of the practice of teaching, and it is also an art...' Attentiveness must be practiced and requires a researcher to 'get up close' to investigate the essentially personal nature of how teachers experience their work (p. 27). The origins of narrative research are explained and some of the criticisms of narrative methods are addressed. Narrative inquiry is seen as a 'form of intervention and an influence in making schools better places - places where teachers can communicate openly about their ideas, can reflect and learn together, can cooperate and write new stories of teaching. Developing on the theme of complexity, Elbaz-Luwisch outlines how her perspective draws on the notion of the eclectic (Schwab, 1978), '...that educational situations were so complex that no one theory could be adequate to make sense of them; he advocated drawing on a number of theoretical perspectives to account for any given educational phenomenon' (p. 33). For people unfamiliar with the world of narrative inquiry and narrative methods, the creative elements of the research analysis and product can appear threatening or somehow inadequate. Elbaz-Luwisch argues that 'the great variety of approaches to the analysis of experiential and life-story material is...not an indication of confusion in the field but a sign of creativity of researchers and the varied and diverse nature of the lives and experiences being studied' (p. 33). I am reminded of Laurel Richardson's (2000) work where she explores the concept of 'crystallization'. This metaphor is a useful reminder of the many facets of any research analysis and writing; 'where what we see depends upon our angle of repose' (p. 934). *Teachers' Voices: Storytelling and Possibility* is a testament to the power of creative approaches of researching but it is more than this. It is much more: it allows the body, the imagination, a sense of place to all be foregrounded in research, not silenced and somehow seen as lesser dimensions in teaching. Ways of developing attentiveness are explained and 'the theme of attentiveness seems to indicate a basic methodological and ethical attitude in teaching' (p. 41). There seems to be a resonance with the Benedictine suggestion that one should 'listen with the ear of your heart'.

In Chapter 3, *Stories of teacher development: Holding complexity*, Elbaz-Luwisch challenges the simplistic understanding of teachers developing through a series of commonly understood stages. In

keeping with her argument of the non-linearity (and complexity) of teachers' lives she carefully explains how stories of teachers supposedly going through the various stages can be reframed, reinterpreted to tell something more subtle and accurate. This chapter addresses some exciting reminders and insights about teaching: how the concept of time changes in teaching 'time seems to run backward as well as forward...'; 'under extreme pressure we do what is most important to us'; 'regardless of external conditions the imagination is always free'. It is noted that 'good stories teach us how to live' and this is probably one of the key messages of this book. Teachers seem to want to understand their world and how it works and celebrating the unusual (or perhaps less researched) aspects is important for understanding identity: 'As researchers we should learn to pay attention to the small details that have the power to move a story along, or make it change direction, because these are the points at which identity is evolving' (p. 67).

Writing is an intensely personal experience and Chapter 4 provides an outstanding explanation and guide to writing personally, powerfully and thoughtfully. Models are provided and Scholes (1985) categorization of reading, interpretation and criticism is utilized. People who engage in narrative research are particularly interested in words and how they are put together. So many of us write about the joy of writing, the sense of being alive, safe, happy when writing is going well (Ellis & Bochner, 2000); when there is a sense of discovery (Richardson & Lockridge, 2004). I wonder if people who engage in writing as inquiry share something. Perhaps we share an awareness of the power of writing, how we can 'write ourselves into understanding' (Richardson, 2000). Reading the chapter *Arts and practices of Writing and Restorying* I am reminded of the beauty of good writing and also the tentativeness, the experience of being 'frozen at the keyboard' (p. 82), the agonizing over what matters. I am challenged (again) by the question 'what enables some of us to write, and what keeps others silent?' (p. 93)

Elbaz-Luwisch asks 'Is this practice of telling, writing and retelling stories of teaching a practice with the potential to change teaching, to interrupt standard practice, or has it merely become one more facet of standard practice?' (p. 82). She goes on to explore her own story of the pedagogy of personal writing through her 'portrait of the writer as teacher educator'. The story itself is fascinating and brutally honest. All teachers, and teacher educators, could learn from the way these stories are shared and analyzed. The writing of Cixous (1997) challenges Elbaz-Luwisch and we are shaken out of any sense of confidence or self-satisfaction as she shares the multitude of voices at work in our heads as we write: 'But all of them are my voices, and in my work as a researcher, university teacher and teacher educator they are engaged much of the time in either keeping silent or silencing.' (p. 94)

Elbaz-Luwisch does not shy away from the challenge she faces; in fact she confronts it head on. She explores the debates around writing, identifies the differences between academic writing and personal writing and identifies the possibilities inherent in writing: 'Writing about personal matters has an effect on the writer's awareness, bringing her face to face with herself and creating the beginning of a dialogue. It seems that the emotion generated in the process of personal writing is at least a cue, and perhaps even a catalyst to the beginning of an internally persuasive dialogue...one is aware of oneself as different from others, as standing a little outside the authoritative discourse' (p.

99). One of the strengths of this chapter is Elbaz-Luwisch's understanding of how teachers' lives are different from researchers. She notes that personal accounts are very different from academic writing and notes: 'For teachers the situation is doubly problematic since the impersonal and static discourse of educational research already conflicts with their lived experience of teaching as unfolding concretely over time, through the actions of the many characters that live in a classroom or school' (p.105). Ultimately we share the author's understanding of the 'radical nature of the writing process'.

'Listening to oneself' (p. 113)

Teaching is an extraordinarily demanding profession and there are various pieces of research that have identified the complexity and number of daily interactions of teachers, the intensification of teachers' work (Apple, 1996; Fullan, 2001; Kelchtermans, 1996). The concept of embodied knowledge has been understood for some time (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Johnson, 1989; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Embodiment in teaching is important and as noted earlier has not been attended to extensively in educational research. Elbaz-Luwisch has explored the concept of embodiment in earlier work (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001, 2003). In *Interlude 111; Listening to oneself* the author gives the reader/ teacher a wakeup call: 'Often teachers understand something intuitively before they know it on a conceptual level, and this knowing comes through teachers' bodies...Listening to oneself includes the ability to stop, to relax, to reflect, to pace one's work and pay attention to one's level of physical and emotional energy' (p. 114). As someone who has ventured back to school teaching I find myself responding to this with a mixture of enthusiasm, guilt and longing! I know that academic life is no less demanding but the space and quiet required for thoughtful writing is certainly not present in school teachers' lives. Maybe the message is that all of us, whatever our way of life, would do well to remember to listen to our bodies.

Continuing her venture into challenging educational research terrain Elbaz-Luwisch introduces the concept of moral dimensions in teaching in Chapter 5 *Arts and Practices of Valuing; Moral Voices in Teaching*. She acknowledges that 'there is no question that in the technocratically- biased discourse of educational research, merely putting the topic of the moral up for consideration generates a suspicion that what is to follow will likely be lacking in rigor' (p. 118). The chapter then goes on to explore the moral voices that are heard in teachers' stories. In an artfully constructed chapter, the author draws on life story interviews and autobiographical writing from graduate courses and adopts a broadly phenomenological approach to reading and eliciting themes. The stories come from a diverse group, from Jewish and Arab communities, living in urban, village and kibbutz settings. Two major themes are explored: the value of care in teaching and the value of subject matter knowledge. The author has had a long interest in the moral voices of teachers (Elbaz, 1992) and this work has proved invaluable to those of us who followed. The concept of care in teaching is well understood and was clearly explicated by Noddings (1992, 2002, 2003), Diller (1991) and others.

Subject matter imbued with value is explored through three diverse stories: from an art history teacher; an electronics teacher from the Arab sector and an Israeli bible studies teacher. Careful analysis serves to illustrate 'how complex and multidimensional the interactions can be between the subject matter, the teacher's moral stance, and the various social voices that come into play in the

school and social-cultural context' (p. 129) and 'the increasing complexity of the professional knowledge landscape in which teachers work...there are not, and apparently cannot be, definitive right answers; there are no ways of acting that are always beyond question' (p. 132).

This is a demanding but extremely worthwhile chapter. The reader is forced to confront his or her own beliefs and to ponder questions such as why we 'tend to choose to work with teachers who are like ourselves, whose values we share...' and how those whose lives have a high degree of "narrative unity" are more prepared to participate in research. There is no doubt that there are some stories not told and the issue of loss of voice is also explored. A rather delightful and powerful section of this chapter explores 'objects of value' where students/ teachers were asked to bring objects of value to share with the group. 'In this exercise teachers begin speaking in a "language of possibility" ...The teachers' stories about their objects of value allowed us to examine the contours and the often ambiguous fault lines of the education settings we were familiar with as well as those of the larger world we shared' (p. 137).

'Making room for imagination in research ... letting go of control, trusting that new meanings will emerge' (p. 227)

Imagining and Revisioning: Arts and Practices of Innovation explores the persistent problem of school reform through life story interviews with teachers who are enthusiastically involved in change processes in their work; teachers who are innovators and curriculum makers. The chapter is inspired by a sense that 'everything has already been said' about school reform but rather than succumb to malaise, the author uses 'storylines and imagery that characterize the discourse of reform' and sets out to break new ground for understanding and participating in educational change. The work is informed by theoretical formulations from MacIntyre, Bakhtin and Heidegger. Two teachers' stories are told: Dalia has immigrated to Israel from a European country and teaches at a religious high school and Yael teaches in a kibbutz school. Their experiences are very different and yet there are common threads: the stories are non-linear and not told chronologically; home and family are integrated with work; the teachers are experienced and thoughtful and aware of different cultural voices; they confidently use teachers' power; both have an underlying 'theory of change' which is enacted in their work and both perceive change as 'doing and being' (p. 158-159).

I found the stories fascinating and the author skillfully draws out the possibilities inherent in them. She acknowledges that these two teachers do not 'give voice to a full range of positions taken by other teachers in the system with respect to reform' (p. 165) but the reader is introduced to the idea of 'carnavalesque dimensions of reform'. The chapter is challenging and I was concerned that again, women are telling the positive stories in teaching. I wonder about the place of gender in so much of narrative inquiry. Ultimately the chapter is engaging and inspires the reader to think again and again.

Chapter 7 introduces another interesting and relatively 'new' idea in educational research. Entitled *Arts and Practices of Making Place*, this chapter is profoundly moving as it focuses on Arab and Israeli teachers' experiences of place and the effort to make a 'place' in their stories. Place is understood as 'a given location that is not only specific, describable, and distinct from other locations...that holds

meaning, that matters to the persons who inhabit it' (p. 171). For many of us, place is taken for granted. We live and work in generally safe and stable communities. This chapter is most powerful in challenging a passive acceptance of place in teaching. Two groups of teachers' stories are explored: six female Jewish teachers who are immigrants to Israel and three male and three female Palestinian Israeli teachers who work in the Arab sector of the school system. As in every chapter, significant knowledge of relevant literature acts as a bedrock to this intriguing and poignant analysis. Again, the author points out that there is a paucity of research that takes the notion of 'place' seriously.

Some common themes emerge from the immigrant teachers' experience as they have negotiated their teaching lives in a new culture, a new country. I imagine that these experiences could be common to immigrants the world over and as such the stories are worthy of exploration. The immigrant has the effort of holding on to parts of their old life as they learn to hold together their new life; they can experience conflicts in values in their new place and they must learn new ways to behave. The author is aware of the ethical risk of presuming to speak for the Palestinian Israeli teachers but she decided 'the risk of perpetuating their exclusion from the collective story seems greater than the risk of misrepresentation'. The stories of both groups are explored together and the similarities are noted. The sense of different experiences but similar storylines; the struggle to make sense and meaning of their experiences; the experience of power and how some relationships are privileged, are all shared. 'The vulnerable sense of their own agency within their schools and classrooms is, indeed, one of the central messages conveyed by these stories of immigrant and minority teachers' (p. 197). The most important common theme though is that of making a difference. The teachers all 'seemed to be concerned to give expression to their own agency', they cared about helping their students make something of their lives and they confronted and challenged authorities when trying to bring about change in their schools. The sense of place is imbued with particularly powerful emotions in the Israeli/ Palestinian context and I think it is courageous of Elbaz-Luwisch to explore it so honestly and sensitively. As she notes: 'emotions seem to be quite close to the surface in teachers' stories of place' (p. 196). The chapter is ultimately positive as the stories 'provide testimony to the strength and importance of relationships in transcending both space and time.'

In Chapter 8, *Storytelling and Border-crossing: Shaping dialogic identities as teachers*, the reader shares in the author's experiences of running coexistence workshops in university classes. This is brave and fascinating work as some of the most challenging issues facing her community are raised within the classes. The chapter draws together many of the themes of the book: 'during their careers teachers are engaged in ongoing dialogue with diverse voices that surround them in the cultures and schools to which they belong' (p. 194). The concept of dialogue is explored through a Bakhtinian lens. The author's belief, informed by the border pedagogy work of Giroux, that 'taking action together is an important aspect of education for coexistence', is central to this work, and may have been a prime motivator for writing this book.

As the descriptions of the coexistence and multiculturalism courses developed I felt a rising sense of apprehension. I had read some of the stories in earlier work (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001; Elbaz-Luwisch &

Pritzker, 2002) but I wondered how this particular story would evolve. All teacher educators have encountered differences of opinion in classes, often in relation to beliefs and values about teaching and learning; sometimes in the context of autobiographical work, but I have never had to confront such deeply held divisions. Elbaz-Luwisch's handling of these difficult situations is inspiring; she took the time to listen attentively, to pay attention to her body, their bodies; to find ways of building dialogue and in so doing find the space for learning, 'a space that disappears when we retreat into categories that define who we are – Christian, Muslim, Jew, Israeli, Arab, Palestinian- and forget that we are always 'more and less than what we stand for in the polis and what stands for us (Finn, 1992, p. 113)' (p. 217) . When students found it difficult to discuss the potentially fraught topics the author used 'innerwork' (Mindell, 1995) where she asked 'everyone to be silent for a few minutes and to think of a time when they found it difficult to speak out about something they believed in' and the conversation was able to move to a deeper level. Another strategy she used was 'worldwork' (Mindell, 1995), an approach 'that makes room for the expression of strong feeling and encourages all the different positions to speak out particularly those that are far from the mainstream...described metaphorically as 'sitting in the fire'...[it] stresses the importance of integrating and transforming violence and other negative forces' (p. 214).

The author is very conscious of her own values through this process and acknowledges at one point: 'I went home and agonized about my role in the discussion; had I crossed the line between pedagogy and indoctrination, conversation and rhetoric, teaching and persuading?' (p. 204). I found myself being reminded of similar moments in my teaching and this very question stayed in my head for days. The concepts of the dispassionate teacher, the objective researcher, the unbiased person are myths. Post-modern thinking insists that we acknowledge who we are, how we are positioned (physically, socially, emotionally), and how we position others. Asking questions about our own practice is challenging and attending to our body in difficult situations is important. Elbaz-Luwisch notes: 'Bringing forward and using this body knowledge is not the solution to problems of difference...But it adds immeasurable richness and significance to the meanings that can be elaborated and worked with in the course of encounters across difference. It is *something more* that makes it worthwhile to continue trying to create the pedagogical space in which encounters across difference can take place' (p. 218).

The final chapter, *Voices and Possibilities: Teaching/ Research Story as Arabesque* draws the different elements of the book together through the intriguing and delicate use of the metaphor and image of the arabesque, a motif from the Islamic world view which honors the connectedness of the basic element of stem and leaf. It is an effective metaphor for the connections of the various stories told through the book, the variations, the echoes. 'Like the designs of leaf and stem, the motifs in teachers' stories are of interest when they are a part of an ongoing pattern of growth...' (p. 223).

Elbaz-Luwisch has created a captivating book. She has challenged some of the conventions of academic discourse and in so doing she has given researching teachers' experiences a warmth, vitality and meaning so badly needed in educational research. She has honored her own life's work through sharing her stories with us. She has honored those who have shared her journey through telling their stories and providing a way to gain a much better understanding of how teachers experience their

work. Her work epitomizes Noddings' (2003) concept of circles and chains of care. She has cared deeply about her work as a teacher and researcher, she has many circles of care; she has also connected more broadly to her readers, those not known personally maybe, but still cared for through the 'chains of care'. This book is a testament to Elbaz-Luwisch's commitment to making the world a better place. I leave the last words to her; we would do well to listen attentively:

These elements - the concrete experience of the body and all its senses, the awareness and expression of feeling and emotion, the use of imagination and the acceptance of conflict, all have the potential of contributing to the elaboration of a language of possibility in teaching. Such a language of possibility would be one that grows out of the lived experience of teaching and is connected to the hopes and fears of teachers themselves. It is a language that is being developed every day by teachers in the field. If it falls short of the rational critique formulated by theorists of education, for want of comprehensiveness and systematization, it goes far beyond such critique in being close to the heartbeat of life in classrooms. The development of this language of possibility can be supported by researchers through listening to the stories, sharing the concerns and responding to the voices of teachers, helping to retell all our stories in more generative and just ways." (p. 226)

*The book reviewed here is: **Teachers' Voices: Storytelling and Possibility** by FREEMA ELBAZ-LUWISCH, Greenwich, Co: Information Age Publishing (2005), xviii +250 pp., US \$39.99 (pbk), ISBN 1-59311-183-5, US 73.99 (hbk) , ISBN 1-59311-184-3*

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