

Teaching and Writing Vulnerably: An Auto-Ethnography about Schools as Places of Hope

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Presentation held at the 2009 Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict, Columbia University, New York, December 10-11, 2009.

Grace Feuerverger explores teaching and learning in schools as a sacred life journey: a quest toward liberation. This presentation is based on her book **Teaching, Learning and Other Miracles**, an auto-ethnography written for teacher/educators who wish to make a real difference in the lives of their students. It speaks to everyone who finds themselves, as she did, on winding and often treacherous paths, longing to discover the meaning and potential in their professional lives at school. This book also honours the struggle of every child who seeks to be rescued, to be heard, and to speak the truth about his or her lived experience. Many such students fall by the wayside, too weary from experiences of violence, war, poverty or other oppressions to continue on their journey towards the life force.

A child of Holocaust survivors, Feuerverger tells how School can be a magical place where miracles happen. She shares narratives about her school teaching years, about her university teaching and about her research work with immigrant and refugee students. Unifying these is a story of how language, culture and school serendipitously all came together in her childhood to offer her a way to survive --- a path towards repair and restoration.

In an era of narrow agendas of 'efficiency' and 'control' in schools, Feuerverger dares to suggest that education is and always will be about uplifting of the human spirit. It advocates for the priceless opportunity that good public education can give to students of all backgrounds, discussing in a multiplicity of ways the act of creating and of being in classrooms as sites of cultural encounters and spaces for possibility and community and knowledge. She underscores the mystery and the majesty of the teaching-learning experience *as an act of courage, love and hope*. Teaching is not solely about technique but also about presence, about awareness of both the frailties and potentials of humankind, about helping to create a world more joyful, more creative, more articulate, more compassionate, and more peaceful than it is now. It is first and foremost about sharing dreams of a better future with our students, about saving lives. Nothing more or less really matters.