

Forskning om undervisning och lärande har bjudit in Keri Facer, professor i utbildningens och samhällets framtid vid University of Bristol och gästprofessor vid Göteborgs universitet, att reflektera över *Svenskämnets berättelser och berättelser i svenskämnet – ett temanummer om hållbarhet*. Hon forskar kring relationen mellan formella utbildningsinstitutioner och det omgivande samhället, med särskilt fokus på kunskap som kan behövas för att adressera samtida miljömässiga, ekonomiska, social och teknologiska förändringar.

# Reflekterande kommentar – The arts of the richness of the meanwhile

av Keri Facer, University of Bristol och Göteborgs universitet

The world we are living in demands poetry, arts, imagination; demands that we twist together our personal narratives with the wider social stories we are living through, that we connect the emergent ideas and feelings of schoolchildren and teachers with the deep time threads of history, glacial melting, the slow accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The world we are living in demands the release of dreams that dare not speak their names – fairness, justice, care, friendship, hope – into the singing voices that can, in solidarity, translate them into realities. The world we are living in demands that we learn from Audre Lorde that “poetry is not a luxury... is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundations for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before” (1977/2007:38).

We have left questions of ‘sustainability’ too long to the scientists whose graphs and numbers tell us what is happening but do not help us to feel it in our bones. Scientists whose scenarios offer a repertoire of disasters, but no space to dream the impossible – namely that we might reimagine ourselves, our relations with each other, with the earth beneath our feet; that we might reshape our knowledge of who we are. The scale of the imagining that faces us is one that must hospice an old world to death and midwife a new one into being. In the gap between, says Gramsci, lie monsters. It is in the ecotone, say the biologists, between one world and the next, that new creatures

Reflekterande kommentar

emerge, impossible to know in advance. And to find, fight or befriend these monsters, we need courage, heart and the imagination that the impossible might just be possible – we need stories.

We also need what Keats' called 'negative capability', the ability to open ourselves up to a complex world, where unintended consequences emerge from tiny actions, where huge waves are created from ripples, where my action and your action interact to create something we could not foresee – for good or ill. This is a way of living that dwells in the richness of the meanwhile, that inhabits joyfully the many-layered impossible realities of what is going on right now. This is a form of attention to the present in which our pasts and our ideas of the future intermingle to create a world that is always moving, always dynamic, always eluding our grasp. We can neither know all that is happening right now nor all that will happen in the future. Both are shadows and rainbows, constantly shifting and eluding our grasp. What we can do, however, is develop a pedagogy of the present, and make a thousand lenses through which to experience and feel our way into this shifting world. A thousand lenses that invite us, and our students, to become curious about what we don't know, about the lives that are not ours, about the ways of being that elude our grasp. And in that curiosity and in the dreams that our poetry invites us to dream, we might increase our chances of glimpsing new worlds - just beginning to grow in the richness of the meanwhile – that we might come to love and that we can nurture into being.

Lorde, A. (1977/2007) Poetry is not a luxury. I *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* by Audre Lorde. Crossing Press

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