



POETIC INQUIRY

Enchantment of Place

Edited by

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Frontispiece — oak

Table of Contents — avocado

Section I — strawberry

Section II — eucalyptus

Section III — blackberry

Section IV — ivy

Section V — bay

Section VI — holly

Author Bios — maple seed

Book closing — avocado 2



CONTENTS



FOREWORD	11
Monica Prendergast	

POETIC INQUIRY	
PAST, PRESENT, AND POSSIBILITIES	15
Pauline Sameshima	
Kedrick James	
Carl Leggo	
Alexandra Fidyk	

Section I Method

FUMBLING FORWARD	
FINDING MY WAY TO POETIC INQUIRY	41
Judy Amy-Penner	
THE PIANO PLAYS A POEM	49
Kedrick James	
POETIC REPRESENTATION, REFLEXIVITY AND THE RECURSIVE TURN	59
Sandra Sjollema & Felice Yuen	

FISH EYES INVESTIGATING THE PHILOSOPHY OF POETIC INQUIRY	69
Holly Tsun Haggarty	
THE POETIC GESTALT EXPRESSING AWE TOWARDS THE ONTOLOGICAL	79
Nilofar Shidmehr	
PLAYING EXQUISITE CORPSE VILLANELLES ON FAMILY	87
Sandra L. Faulkner John J. Guiney Yallop Sean Wiebe Natalie Honein	

Section II Place

LIVING WITH WORDS THIS "VALE OF SOUL-MAKING"	99
Maya Tracy Borhani	
SUSCEPTIBLE TO BEAUTY	111
Ahava Shira	
INTIMACY REQUIRES MORE	115
Daniela Elza	
THE RECIPE FOR WATER (IN MEMORY OF NARCISSE BLOOD, ELDER)	119
Bruce Hunter	

TAKE YOUR GLOVES OFF ROUND THE WINTER FIRE FRIEND POETRY AND MEDITATIONS ON LAND AND (SETTLED) PLACE	121
Margaret McKeon	
PLACE OF OCEAN TIDES AND HEARTBEATS	129
Linda H. Y. Hegland	
INTIMACY IS A DIFFICULT ART	133
THE ORANGE BICYCLE	134
A PAINTING: SIDEWALK CAFE AT NIGHT	135
THE PROBLEM WITH BEING AN IMMIGRANT	136
WORDS ARE EVENTS	137
Maria Vasanelli	
TELL DEM STORIES	139
Steven K. Khan	
ENCHANTING "LOVE-MAKING"	147
Pauline Sameshima	
THE REAL ISLAND	151
RAT BAY	154
Pete Hay	

Section III Family

RIVER ROSE UP APPLAUDING	157
THE SISTER'S KISS	158
MEETING ON THE RIVERBANK	159
Christi Kramer	
THE MIDDLE LAND POETRY AS TRANSFORMATIVE INQUIRY INTO MYTHOLOGIES OF PLACE	161
Nicole Armos	
SANDALS IN THE SNOW HOW POETRY WINTERS A MEMORY	171
Anar Rajabali	
THE ART AND PROCESS OF REVERENCE	179
Merle Nudelman	
LINES OF LINEN, LINES OF KNOWING TABLE CLOTHS AND STITCHES	185
Sheila Stewart	
LIVING POETICALLY "HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS"	191
Heather McLeod & Gisela Ruebsaat	
BREATHING FROM THE HEART	203
Sandra Filippelli	

Section IV Healing

- AN AESTHETIC OF THE UNDERWORLD 211
Alexandra Fidyk
- VOICES FROM THE EDGES (OF COMMUNITY) 221
Cindy Clarke
- THE CASE OF ALL THE MISSING POEMS 227
TONGUE-TIED
A POETIC INQUIRY INTO THE MEANINGS OF ABUSE 228
Tess Hurson-Maginess
- ORIGIN AND AUDIENCE
TO WHOM AND WHERE DO THESE WORDS BELONG? 229
Kimberly Dark
- WITH LABOURED BREATH
A POETIC INQUIRY ACROSS AN ABSENCE UNEXPECTED 235
Sarah K. MacKenzie-Dawson
- MUSINGS ON EXPERIENCES OF POETIC TIME 241
Pamela Richardson
- DSM (21 DIS/ORDERED THOUGHTS) 251
Carl Leggo
- MATRIXIAL SNATCH
ECOFRACTAL POETIC INQUIRY PROCESSES
MIDWIFING REGENERATIVE EARTH 257
Marna Hauk

Section V Media

THE FOUND POEM AS A CONSTELLATION 271

Adrian Schoone

GENRES, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND CITY
SIGNAGE 281

Heather Duff

RICAN STRUCT(UR)ING FOR POETIC
PEDAGOGY PARA LA PUERTORRIQUEÑIDAD 285

Ángel L. Martínez

DEWEYAN FRAGMENTS
ERASURE POETRY, MUSIC, AND A STORY 297

Jee Yeon Ryu

TRANSFIGURATING SENSATIONS
ARTEFACTUAL ENACTMENTS OF S/PLACE 305

Darlene St. Georges

FINDING POET/ic INQUIRY 309

Jen Selman

Section VI Pedagogy

ECOPOETRY WALKS (AND SINGS) 315

Susan Gerofsky

ENTRAPMENT 323

Jodi Latremouille

WINDING ROAD TO WEST YORKSHIRE	327
Adam Henze	
GRADE 7	333
Teresa Anne Fowler	
CURRICULUM TRIAGE	
A POETIC PLAY UPON CRISIS IN SCHOOLS	337
Sean Wiebe, Celeste Snowber, & Susan Walsh	
POETRY AS SUSTAINABILITY	347
Natalia Archacka	
POETIC PEDAGOGY IN SCIENCE EDUCATION	355
Lee Beavington	
INDEX	379

as indigenous knowing
as empathy
as courage
as a way to love

(to be together/like this/is everything)

these chapters unfold
in witness and wisdom

familiar voices sing
in harmony with
those that are new

i am so heartened
 here
(so many poems . . .
how far we have come
 to arrive here
 in this place)

the webbing of leaves
the ebbing of lives
the leaving of gifts
the testimony of trees

ecofractal prisms
shed perception as

scattered handful
glass marbles
across the sunlit grass

each one encloses
a world within

in constellations
of accumulation
 of erasure
 of pleasure
 of pain
of pedagogy
(and its discontents)

poetry
whispers insights
shouts rage

(a better word
for a better world)

we happy few
who inquire
 lyrically
 hopefully
 generatively
 generously

will find a home
 (here)
 in these pages

in this community
of artist/scholars

bighearted
capacious
judicious
penetrating

to the apple's core

i say to you
(dear reader)

plant seeds
from these
gleanings

they will hearten
and sustain

POETIC INQUIRY

PAST, PRESENT, AND POSSIBILITIES

Pauline Sameshima
Kedrick James
Carl Leggo
Alexandra Fidyk

Reverberating Leaves on a Tree: Nourishing Wondrous Flesh with No Skin

Pauline Sameshima

the creek calls out
constant and fast
an urgency
that swallows the
pelting rain
joined as if
meant to be

and I sit on the deck
untouched by the wetness
but feel it all around
falling in
the way I've
already fallen
into you

*If you don't know history, then you don't know anything.
You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree.*

Michael Crichton, *Timeline*, 1999, p. 73

The poetic image is not subject to an inner thrust. It is not an echo of the past. On the contrary: through the brilliance of an image, the distant past resounds with echoes, and it is hard to know at what depth these echoes will reverberate and die away. Because of its novelty and its action, the poetic image has an entity and a dynamism of its own; it is referable to a direct ontology. . . It is in the opposite of causality, that is, in reverberation, the poetic image will have a sonority of being. The poet speaks on the threshold of being.

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 1958/1994, p. 2

In the tradition of a decade of biennial gatherings of the *International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry (ISPI)*, this volume serves as the fifth referred symposium anthology. *Poetic Inquiry: Enchantment of Place* celebrates poetry and poetic voices—theorizing and exploring poetic inquiry as an approach, methodology, and/or method for use in contemporary research practices.

Poetic inquiry has increased in prominence as a legitimate means by which to collect, assimilate, analyze, and share the results of research across many disciplines. With this collection, we hope to continue to lay the groundwork internationally, for researchers, scholars, graduate students, and the larger community to take up poetic inquiry as a way to approach knowledge generation, learning and sharing.

This volume specifically works to draw attention to the ancient connection between poetry and the natural world with attention to broadening the ecological scope and impact of the work of poetic inquirers.

We begin by honouring the program that accompanied the groundbreaking image for the first poetic gathering, where “*poetry as a way to be and become in the world*” (Leggo, 2007, p. 2) and “*poetic forms of inquiry . . . within qualitative social science research practices*” (Prendergast, 2007, p. 2), unfolded into the *International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry*. From west coast Canada, to east coast Canada—Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, across the Atlantic to Bournemouth, UK, then westward to Montreal, we circled back to the fecund ground of Vancouver.

In returning to the fertile place of the first symposium, we sought to burrow deeper into poetry as ontological —“*as a way to be and become in the world*” (Leggo, 2007) and poetry as epistemological—as ways of knowing and forms of inquiry. Drawing from echoes of past symposia themes and moved further by poetic inquiry’s dynamism, we sought to attend to

poetry as ecological—the *spaciality* and interrelations of all things, where “*nothing stands alone*” (Griffin, 1992, p. 207) and poetry as imaginal—as a way to bring life, timelessness, and newness to the not-yet seen.

Phloem

An alder leaf, loosened by wind, is drifting out with the tide. As it drifts, it bumps into the slender leg of a great blue heron staring intently through the rippled surface, then drifts on. The heron raises one leg out of the water and replaces it, a single step. As I watch I, too, am drawn into the spread of silence. Slowly, a bank of cloud approaches, slipping its bulged and billowing texture over the earth, folding the heron and the alder trees and my gazing body into the depths of a vast breathing being, enfolding us all within a common flesh, a common story now bursting with rain.

David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 1997, p. 274

Our common flesh is marked by generosity and love,

To meditative minds the ineffable is cryptic, inarticulate: dots, marks of secret meaning, scattered hints, to be gathered, deciphered and formed into evidence; while in moments of insight the ineffable is a metaphor in a forgotten mother tongue.

Abraham Heschel in Mitchell Thomashaw, *Ecological Identity*, 1995, n.p.

The symposia began with Monica Prendergast and Carl Leggo in 2007, when Prendergast, a Social Sciences Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) postdoctoral researcher, organized the first *ISPI* at the University of British Columbia to celebrate her Poetic Inquiry Critical Survey Project, supervised by Carl Leggo. For the last decade, the community has been positioning, defining, and refining the field through the questions that continue to haunt and provoke.

- What is poetic inquiry and what can it do in a research context?
- How do disciplines of research and poetry intersect, connect, and inform one another?

- What is the place of poetry in educational research contexts, in the community at large?
- How and what do researchers and audience come to know through poetry and poetic inquiry practice?
- How does poetry act as a mode of perception, meaning-making, and way of knowing?
- What spaces can poetry create for dialogue about critical awareness, social justice, and re-visioning of social, cultural, and political worlds?
- How might we explore theoretical, philosophical, performative, pedagogic, and experiential perspectives concerning poetry?
- What challenges us in our writing and practices?
- How might poetic inquiry encourage texts that illustrate possibilities, advocate for silenced voices, and address challenges and tensions?
- How do we engage with poetics so as to explore its power of connectivity, its nuanced ways of conjoining what might be seen as contradictory even unrelated, so as to imagine new and sustainable configurations?
- How do we cultivate and sing a new ecology to live poetically, a new poetic to live ecologically?

Topographies

- 2007 Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Hosted by Monica Prendergast and Carl Leggo (University of British Columbia's Centre for Cross-Faculty Inquiry & Faculty of Education)
- 2009 Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada
Hosted by Suzanne Thomas (Centre for Education Research, Faculty of Education, University of Prince Edward Island) and Ardra Cole (Centre for Arts-informed Research, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto)
- 2011 Bournemouth University in Bournemouth, England
Hosted by Kate Galvin and Les Todres (Bournemouth University, Dorset, UK)
- 2013 Avmor Gallery in Old Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Hosted by Lynn Butler-Kisber (McGill University), Mary Stewart (LEARN Quebec), and John J. Guiney Yallop (Acadia University)
- 2015 University of British Columbia Botanical Gardens, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Hosted by Pauline Sameshima (Lakehead University), Alexandra Fidyk (University of Alberta), Kedrick James (University of British Columbia) and Carl Leggo (University of British Columbia)

Vascular Cambrium—Growth

The focus of inquiry has been deep and wide through the last five symposia, culminating in investigations on the self, community, and the medium and methods of poetic inquiry. As poetic inquiry is taken up internationally, a plethora of approaches and subject matter mark this burgeoning field of research. More than a list, the following areas are germane to the poetic inquiry community thus far:

Who am I?

autobiography, self/other, identity, becoming, diaries, post-person, mindfulness, spiritual practice, the quotidian, homes, lively love and lost love, self-critique, healing, change, gender, memory

Who are we?

community, social poets, social justice, race, excess, waste surveillance, resilience, resistance, sustainability, Indigenous knowledge practices and inquiry, troubling realities, collective memory, cultural recycling, and migration

What is a poem? Poetry as:

ontology, thinking, knowing, philosophy, theory, language laboratory, justice, hope, value, morality, ethics, truth, intimacy, art, dance, ekphrasis, language, communication, interpretation, associative logic, literary practices, critical surveys, craft, social science research, qualitative research, metaphor, materiality, pedagogic usefulness, pedagogic imagination, technologies, performance, intertextuality, ecology, ethnography, anthropology, autoethnography, autoethnopoetry, phenomenology, narrative inquiry, lyrical inquiry, reflexive inquiry, hermeneutics, echohermeneutics, eco-poetics, crip-poetics, erasure poetry, curriculum triage, Indigenous métissage, compassionate practice, and Zen curriculum

Branching — Publications from ISPI 1-5

- 2009 *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. Edited by Monica Prendergast, Carl Leggo, and Pauline Sameshima, Sense.
- 2009 *Poetic Inquiry, Educational Insights* 3(3). Guest Editors: Monica Prendergast, Carl Leggo, and Pauline Sameshima.
- 2012 *The Art of Poetic Inquiry*. Edited by Suzanne Thomas, Ardra Cole, and Sheila Stewart, Backalong Books.
- 2012 *Poetic Inquiry. Creative Approaches to Research*, 5(2). Guest Editors: Kathleen Galvin and Monica Prendergast.
- 2014 *The Practices of Poetic Inquiry. in education* 20(2). Guest Editors: John J. Guiney Yallop, Sean Wiebe, and Sandra L. Faulkner.
- 2016 *Poetic Inquiry II: Seeing, Caring, Understanding*. Edited by Kathleen Galvin and Monica Prendergast, Sense.
- 2017 *Inquiries of Reflection and Renewal*. Edited by Lynn Butler-Kisber, John J. Guiney Yallop, Mary Stewart, and Sean Wiebe, MacIntyre Purcell.
- 2017 *Poetic Inquiry: Enchantments of Place*. Edited by Pauline Sameshima, Alexandra Fidyk, Kedrick James, and Carl Leggo, Vernon.

We grow as our community grows. As Carl Leggo (2004) writes, “*My past is always included in the present, implicated, inextricably present with the present*” (p. 22). As a community, leaves on this tree, branches wide, open for others, and reverberating, we share in this book, the possibilities of poetic, philosophical, psychological, phenomenological ground on which to find the real within the real, the what-is made manifest through language.

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what lovely words might also mean

Kedrick James

This book marks roughly the 10-year anniversary of the *First International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry*. Poetic Inquiry now facilitates the research interests of hundreds of emerging and established scholars across a variety of disciplines. It is both a method of undertaking research and a means of relating the data of research in a way that is germane to rethinking both how we do research and how we mobilize knowledge and share our findings. From a scholarly point of view, these are exciting times: this rethinking is long overdue. What makes Poetic Inquiry so useful is its capaciousness of expression, for it allows into an otherwise hardpan discourse the soft, moist, and fertile ground of imagination for both the scholar and the reader. It admits to the fallibility of a singular expression of truths about something—poetry’s capaciousness comes from the inherent polyvalence of poetic expression, to see in many directions at once through the multiple lenses of language. At its best, Poetic Inquiry bootstraps comprehension of a research topic, energizes inquiry, and challenges how we come to knowledge and what we think we know, undercutting disciplinary, discursive norms. The further an inquiry goes, the more surprises we encounter; compare this to other research practices, which might be expected to do the opposite, to become predictable. Prediction is foretelling, and we cannot entirely expel the notion that if we want to remain open to discovery in any particular field, the language we use to communicate and investigate a subject might have a big influence in the knowledge we generate about it. If the language used in our work is unduly generic and predictable, it might just be that our research will also turn out to be generic and predictable. It’s the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Hoiyer, 1954), the idea that language and thought are in a determinate relationship, all over again.

Despite its recent resurgence, Poetic Inquiry is obviously an ancient method of understanding the world. The earliest texts, cosmologies of earth and universe inscribed in stone, bear traces of ancestral voices breathing poems to know why and how we come to be here. But as a scholarly practice, underscoring the poet’s journey among the academies, the first use I can find of the term Poetic Inquiry comes from a literary magazine, an editor’s book review published in 1921, Volume 60 of *The Bookman* journal. This seminal use in print is worth considering:

Of writing for "love of lovely words" the book holds little, but something of that great spirit of poetic inquiry that was Milton's and Browning's there undoubtedly is. (p. 60)

It should be noted, first of all, that the reviewer is referencing a novel, not a book of poetry. Hence, there is implication in the embedded Robert Louis Stevenson quotation that the "*the love of lovely words*" is a more basic form of poetic research, but the great spirit of poetic inquiry may visit more universal and eternal subject matter which was the domain of poets such as Milton and Browning. *A Child's Garden of Verses* with its verdant branches and great towers was a place where people could go to learn about the world through imagination's amorous embrace with language. This garden, where love of lovely words is basic research to the poetic inquirer, still exists, even today in a world inundated with computers. However, the spirit of poetic inquiry, fulfilled by this love of words, can aspire to grow a tree of knowledge. So it is that poets meet the academy on different paths—as agrarians, as mystics, as magical adepts working with the energies of texts to discover the hidden jewels of non-literal comprehension. This path of inquiry thus takes the poet from the garden into applied and practical uses of the love of words.



Figure 0.1 Google Ngram showing case insensitive instances of "poetic inquiry": 1900-2008

We can assume that from early on in the 20th century poetic inquiry was seen as a means to go through and beyond the love of lovely words to grapple with and understand the world more keenly. If this understanding revealed truths difficult to behold, then perhaps this is why. If one reviews the use of Poetic Inquiry in the millions of books scanned by Google's Ngram Viewer visualization software (see *Figure 0.1*), the first spike in use

occurs only after the Second World War in the late 1940s, initially in 1948, again in a book review, titled *The Poet with Wounds* about Harry Brown's *Fourth Elegy: The Poet Compared to an Unsuccessful General* written by literary critic and poet Hayden Carruth (1948, p. 217), who praises Brown for "considerably enlarg[ing] the range of his poetic inquiry beyond that shown in his earlier lyrics." Thus, poetic inquiry is understood as the act of writing poetry with greater purpose and intent than solely for self-expression. From *The Bookman's* reviewer to Carruth, more than a quarter century has passed, much of the world is in post-war shock, and the notion that writing poetry can serve research purposes parallel to but ostensibly other than the production of verse has germinated.

Use of the term "poetic inquiry" in publications fluctuates thereafter but remains a feature of literary critical and social scientific discourse throughout the twentieth century, with the greatest spike in use occurring in the 1950s. Over the period of ten years after Carruth's 1948 review, poetic inquiry began to signify the coming together of both a scientific and an emotive quest to find truth in and through poetic expression. Abrams (1958) provides the following justification for the vision of poetic inquiry as seeing and seeking truths beyond a polemic that separates rational and emotive methods:

The persistently defensive situation of criticism, and its standard procedure of combating charges against poetry by asserting their contraries, has forced it into an either-or, all-or-none choice that breeds dilemmas: Either language is scientific or it is purely emotive; either a poem corresponds to this world or it is a self-sufficient world all its own; either all beliefs are relevant to reading poetry, or all beliefs must be suspended. What we obviously need is the ability to make more distinctions and finer discriminations; and perhaps these will follow if we substitute for concepts developed mainly as polemical weapons a positive view designed specifically for poetic inquiry and analysis. (pp. 123-124)

The vision unfolded in this viewpoint is that language need not divide the inquirer in love with lovely words from the inquirer who faces dilemmas through words and seeks difficult truths: Words that are not singularly solipsistic and emotive, but serve as a vehicle for understanding about people and playing a more-than-aesthetic role for writer and reader. Abrams (1958) positions this methodological design centrally within the social sciences: "Suppose, then, that we set out from the observation that a

poem is about people . . . their perceptions, thought, and actions so as to enhance their inherent interest and whatever effects the poem undertakes to achieve" (p. 124). At this point in its genealogy, scholars are *doing* poetic inquiry, through the production of poems as a way of knowing and mobilizing knowledge. But with such an unconstrained approach, leaving the method of achieving "*whatever effects the poem undertakes*" completely open, the purposes and practices of poetic inquiry are necessarily as diverse as the practitioners. And besides, this comes to be poetic inquiry's greatest strength as a research method in a quest for understanding that can adapt to changes in physical, social and psychic environments. The notion of poetic inquiry as a field of research in social sciences continued to stimulate scholars for 50 years, at which point Poetic Inquiry, as a method, comes of age as a capitalized compound noun. This second peak in the frequency of the use of this term, by a magnitude greater than any before, occurs around 2008, a time full of uncertainty, when technology had completely transformed both personal communications and public research practices. Perhaps uncertainty is the catalyst that turns attention to poetry as a way to find what we missed with our other discursive approaches to understanding.

In 2003 when I left my life as a poet, secondary school teacher, gallery director, musician and media producer to begin my graduate studies, I did not see the full potential cross-over of these fields of endeavour. Nonetheless, I tried to make some connections. I was in a Faculty of Education, so I studied the effect of literature on language acquisition. Then I strayed into many aspects of literacy and carried out ethnographic studies on my own displaced artist community's attempt to retain relational bonds online when our gallery spaces were closed through predevelopment evictions. I still wrote poetry, made art and performed, but I kept the creative side of my work apart and distinct from my academic work. Like many others, I became increasingly aware that unique insights from my research were visible through language, and that it was my generative play with those lovely words that allowed for the brightest illuminations and most enjoyable times I had with the textual data I had gathered. Finally, I had a complete change of academic heart. Under the pioneering influence of Carl Leggo, the direction of my doctoral studies turned about face: poetry moved from the periphery of my activities to the centre of my scholarship, where it has remained, returning me to a life of living poetically with lovely words giving me inspiration and guidance on the ecstatic journey of research-worth-doing. I had the great fortune a couple years later to have my proposal for the *1st International Symposium of Poetic Inquiry* accept-

ed. This was a momentous time, a literary movement of sorts was brewing from within the academy. Something of the Great Spirit of Poetic Inquiry entered the ivory towers and spread from there out through communities and gardens, prisons and hospitals, cameras and computers, bodies and minds, destabilizing and reinventing discursive forms and practices of scholarship in the social sciences. It continues to gather momentum as poetic inquirers from around the world have been busily publishing, striving to understand the benefits of poetic effects in the realms of education, social work, health, ecology, sociology, mythology, technology, systems theory, history, geography, and so on. Many, if not all of the authors in this book would have similar stories to tell, finding in poetry the vital ingredient for a life well lived in the service of humanity and our greater understanding.

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Incantation

Carl Leggo

*What can I say that I have not said before?
So I'll say it again.*

Mary Oliver, *Swan*, 2010, p. 1

. . . no poem ends at the bottom of a page

Luci Shaw, *Water Lines*, 2003, p. 72

There is more to our story, more to the telling of it—

John Ashbery, *Chinese Whispers*, 2002, p. 97

. . . the world is, was, and ever will be full of wonder

Méira Cook, *Slovenly Love*, 2003, p. 81

All my life I have always loved language, words, dictionaries, alphabets, grammar, the enchanting possibilities of spells and spelling. I cannot remember a time that I was not passionately in love with language. I love the accidents of accents, the intentionality of intonation, the sinuous bending of syntax, the glamour of grammar. Though I enjoy many kinds of writing, poetry is my favourite genre because it is the most capacious genre. As Jean-Luc Nancy (2006) understands, “*poetry refuses to be confined to a single mode of discourse*” (p. 5). Poetry invites activism, awareness, comedy, consonance, contemplation, description, emotion, exposition, fantasy, imagery, imagination, music, narration, orality, performance, philosophy, prophecy, rhetoric, romance, story-telling, tragedy, voice, wisdom, and words. Poetry is playful and purposeful. Poetry invents worlds and teaches us how to live in them. After thousands of years on the earth, we have only caught a glimpse of the potentially limitless possibilities of poetry.

As a graduate student in creative writing in the mid-1980s I recall a Sunday afternoon when I was sitting at a table in the library at the University of New Brunswick, reading or writing or falling asleep, when a woman whispered, “*Are you Carl Leggo the poet?*” I looked up with a startled face

and said, “Yes.” I had been named, discovered like Lana Turner, and with the woman’s question and my response, I was creatively reborn—I was Carl Leggo the Poet.

When I was growing up in Newfoundland in the 1950s and 1960s, I knew no poets. I read the poetry in school textbooks. I mostly read the poetry of Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Hardy, Rossetti, and Dickinson. I occasionally read the Canadian poets Bliss Carman, Charles G. D. Roberts, and Archibald Lampman. I liked all the poetry I read, but it all sounded alien—distinctly separate from my daily lived experiences. Even when I read the poetry of E. J. Pratt, the only Newfoundland poet who was included in my school textbooks, I did not recognize my experiences in Pratt’s poetry. Pratt sounded like Carman, Roberts, and Lampman, and they all sounded like the British and American poets I read in school. Their poetry always sounded foreign. The language did not resonate with any language I knew, and the experiences and themes addressed in the poetry were similarly strange.

I was twenty years old when I first heard a poet whose voice resonated with mine. I attended a poetry reading by Al Pittman at the public library in St. John’s, Newfoundland in 1974. I was completing a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English literature at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I had never heard a poet like Al Pittman and I was smitten by his stories and wisdom, laced with sadness and humour. Al presented poetry that was narrative and personal, accessible and familiar, like a warm homespun sweater. Above all, I was entranced by Al’s voice. It was gruff and musical and earthy. I not only heard Al’s voice, but I felt it resonating in my body and imagination.

One of the poems Al read in the public library in 1974 was “Cooks Brook.” Al began:

*At the pool where we used to swim
in Cooks Brook
not everyone had guts enough
to dive from the top ledge*
(Ware & McKenzie, 2003, p. 54)

I was captivated. Al wrote about my life. I recalled how Cec, Frazer, Macky, my brother, and I loved to swim in the pool at Margaret Bowater Park, a pool created by damming the Corner Brook Stream in late June till late August. We loved to play in that pool, and eventually I would write about our antics there and elsewhere in a few books of poems about grow-

PAGES MISSING
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INDEX

A

Aboriginal, 59, 60, 63, 64, 67, 68,
122, 125, 378
aesthetic, 25, 49, 62, 71, 72, 74,
105, 211, 216, 257, 274, 288,
289, 291, 306
analysis, 25, 50, 57, 60, 63, 82, 89,
192, 200, 372
audience, 18, 51, 52, 93, 94, 230-
233, 304, 326
awareness, 18, 28, 33, 35, 79-82,
101, 111, 161, 165, 171, 189,
241, 243, 266, 292, 297, 299

B

beauty, 36, 45, 64, 101, 102, 111-
114, 127, 211, 216, 337, 338,
348, 349, 353, 365
body, 17, 29, 30, 52, 60, 61, 63,
65, 105, 106, 113, 116, 117,
149, 157, 164, 169, 172, 179,
180, 185, 189, 204, 215, 216,
229, 233, 235, 236, 238, 278,
309, 328, 334, 338, 344, 348,
365
breath, 33, 47, 80, 99, 106, 120,
121, 127, 130, 183, 203, 205,
206, 208, 216, 234, 235, 239,
306, 324-326, 334, 339, 378

C

collaboration, 59, 93, 149, 187,
378
community, 16-18, 20, 21, 26, 30,
33, 34, 65, 95, 110, 149, 166,

193, 196, 197, 221, 229-232,
235, 286, 290
crow, 122, 125, 159, 246, 247, 343

D

data, 23, 26, 49-55, 61, 63, 65,
230, 261, 263, 356, 374, 378
desire, 75, 82, 83, 171, 175, 197,
217, 235, 334
dialogue, 18, 65, 145, 167, 191,
192, 233, 291, 306

E

education, 21, 27, 30, 34, 36, 45,
108, 145, 150, 161, 169, 178,
191-193, 196, 200, 202, 212,
215, 266, 267, 271, 272, 277,
278, 286, 291, 297, 299, 301,
303, 304, 315, 339, 340, 342,
354, 363, 364, 367, 368, 370,
371, 374, 375, 377
ekphrastic, 53, 187
environment, 49, 54, 74, 243,
267, 315, 343, 349, 361
epistemology, 70, 73, 289, 291,
293
experience, 30, 50, 51, 53, 60, 62,
63, 71, 75, 79, 81-83, 93, 100,
104, 123, 139, 163, 171, 177,
182, 191, 200, 202, 203, 208,
212, 214, 216, 232, 233, 235-
237, 239, 241, 243, 263, 264,
273, 274, 285, 289, 291-293,
297-299, 303, 304, 306, 311,
340, 348, 367, 371

F

family, 52, 87, 92, 150, 163-165,
189, 191-193, 196, 201, 203,
204, 207, 212, 241, 274

G

game, 87, 89, 94

H

healing, 20, 59-61, 63, 208, 215,
372, 378
history, 15, 27, 44, 60, 121, 142,
145, 167, 192, 193, 197, 212,
214, 342
hummingbird, 51, 52, 56, 105,
125-127

I

identity, 20, 22, 45, 67, 82, 161-
163, 165, 179, 213, 215, 221,
337, 365, 371
imagination, 20, 23, 24, 28-30,
33, 51, 54, 56, 79, 83, 128, 206,
284, 286, 288, 290, 298, 303,
310, 370
inquiry, 16-18, 20, 22-26, 31, 34,
36, 43, 48-55, 57, 62, 67, 68, 70-
77, 94, 95, 99-104, 107, 109,
111, 127, 150, 162, 163, 167,
169, 172, 175, 177, 178, 189,
191, 200-202, 211, 221, 237,
240, 241, 244, 248, 249, 257,
260-267, 271, 278, 281, 306,
309, 310, 312, 354, 356, 361,
363, 364, 366, 367, 369-371,
373-375, 378

J

journey, 23, 26, 48, 59, 60, 99,
107, 123, 125, 204, 212, 213,
215, 216, 240, 246, 273, 281,
291, 327, 353
justice, 18, 20, 67, 192, 267, 291,
363, 368, 374

K

knowledge, 16, 20, 23, 24, 26, 33,
45, 70, 72-74, 143, 145, 161,
191, 200, 213, 231, 232, 277,
287, 306, 337, 355, 356
knowledge mobilization, 191

L

land, 32, 33, 106, 110, 121-124,
127, 136, 151, 152, 163, 164,
182, 193, 197, 212, 214, 216,
267, 371
language, 20-30, 33, 45, 46, 50,
52, 53, 57, 74, 79, 81-83, 99,
101, 105, 106, 109, 136, 164,
169, 172, 175, 177, 191, 192,
198, 200, 201, 229, 230, 232,
235, 241, 245, 248, 265, 272-
274, 278, 282, 306, 348, 350,
351, 354, 356, 363, 370, 371
learning, 16, 44, 48, 57, 95, 99,
102, 125, 147-149, 169, 215,
221, 231, 242, 271, 287-289,
293, 297-304, 311, 315, 318,
330, 334, 357, 364, 367, 371,
374
love, 17, 20, 24, 25, 28, 31, 35, 44,
47, 52, 54, 74, 85, 87-89, 91,
103, 104, 111, 113, 119, 120,
123, 124, 143, 147, 148, 150,

153, 166, 203, 207, 229, 230,
232, 237, 240, 255, 274, 285-
287, 302, 317, 321, 348, 349,
353
lyrical, 20, 79-83, 172, 175, 289,
356

M

media, 26, 49, 53, 54, 57, 95, 233,
370
memory, 20, 50, 89, 92, 100, 103,
119, 141, 171-176, 189, 192,
198, 235, 240, 245, 247, 285,
286, 289, 290
metaphor, 17, 20, 37, 55, 71, 74,
75, 101, 139, 151-153, 163, 189,
247, 257, 261, 262, 271, 277,
283, 356
method, 16, 23, 26, 43, 47, 49, 61,
71-73, 106, 147, 172, 178, 201,
208, 212, 231, 257, 260, 265,
272, 274, 311, 356, 370
music, 28, 45, 51, 53, 55, 81, 83,
84, 99, 106, 121, 175, 176, 190,
204, 293, 297-302, 348, 365,
367, 374

N

nature, 34, 55, 71, 72, 81, 99, 103,
105, 106, 110, 113, 128, 173,
175, 181, 182, 212, 235, 243,
245, 248, 264, 266, 267, 306,
315, 337, 348, 349, 353, 356

P

path, 24, 47, 102, 105, 106, 125,
149, 243, 245, 287, 311, 316,
328, 332, 344, 357

pedagogy, 33, 54, 67, 100, 109,
150, 169, 217, 258, 274, 288-
294, 298, 299, 344, 371
performance, 20, 28, 32, 51, 83,
93, 104, 229-233, 291, 297, 298,
304, 306, 342, 344, 369, 374
play, 26, 29, 30, 32, 55, 69, 80, 87,
93, 94, 104, 111, 229, 232, 264,
271, 286, 288, 298-300, 302,
303, 324, 326, 343, 348, 370
poetics, 18, 20, 22, 49, 51, 54, 55,
57, 103, 108, 152, 169, 175,
177, 282, 304, 315, 332, 366
prairie, 35, 129, 204, 366
process, 50, 53, 60-63, 65, 71, 72,
76, 79, 81, 82, 89, 99, 100, 102,
107, 126, 171, 181, 192, 200,
212, 214, 215, 218, 221, 230,
244, 245, 257, 258, 260, 265,
272, 273, 297-300, 303, 306,
311, 337, 347, 348, 357, 372

R

relationality, 165, 261, 262, 265,
356
relationship, 23, 61, 65, 113, 121,
124, 150, 161, 167, 245, 262,
297, 310, 347, 348, 368, 370,
371
research, 16-18, 20, 22-26, 33, 41,
45-47, 49-51, 57, 59, 60, 62, 63,
67, 68, 70-77, 84, 94, 95, 100,
102, 104, 106, 108, 127, 147,
149, 177, 178, 191, 192, 201,
217, 221, 229-231, 233, 235,
240, 243, 247, 257, 260, 262,
271, 272, 274, 276-278, 290,
293, 300, 302, 304, 309, 310,
311, 354, 356, 363, 364, 367-
371, 374-376, 378

S

school, 26, 29, 30, 44, 45, 49, 90,
 166, 186, 193, 196-198, 203,
 232, 271, 273, 276, 277, 281,
 283, 286, 315, 325, 327, 330,
 331, 333, 334, 338, 340, 343,
 367

self, 20, 25, 34, 45, 50, 53, 57, 80,
 81, 99, 104-106, 110, 122, 152,
 162, 165, 171, 189, 192, 213,
 223, 235, 241, 260, 267, 278,
 289, 291, 301, 306, 311, 347

song, 33, 36, 43, 44, 52, 56, 99,
 102, 106, 108, 175, 180, 198,
 234, 287, 293, 301, 358

space, 22, 35, 42, 55, 70, 83, 88,
 92, 121, 149, 162, 163, 169,
 171, 175, 177, 179, 203, 214,
 227, 231, 235, 237-239, 247,
 257, 263-265, 273, 287, 291,
 293, 299, 311, 323, 348, 349

sustainability, 20, 257, 262, 347-
 349, 354

symposium, 16, 22, 23, 26, 32,
 43, 51, 87, 92, 258, 309, 349,
 356, 374

synthesis, 161, 285, 293

T

teaching, 30, 46, 48, 95, 100, 102,
 109, 123, 243, 287, 293, 297-
 301, 303, 304, 342, 346, 364,
 367, 369-371, 374

theory, 20, 27, 128, 147, 215, 257,
 266, 281, 297, 299, 303, 304,
 366, 367

transformation, 55, 99, 104, 214,
 247, 264, 273, 274

V

visionary, 50, 214

W

wisdom, 28, 29, 33, 109, 124, 177,
 206, 215, 246, 247, 261, 265,
 266, 321, 333, 351