Poetic Inquiry as Social Justice and Political Response

Edited by

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Bowling Green State University

and

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Series in Literary Studies

VERNON PRESS

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www.vernonpress.com

In the Americas:
Vernon Press
1000 N West Street,
Suite 1200, Wilmington,
Delaware 19801
United States

In the rest of the world:
Vernon Press
C/Sancti Espiritu 17,
Malaga, 29006
Spain

Series in Literary Studies

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019939877

ISBN: 978-1-62273-649-2

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Foreword

This volume presents refereed work from the 6th International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry (ISPI) and the 17th annual Winter Wheat: The *Mid-American Review* Festival of Writing held at Bowling Green State University in 2017. The ISPI symposium is a biennial gathering of international poets, researchers, students, and community members interested in the use of poetry and poetic inquiry as a research method, methodology, and/or approach (see below for a history of all the gatherings). This informal community of poets and researchers meets in person, online, and on the page to engage in the fun and difficult conversations about what poetry can do in our qualitative work and practices.[1] Winter Wheat is a festival consisting of generative workshops and readings that celebrates writers and readers, produced by internationally distributed literary journal *Mid-American Review* and hosted on the campus of Bowling Green State University.[2] In early November 2017, the conferences co-convened with the theme *Poetry as/in/for Social Justice*; participants at the symposium considered how poetic inquiry can be used to interrogate social structures, cultural norms, and discourses that create inequalities and social injustice and how poetry can act as response and political voice.

For this volume, we invited manuscripts and poetry from the symposium that engage with poetry's potential for connectivity, political power, and evocation through methodological, theoretical, performative, and empirical work. The poet-researchers consider questions of how poetry and poetic inquiry can be a response to political and social events, be used as a pedagogical tool to critique inequitable social structures, and speak to our local identities and politics. This volume represents a growing body of work on the use of poetry as/in/for qualitative research (see below for a list of ISPI publications).[3] Specifically, *Poetic Inquiry as Social Justice and Political Response* speaks to the use of poetry in critical qualitative research and practice focused on social justice. Other ISPI volumes and journals have focused on the range of poetic inquiry from the use of literature-voiced poems (VOX THEORIA) to researcher-voiced poems (VOX AUTOBIOGRAPHIA) to participant-voiced poems (VOX PARTICIPARE);[4] poetry as a way of knowing, being, and telling;[5] poetic inquiry in the fields of

healthcare and education;[6] poetic inquiry as reflection and renewal;[7] poetic inquiry as social justice;[8] and the connection between poetry and the natural world through an examination of the ecological scope of poetic inquirers.[9]

In this collection, poetry is a response, a call to action, agitation, and a frame for future social justice work. The authors answer a question posed in previous ISPI gatherings: "What spaces can poetry create for dialogue about critical awareness, social justice, and re-visioning of social, cultural, and political worlds?"[10] This collection adds to the growing body of poetic inquiry through the demonstration of poetry as political action, response, and reflective practice. We hope this collection inspires you to write and engage with political poetry to realize the power of poetry as political action, response, and reflective practice.

We dedicate this volume to Carl Leggo—friend, poet, mentor, teacher, and champion of Poetic Inquiry.

Gatherings of the International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry

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, 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)
2017	Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, USA Co-convened with the Annual Winter Wheat: The *Mid-American Review* Festival of Writing Hosted by Sandra L. Faulkner and Abigail Cloud (Bowling Green State University, School of Cultural and Critical Studies, The Department of English, and *Mid-American Review*)

Publications from the International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry 1-6

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.

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 Press.

2018 Poetry and Social Justice. *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal, 3(1)*. Guest Editor: Sandra L. Faulkner.

2019 *Poetic Inquiry as Social Justice and Political Response*. Edited by Sandra L. Faulkner and Abigail Cloud, Vernon Press.

Notes

1. http://www.poeticinquiry.ca/

2. https://casit.bgsu.edu/midamericanreview/winter-wheat-about/

3. Faulkner, 2019.

4. Prendergast, Leggo, and Sameshima, *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices*.

5. Thomas, Cole, and Stewart, *The Art of Poetic Inquiry*.

6. Galvin and Prendergast, "The Practices of Poetic Inquiry."

7. Butler-Kisber, Guiney Yallop, Stewart, and Wiebe, *Poetic Inquiries of Reflection and Renewal*.

8. Faulkner, *Poetry and Social Justice*.

9. Sameshima, Fidyk, James, and Leggo, *Poetic Inquiry III: Enchantments*.

10. Sameshima, Fidyk, James, and Leggo, *Poetic Inquiry III: Enchantments*, 18.

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Thomas, Suzanne, Ardra Cole, and Sheila Stewart, editors. *The Art of Poetic Inquiry*. Nova Scotia: Backalong Books, 2012.

Poetic Inquiry as Social Justice and Political Response

Sandra L. Faulkner,
Bowling Green State University

> *"Poetry matters because it can waken us to realities that fall into the realm of the political."*[1]

Many social researchers use poetry in their work to re-present the human experience in a more approachable, powerful, emotionally poignant, and accurate form than prose research reports allow.[2] Scholar poets use poetry as a form of research representation, as data analysis, as a research tool, and as a research methodology. As Norman Denzin notes, "the poet makes the world visible in new and different ways, in ways ordinary social science writing does not allow. The poet is accessible, visible, and present in the text, in ways that traditional writing forms discourage."[3] Poetic inquiry includes, "the use of poetry crafted from research endeavors, either before project analysis, as a project analysis, and/or poetry that is part of or that constitutes an entire research project."[4] Though a fixed definition of poetic inquiry does not exist, poetic inquiry describes, "a method of turning research interviews, transcripts, observations, personal experience, and reflections into poems or poetic forms."[5]

One reason scholars use poetry in their work is the power of poetry as a means to engage a political voice. Poetic inquiry can be an active response to social issues, a political commentary, and a call to action:

> The poetic inquiry movement offers a contribution to a developing body of evidence that is not merely a third person perspective, as in conventional evidence, but is also intimate with first and second person perspectives and is thus a fertile pathway to ethical, caring, and empathic work. In reading or listening to a poem we are bearing witness to the other, to the person writing the poem, or to the situation that is the subject of the poem and this is a fundamental part of caring work.[6]

Poetic inquiry represents engaged social science.[7] Writing and performing poetry can be political activity; many scholars and poets turn to poetry as a way to make sense of, critique, and respond to current events. For example, poets write poetry in response to events in the news for *Rattle*'s online magazine *Poets Respond*,®[8] and other online journals like *Writers Resist*[9] and *Rise Up Review*.[10] The response offers a way to critique power structures, offer alternative views, and advocate for social justice. Burford uses poetry in his research on the neoliberal university as a kind of political practice that "enables inhabitants of the university to reflect on a diverse array of political phenomena—from the structuring frame of heteronormativity to the wide scale marketization of universities across the globe."[11] Reale uses poetic inquiry in her work with refugees from Sicily and Africa as a form of social activism.[12] She writes her research as poetry because she is "interested in presenting my research in ways that are easily relatable, understood, and accessible. [She] was not interested in presenting [her] research in a jargon-filled and sterile way, able only to be interpreted by the chosen few."[13] Poets and researchers can use poetry to engage audiences and activate poetry's political potential.[14]

Poetry can help us shape lives in ways that we want to live; we create and tell stories that advocate for social justice and change. Rita Dove considers poetry to work through poets' use of empathy and reader's recognition of themselves and their worlds in verse: "Poets … are sensitive to their surroundings in the world where they live. So, speaking out is almost unavoidable. That can sustain people, because if someone reads a poet's description of an experience for which they had no words before, it again offers the reassurance of telling them that they are not alone."[15] Ivan Brady writes of how poetic methods are steeped in an author's self-awareness; "poets write *in* and *with* the facts and frameworks of what they see in themselves *in relation to* Others in particular landscapes, emotional, and social situations."[16] Poetic inquiry as political activism works because it makes the personal political. Faulkner tells us how this works: "Poetry taps into the universal through radical subjectivity. The poet's use of personal experience creates something larger from the particular; the concrete specifics become universal when the audience relates to, embodies, and/or experiences the work as if it were their own words."[17]

This volume addresses poetry's role as a creative art that is vital in the inquiry process and presentation, a method of engaging in important social issues.[18] The pieces in this collection engage with poetry's potential for connectivity, political power, and evocation through methodological, theoretical, performative, and empirical work. The poets reveal inequitable social conditions in education, immigration, politics, and their local

communities; they use poetry to question inequality and show how poetry can be a personal and political response. The political task of poetry is "making way for new worlds and words."[19] Some poets, like Rita Dove and Naomi Shihab Nye, argue that art, and poetry in particular, are important to deny tyranny in all forms.[20] Poetic inquirers, such as Monica Prendergast, consider poetic inquiry an important tool for social change and social justice.

> I am interested in social poetry as the core mandate for critical poetic inquirers whose work is in support of equity, human rights, and justice worldwide. Critical poetic inquiry invites us to engage as active witnesses within our research sites, as witnesses standing beside participants in their search for justice, recognition, healing, a better life.[21]

The authors in this volume use poetic inquiry as a way to reflect on power inequities, to make their personal experience part of the critique, and to realize the potential power in poetry as political discourse.

Notes

1. Orr, "The Politics of Poetry," 416.
2. Faulkner, "Poetic Inquiry: Craft, Method, and Practice."
3. Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*, 86.
4. Faulkner, "Poetic Inquiry," 210.
5. Faulkner, *Poetic Inquiry: Craft, Method, and Practice*.
6. Galvin and Prendergast, 2016, xv.
7. Faulkner, "Poetry Is Politics."
8. https://www.rattle.com/respond/
9. http://www.writersresist.com/
10. http://www.riseupreview.com/index.html
11. Burford, "Sketching Possibilities," 238.
12. Reale, "Living One Day."
13. Reale, "We Never Thought," 110.
14. Orr, "The Politics of Poetry."
15. Masciotra, "Rita Dove."
16. Brady, Foreword, xiv

17. Faulkner, "Poetic Inquiry," 210.

18. Faulkner, "Poetic Inquiry."

19. Fisher, "Outside the Republic," 984.

20. Masciotra, "Rita Dove."

21. Prendergast, "Surrender," 683.

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Rise Up Review! http://www.riseupreview.com/index.html

Writer's Resist. http://www.writersresist.com/

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FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

Biographies

Laura Apol is an Associate Professor at Michigan State University. In addition to professional publications on children's literature and creative writing, she is the author of numerous collections of her own poems, including *Falling into Grace* (Dordt, 1998); *Crossing the Ladder of the Sun* (Michigan State University Press, 2003); *Requiem, Rwanda* (Michigan State University Press, 2015); and *With a Gift for Burning* (Finishing Line, 2018).

Robin Reynolds Barre, Ph.D. is a depth psychotherapist in private practice in the Pacific Northwest. She works mainly with adolescents and clients who have survived trauma. Barre earned her master's and doctorate from Pacifica Graduate Institute. Her doctoral dissertation was a poetic inquiry exploring mythology, poetry, the archetype of Adolescence, and the Unsayable Dimension of trauma. In addition to being a therapist, Barre is also, at heart, a teacher—though she was first, before anything, a writer.

Lee Beavington is an award-winning poet and ecologist. He is an SSHRC scholar and PhD candidate in Philosophy of Education at Simon Fraser University, and has taught a wide range of courses and labs at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, including Ecology, Genetics, Expressive Arts, and the Amazon Field School. His interdisciplinary research focuses on ecopoetics and using poetry to cultivate a connection to place. Find Beavington reflecting in the forest, mesmerized by ferns, and always following the river. Find more about him at www.leebeavington.com.

Maya T. Borhani, poet and wordsmith, is currently a doctoral student in Educational Studies at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, specializing in poetic inquiry and applied theatre; she holds a master's degree in Language and Literacy Education from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Her interest in poetic inquiry stems from a lifelong relationship with place-centered pedagogies, and poetry as voice, political currency, and personal salvation. When not studying, writing, or singing, Borhani enjoys attending to the small movements of the natural world in wild places, in cityscapes, and within the intricacies of the human emotional mind/land/scape.

Abigail Cloud is a poet and Senior Lecturer at Bowling Green State University. She is Editor-in-Chief of *Mid-American Review* and faculty advisor to *Prairie Margins*. Her first collection, *Sylph* (Pleiades, 2014), was a Lena-Miles Wever Todd Prize winner. Her research interests include Laban's effort principles as applied to language and mortality theory.

Kimberly Dark is a writer, professor, and raconteur, working to reveal the hidden architecture of everyday life one clever essay, poem, and story at a time. She has performed poetry and stories at hundreds of venues worldwide during the past twenty years. She teaches in the MA program in Sociological Practice at California State San Marcos. Learn more at www.kimberlydark.com.

Sandra L. Faulkner is Professor of Communication and Director of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Bowling Green State University. Her interests include qualitative methodology, poetic inquiry, and the relationships among culture, identities, and sexualities in close relationships. Her poetry appears in places such as *Literary Mama* and *damselfly*. She authored three chapbooks, *Hello Kitty Goes to College* (dancing girl press, 2012), *Knit Four, Make One* (Kattywompus, 2015), and *Postkarten aus Deutschland* (http://liminalities.net/12-1/postkarten.html), and a memoir in poetry, *Knit Four, Frog One* (Sense, 2014). She was the recipient of the 2016 Norman K. Denzin Qualitative Research Award.

Alexandra Fidyk, PhD, is Associate Professor in the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta; Associate Editor of the *International Journal of Jungian Studies*; past President of the Jungian Society of Scholarly Studies; joint editor of *Poetic Inquiry: Enchantment of Place*; Certified Jungian Psychotherapist, Integrated Body Psychotherapist, Constellation & Family System therapist (inherited and transgenerational trauma); lover of horses, cats, and nature.

Sandra Filippelli's current explorations include peace, mindfulness, and happiness. Her research interests encompass arts-based research areas of poetic inquiry, creative writing, art education, and art research. She has published in *Art Research International*, *Poetic Inquiry: Enchantment of Place, Visual Inquiry: Learning & Teaching Art*, *EVENT Magazine*, *Joyland*, and *The Flat Earth Excavation Project*. She is a PhD candidate in the Department of Language and Literacy, University of British Columbia.

Amanda N. Gulla is an English Education professor and a published poet. Her poems and her research and writing on poetic inquiry and aesthetic education have appeared in many literary and academic journals. She is

the coordinator of the English Education program at Lehman College of the City University of New York, a member of the Board of Directors of the Maxine Greene Institute for Aesthetic Education and the Social Imagination, and the Professional Development Liaison for the Maxine Greene High School for Imaginative Inquiry.

Natalie Honein is a writer, poet, educator, and parent. She holds a doctorate in Education from the University of Bristol, UK, and has taught academic writing at the American University of Beirut and the American University of Sharjah in the UAE. Her publications explore narrative research, gender issues, poetic inquiry, and Arab women activists. She is published in *Poetic Inquiries of Reflection and Renewal*, the *Canadian Journal of Education*, *Poetic Inquiry III: Enchantments of Place*, and *Narrative Works*. Honein currently works and writes in Dubai.

Sarah K. MacKenzie-Dawson spends her days negotiating among her identities as a mother, artist, poet, partner, teacher, scholar, and introvert. She relishes the rare moments of quiet, but also finds her spirit nourished by the beauty of watching her two young daughters discover the world or listening as her college students discover themselves beyond the definitions that may have been placed upon them by society. She is an Associate Professor of Education at Bucknell University, where she teaches courses related to literacy, arts-integration, holistic education, spirituality, gender, and social justice. Her research focuses on ideas of identity, connection, and isolation.

Mark McCarthy is a doctoral candidate in Teacher Education at Michigan State University. His research investigates teacher preparation, specifically as inquiry into his own teaching practice. Interests bridging his research and teaching include children's literature, literacy and discourse, and a pedagogy of creative interference.

Margaret McKeon is an outdoor educator, poet, and doctoral candidate in Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia. A person of Euro-Settler ancestry, for her dissertation she is creating poetry and stories about land relationship, ancestral knowledges, and colonialism. This research builds on professional work coordinating an outdoor education program in Western Newfoundland as it transformed to also be a strong Mi'kmaw cultural education program, and master's studies that theorized on this weaving process of "indigenization."

Heather McLeod (Ph.D. University of Victoria) is Associate Professor (arts education) in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University in St. John's,

Newfoundland, Canada. She pursues a critical research agenda and is interested in arts-based research methods. Her funded research initiatives include a parents and poetry project, an examination of the process of becoming a researcher, an initiative to understand student experiential learning in an art museum, and an Open Studio project with immigrant and refugee youth. McLeod has won national and faculty awards for curriculum development and teaching. She currently serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Canadian Review of Art Education*.

Robert Christopher Nellis is a continuous faculty member in the Red Deer College School of Education. He is the author of *Haunting Inquiry: Classic NFB Documentary, Jacques Derrida, and the Curricular Otherwise* (Sense, 2009) and a former co-President of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies. He teaches courses in Educational Psychology, Family Studies, Educational Foundations, Curriculum Studies, and Media Education. Recent scholarship has taken up creative nonfiction and poetic inquiry to explore place, memory, and human-animal relations. He shares his life with both humans and animals yet laments that his gifts received shine far, far richer than those given.

Bonnie Nish is Executive Director of Pandora's Collective Outreach Society. She has a master's in Arts Education from Simon Fraser University and is pursuing a PhD in Language and Literacy Education at The University of British Columbia. Nish's research examines how poetry and life writing can help those recovering from trauma. Nish's book *Love and Bones* was published in 2013 (Karma Press). Her book *Concussion and Mild TBI: Not Just Another Headline* was published by Lash and Associates in 2016. Ekstasis Editions will release her next book of poetry, *Cantata in Two Voices*, co-written with Jude Neale, next fall.

Gisela Ruebsaat is a legal analyst, writer, and independent scholar whose work has appeared in literary and academic journals. In 2016, Ruebsaat was selected by the Canadian government as one of 150 woman leaders in Canada to support gender equality. Her poetry collection, *Heart Mechanic*, was published in 2016 by Quadra Books. Ruebsaat has performed her poems locally and internationally: She performed at the "Soulfood-Lesebuhne" in Marburg Germany; she presented at three International Symposia on Poetic Inquiry and also, in 2017, at Winter Wheat: The *Mid-American Review* Festival of Writing at Bowling Green State University. Most recently Ruebsaat worked as legal analyst for a feminist advocacy organization.

Pauline Sameshima is a Professor and Canada Research Chair in Arts Integrated Studies at Lakehead University. Her interests are in creativity, imagination, curriculum theory, and community health. Sameshima's interdisciplinary projects use the arts to catalyze innovation, generate wanderings, and provoke new dialogues. She is the Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* and curates the Lakehead Research Education Galleries. She is online at solspire.com.

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