



POETIC INQUIRY

Enchantment of Place

Edited by

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ARTWORK

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Frontispiece — oak

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Section II — eucalyptus

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FOREWORD

Monica Prendergast

where we have been
(where we are)
where we are going

poetry lights the way

how poetic inquiry
emerges from philosophy
anthropology
history
sociology
healthcare
literature
education

in/vestigations with/in
and beyond
the self

how poems mark
moments
capture life
in its liveness

like a scarab in amber

like an exquisite corpse

like an ecological dreaming

like the holding of place

(nucleus deep)

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 (Hoiijer, 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-

ing up. But I was not only captivated by the stories in Al's poetry. I loved the language, especially the rhythms. When I heard Al perform his poetry, he leaned and swayed, his right hand held his book, and his left hand moved up and down like his body was a musical instrument. He performed his poetry, but, even more so, he was his poetry. There was no pretence, no Hollywood actor's trained intonation. Whenever I heard poetry recited in school classrooms, I was typically listening to recordings of Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. who read the poetry of others with all the inflections of a suave Hollywood actor who was the son of a renowned Russian-born concert violinist and a Romanian-born opera singer. Zimbalist's voice was pleasant but alien. Zimbalist's voice was not like any voice I heard on Lynch's Lane in Corner Brook.

When I heard Al read, I was mesmerized by the familiarity of his poetry. At the end of "Cooks Brook" Al writes about the divers who

*... daringly defied the demons
who lived so terribly
in the haunted hours of your sleep*
(Ware & McKenzie, 2003, p. 55)

I was haunted by Al's images and rhythms. I especially loved the alliteration in "*daringly defied the demons.*" I heard Al's poetry resonate in my body.

As a poet and professor of language and literacy education, I teach and mentor many readers and writers. I encourage all of them, writers and readers in elementary and secondary classrooms, and readers and writers in undergraduate and graduate programs, and other writers and readers in a diverse network of community life writing groups that span the generations from young adults to senior citizens, to pay attention to the alphabet and the play (fullness) of language. Above all, I invite writers, whether English is a first language or an additional language, to know themselves in poetry, to know themselves as poets. I am committed to examining, questioning, disclosing, and nurturing principles and practices related to teaching, writing, and reading poetry in classrooms. I live in the world as a poet. I spend a part of most days in reading and writing poetry, in the practice of poetry, even in the experience of poetic living. I am constantly vigilant about seeing the world with a poet's senses and heart and imagination. I live in the world with a passion for words. I express that passion in poetry. This has been my calling for a very long time, at least a life time. I will continue to shape my words and send them into the world. The act of writing is creative and necessary. And I will read the words I find

along the way, and linger with them as I would linger with gifts that have been offered with hope.

Wendell Berry (1990) understands that “*a good poem reminds us of love because it cannot be written or read in distraction; it cannot be written or understood by anyone thinking of praise or publication or promotion*” (p. 90). This is the mysterious and capacious and efficacious heart of poetry. This is why I am devoted to poetry, and poetic inquiry, and poetic living.

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“A Setting of Things Side by Side”

Alexandra Fidyk

this land is
my tongue my eyes my mouth

Marilyn Dumont, *A Really Good Brown Girl*, 1996, p. 46

It's no metaphor to witness the astonishing fidelity of minerals magnetized, even after hundreds of millions of years, pointing to the magnetic pole, minerals that have never forgotten magma whose cooling off has left them forever desirous. We long for place; but place itself longs.

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 1996, p. 53

. . . I felt a touch of awe always with me at what seemed to me to be the otherness of [nature], mixed with the bewildering knowledge that I had come from it and that it couldn't be other than I was.

Sharon Butala, *Old Man on His Back*, 2002, p. 11

The Fifth *International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry* was held at the Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. As many have written, place begets poetry: poetry begets place, thus, the inspiration for the title of this edited collection, *Poetic Inquiry: Enchantment of Place*. Gathered to the lush verdant growth of the coastal rainforest of southwestern British Columbia; participant to performance in the germane underbelly of the deciduous hardwood forest; and, conversant with the rhythm of becoming and decay, we fell into deep time, where a sense of separateness dissolved, at least fleetingly, amidst the soft rain. Set apart from urban pulse and campus buzz, the Garden offered a rare sojourn into slowness and pause, a tangible texture for the lure of poetry and poetic play.

Being surrounded by the gardens of rainforest, oak meadow and woodland, alpine, and hardwood, supported those present to entrain with the particularities of place. We were confronted by the initiatory address of things: fish eyes, stacked stones, and ancestral bones. As such we partook in an ecopoetics, an understanding and living that defies Plato's

main objections to poetry—that is, poetry is not ethical, philosophical, and pragmatic. On the contrary, poetry has great educational value. It is ethical for the passions and emotions enacted move us to participation and activism; it is philosophical for it lays bare truth and knowledge—personal and collective, contemporary and ancient; and, it is pragmatic for it offers practical consequences constituted as meaning and value in research, community practice, and episteme. Qualities that are fleshed out in what follows.

If we are willing to attend to what Don McKay (2002) called “*the phenomenological edge*” (p. 60) and land “*our attention on the particulars of this invitation, something happens*” (derby, 2015, p. 2). Momentarily emptied of our human-centredness, something addresses us from beyond our wanting and doing, beyond our constructs and categories, yet through our interbeing: “*the rocks below, green-dressed and barnacle-scabbed*” (Hegland, 2017, p. 130); “*dawn glistening beaches*” (McKeon, 2017, p. 124); and the “*vortex of branches calls out*” (Borhani, 2017, p. 102). In this way, a kind of earthy wisdom arises or at least takes seed through slowing, noticing, and attending to something real, something relational, something ecological. As Gary Snyder (1980) named it, this is the “*real work*” of the poet: “*to make the world as real as it is and to find ourselves as real as we are within it*” (p. 82). Similarly, Robert Bringhurst (2006) adds:

What does poetry say? It says that what-is is: that the real is real, and that it is alive. It speaks the grammar of being. It sings the polyphonic structure of meaning itself . . . Poetry is the language of being: the breath, the voice, the song, the speech of being. It does not need us. We are the ones in need of it. If we haven't learned to hear it, we will also never speak it. (p. 43)

As Plato cautioned and Aristotle championed, poetry sings; poetry enchants; poetry inspires. It captivates, entices, empowers, and even seduces, capacities that underscore the educative merit needed to turn learners, teachers, and researchers to their emotions, senses, intuition, imagination, and feeling, aspects of humanity that reveal our relational co-existence in an interconnected world. In these times of ecological crisis, such address is the call of the educator. That is, a call to embrace a pedagogy informed by relational awareness, an ability to dwell on “*the phenomenological edge*,” and a commitment to hear “*the language of being*”. Pedagogy as poetic endeavour shares “*a commitment to acknowledging, mourning, and celebrating what-is—its non-, its extra-, and its fully human dimensions*” (Zwicky, 2008, p. 86). That is, a poetic orientation to the

world does not aim at reductive explanations to fit the “*complexity, polyphony, and ineffability of what-is into human constructs*” (derby, 2015, p. 5). Its primary gesture is a disciplined act of attending to things, and such an understanding is “*ontologically robust*” even as it points beyond the human (Zwicky, 2008, p. 86). After all, it is the horizon of existence, not the verticality, that brings us home, back to a community of things. “*Ontological understanding*,” Jan Zwicky (2003) has explained, “*is rooted in the perception of patterned resonance in the world*” and that, “*Philosophy, practiced as a setting of things side by side until the similarity dawns, is a form of ontological appreciation*” (p. L7). Such ontological understanding and appreciation is central to poetic inquiry and together redirect education toward kinship, interconnectedness, ancestry, empathy, humility, and wonder. By extension, we are confronted with the ethical implications that arise from this positioning. That is, in “a setting of things side by side,” we perceive patterns of what-is and thereby, we recognize the significance of each element to the overall gestalt. As within the rainforest garden, life exists in “*an interactive and polymorphous form*” and only through such recognition might we revise our beliefs, actions—understood as doing, undoing, and not-doing—and so values (derby, 2015, p. 15).

In being rooted in place, we acquire a similar ontological insight and a sense of ecological being. Growing up on a self-sustaining farm in northern Saskatchewan, where the aspen parkland slopes into the Canadian shield, it was clear that we celebrated or mourned the seasons as nature orchestrated them. When a kid, the stress related to the lack of spring rain or the arrival of early frost was palpable. Even if my parents did not articulate their concerns, the implications of a poor crop reverberated far beyond harvest.

Years later when I studied Canadian Literature as an undergraduate, I was surprised by the intimacy I had with the characters of authors from the prairies: Margaret Laurence, W. O. Mitchell, and Sharon Butala to name a few. Because they wrote of and from familiar patterns—I found resonance with their worlds—be it Manawaka, Manitoba, 1930s rural Saskatchewan, or the native grasslands of Cypress Hills. I felt, for example, the loss revisited through the narrating of Hagar Shipley’s life. Although 90 years of age, I recognized her Stoicism—a stance of many farmers and pioneers whose lives did not permit vulnerability (my grandparents). Likewise, I experienced the prejudice that comes from social class, not only as a child of an immigrant Eastern European (Orthodox Ukrainian) but also as witness to the discrimination of many Cree and Saulteaux, people of near-by reservations, round-ups which made possible the set-

tled land where I lived. And I immediately recognized Butala's ability to throw her consciousness, a state of awareness that enabled her to attune to, even mingle with, Nature.

Of similar note, the writing of many Canadian prairie poets—perhaps not all with an awareness of space and distance and big sky but with a field of view, rooted in the "*particularities and generalities of the prairie landscape*"—shares an ontological standpoint (Adamson cited in Tracie, 2016, p. 7). Such landscape is not only physical but also philosophical, psychological, even spiritual because it continues to shape reciprocally through a lingering attachment. In "Wake Up," Di Brandt (2003) expresses her deep attachment to

*[w]ild scented meadow,
grasshopper sung,
sun drenched,
holding us earthbound.*

*In love with grass,
and wonder. (p. 45)*

For Lorna Crozier (1996), it is the weather that is most directly felt. In "Burial, Partridge Hill," she speaks poignantly of drought through the persona of Mrs. Bentley:

*I've never seen the dust
this bad. The world
turns upside down, the sky's
the earth. Among the graves
badgers dig their way to heaven.*

.....

*Five years of being burnt out,
blown out, hailed out,
and now they plant
their only son. (p. 34)*

The further we are removed from an understanding of what makes space place, from its fecundity, the less likely we are to feel and so be moved by what-is. The less moved by what is real, the less impacted by

our pedagogical efforts. Perhaps that is part of the beauty, charm, and power of poetry, poetic inquiry, and a poetic basis of mind—its ability to cast a spell upon its readers and listeners—in hope of some form of enactment.

To honour patterned resonance, and phenomenology of place, this collection has been arranged by “a setting of things side by side” and tuning to their “*song, concert, chorus,*” ancestral lines from the Old French “*encantement*” (Enchantment). In this way, Method, Place, Family, Healing, Media, and Pedagogy emerged as its own grammar.

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