

2ND INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON POETIC INQUIRY

OCTOBER 15-18, 2009

poetry as a way of knowing



Centre for Education Research
University of Prince Edward Island

Centre for Arts-informed Research
OISE/ University of Toronto

Preliminary Programme

**2nd International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
October 15—18, 2009**

Thursday, October 15

7:30-10:00: Opening Reception & Registration, Faculty Lounge, Main Building,
University of Prince Edward Island

Poetry Readings

Diane Morrow, John Mackenzie, Judy Gaudet, Hugh MacDonald, Jane Ledwell, Brent
MacLaine, Deirdre Kessler & Richard Lemm

Friday, October 16—Mackenzie Theatre, Charlottetown

9:00-10:30: Welcome and Opening Remarks

Suzanne Thomas, University of Prince Edward Island & Ardra Cole, OISE/University of
Toronto

Presentation A

Monica Prendergast, Lesley University

Poetic Inquiry and the Social Poet

Throughout history, poets have talked back to power in abundant ways. In the 20th century, a strong movement of social poetry developed in the First and Second World Wars (Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Erich Maria Remarque, Rupert Brooke) and on into the 1930s and beyond, at an international scale, that involved poets such as Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Pablo Neruda, Federico Garcia Lorca, Carolyn Forché, Marge Piercy, Czeslaw Milosz, Adrienne Rich, and many more. These poets took on the role of the social scientist in placing their close lenses over society and identifying both problems and possible solutions through their work.

The social poets sit in good company with poets working in social science contexts, and it is necessary to bring their work into the ongoing methodological conversation that is Poetic Inquiry. This presentation offers an overview of social poet Muriel Rukeyser's suite *The Book of the Dead* as a poetic ethnography of a 1930's West Virginia mining community coping with lung disease (silicosis) due to unsafe working conditions. As an exemplar of social poetry and poetic inquiry, Rukeyser's poetry offers a model for poetic inquirers interested in using their art and craft in socially progressive ways.

Presentation B

Carl Leggo, University of British Columbia

Light Echoes: Provoking Pedagogic Imagination

I write poetry as a way to make sense in the world. I write poetry in order to share questions and insights with others. I write poetry in order to learn to be still and attend to the circles of seasons, to feel rain and snow on my tongue, to see the sun scribe shadows in the mountains, to hear the raucous calls of crows and seagulls, to smell the sweet resilience of May flowers, to taste the ripeness of wild raspberries in late August. For the past two decades I have been writing poetry as a way to know the world, as a way to be and become in the world. Poetry invites us to experiment with language, to create, to know, to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience. Like Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Heart*, 1997), I am eager to "produce forms of knowledge that do not exist yet" (p. 31). Poetry is a practice of language and literacy that can foster hope and wisdom for living more effectively and productively in the world. As an educator, I am convinced that all of us—students, teachers, parents, artists, administrators—need to attend to multiple ways of knowing and becoming. Poetry offers significant ways for learning and practicing our living in the world. And, so, I present several poems and ruminations on why poetry is important for researching and practicing education, for understanding and revitalizing education, for learning to live well with ourselves and with one another in the world.

10:30-11:00: Break

11:00-12:00: Panel Presentation

John Parker Oughton, Mary Lou Soutar-Hynes, Sheila Stewart & Elana Wolff, Centennial College

Resonance: Poetry and Art: A Collaboration between Poets and Artists

A group of five published poets in Toronto began an unusual collaboration with studio artists at the Women's Art Association of Canada. Meeting regularly with the artists in their studios, the poets viewed both finished art pieces and works-in-progress, and then wrote new poems, or adapted existing ones, that spoke to their experience of the art. While the poets explored their ability to interpret/respond to paintings, drawings and collages, the artists gained insights into how their work "spoke" to others, and had the opportunity to respond to the work of the poets as it evolved. The collaboration inspired a well-attended reading/exhibition, and *Resonance: Poetry and Art*, a full-colour, 72-page book from Sixth Floor Press. In this panel presentation we explore this collaboration and the role of poetry as a way of knowing, and as a mode of perception in responding to visual art. Focusing on the question, "What does it mean to live and engage with visual

art poetically?" poets and artists engage in dialogue about their learning through a meeting of forms and modes. Slides of visual art accompany readings of specific poems.

12:00-1:00: Lunch

1:00-2:30: Presentation A

Sheila Stewart, OISE/University of Toronto

Poetry's Attentiveness

As a poet, a form of attentiveness, which is like research, leads to me poetry. How has being a poet influenced the way I've approached collaborative research with literacy practitioners? What was the role of poetry in research meetings and as part of the research findings and report writing? What role could it have? How does the poetry "serve" the research? How might my poetry and research come into a more direct, compelling dialogue? How can I bring together my poet self with my adult educator/adult literacy researcher self? How can poetry be part of collaborative, community-based research? How can poetic inquiry be part of a critical research agenda? What role could there be for poetic inquiry and the university to engage with and support poetry which challenges the status quo, fosters a critical, anti-racist perspective, and reaches into the community beyond current poetry circles and venues?

Using a mixture of poetry reading, brief readings from research documents, images from research project web-pages, and dialogue with the audience I explore themes and processes which connect my poetry and the research I've done on adult literacy practitioners' narratives about the possibilities for connection between poetry and community-based adult literacy research.

Attentiveness and attention to language are important to research and poetry. How can research benefit from poetry's linguistic playfulness? How can poetry's relationship with the unconscious, music, and rhythm be part of poetic inquiry? How can poetry as a way of knowing help us learn what we want to learn?

Presentation B

Scott Watson, Tohoku Gakuin University

An American Santoka: a Study of Racism and Translation

Does a light-skinned translator think of herself or himself as "white", and do they assume whiteness for their readers? Do they think much about the racial makeup of their audience? And, in America, with its racist past and present, if light skinned translators do not have such things in mind is it because they consider themselves the "norm"?

Light skinned ("white") translators, socialized by a color code as "white", speak--and write--a language that is "white", and, so, in part, racist. To me it seems that translations

via the American English language (I cannot speak from experience about the scene in other English-speaking countries) are unavoidably racist in part.

The two translators of Taneda Santoka's poems under discussion here are Burton Watson and John Stevens. Neither man constructively can be called racist in the familiar sense of that word. If we read them, though, through the wider lens that is provided here (meaning that any individual growing up "white" in America has inside them some skin color based ideology), if we view the matter from that angle, we can maybe come to see how a racist cultural background can, even though we may not be conscious of it, influence our writings. Instead of looking at their actual translations, I look at the translators in their own words, at what they say in their introductions to their Santoka translations.

Presentation C

Shauna McCabe, Mount Allison University
(Abstract to be added)

2:30-3:00: Break

3:00-4:30

Presentation A

Ahava Shira, University of British Columbia

Listening to this Poet Heart Dream: Loving Inquiry as a Practice of Restor(y)ing Relationship

Few things are accomplished in human affairs except under the type of entrancement that can be associated with dream experience (O'Sullivan, 2003).

Through a research practice I call "loving inquiry" I seek to attend to the ways I engage in relationships with myself, others and the natural world. Poetry is one way in which I practice loving inquiry, evoking what Abram (1996, pp. 270-271) calls a "storied relation and reciprocity with the myriad things, the myriad beings, that perceptually surround [me]".

This impulse to attend is within me. It is available to me here and now, in every moment. It requires me to slow down, to listen, to become attuned to the interactions between you and me. As I give time to wondering about the quality and equality of my relationships, I become curious about the nature of my relationships and my relationships to nature. As I open to the diversity of beings within and around me, I learn to be with, and breathe with/in the tension of relationship, to understand how this very act of breathing is happening in relationship.

Through the poetic performance I celebrate the vulnerability and beauty of my everyday encounters as a being-in-relationship.

Presentation B

John J. Guiney Yallop, Acadia University

"I'm being paid to write poetry."

As I sat for the first time in my office at Acadia University in July of 2008, I reflected on my journey to this place, to this position, to this community, and to this identity. In my doctoral research I wrote about identities, communities, and emotional landscapes. I drew on experiences in two of my communities and the multiple identities I held within and without those two communities. I wrote a book of poetry—a poetic journey through an emotional landscape—as the data for my research. In this presentation I engage in self-talk about my work, and invite listeners to come with me as I express and explore how I am living as a poet researcher—a poet whose poetry is research and an academic whose scholarly work is writing poetry. I reflect on my need to re-affirm my identity as poet researcher—a dual identity that is multiple and one. I also discuss the importance of community and the challenges of finding or creating community within and beyond the academy.

Presentation C

Sean Wiebe & Celeste Snowber, University of Prince Edward Island & Simon Fraser University

To Flourish and Nourish with Poetry: An Intertextual Autobiography of Spiritual Practice.

The purpose of our presentation is to consider how the practice of poetry is particularly suited as a means to nourish spiritual engagement in a technologically-evolving, culturally diverse, globalized world. By exploring the differing and complicated ways poets and scholars combine poetry and spirituality, we also ask to what extent can nourishing spirituality be part of the activity in public spaces (such as schools and universities) for renewing appreciation of the depth and complexity of human knowing.

Complementing and complimenting the above, we perform and discuss how working together poetically has uncovered an experimental methodology which we have called intertextual autobiography, where each poet inquirer responds hermeneutically to selected texts and to the other's understandings of those texts. This is an effort to relocate the texts to personal, autobiographical situations of knowing and being, thus to bring honest discussion about the complex relationships, interrelationships, and contradictions implicit in any effort to better articulate poetic and spiritual practices. Intertextual autobiography combines a close attention to the art of discourse, as in narrative inquiry and intertextual interpretation (Leggo, 2008; Hasebe-Ludt & Hurren, 2003), with the critical and artful examination of personal practice, as in self-tudy or a/r/tography (Samaras & Freese, 2006; Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). Combining two effective qualitative traditions, one

which emphasizes interpretation of others' texts and one which emphasizes personal reflections on self texts, can create alternative ways of inquiring and knowing useful to scholars across the traditional subject disciplines.

7:00-10:00: Poetry Gala & Book Display

Haviland Club, Charlottetown

Poetry Readings

Peter Hay, David Helwig, John Smith, Anne Compton
UPEI Student Poetry Contest Winners

Saturday, October 17— Mackenzie Theatre, Charlottetown

9:00-10:30

Presentation A

Daniela Bouneva Elza, Simon Fraser University

Di-versify: Further Testimony to that which Cannot Be Ascertained

"The reason for writing poetry is that poetry knows more than those who write it." Robert Bringhurst (2002)

"Poetry is thinking," reminds Bringhurst (2002), it is "a quality or aspect of existence," and "poems are the tips of the iceberg afloat on the ocean of poetry." Bringhurst looks at the composing of a poem as "a way of leaving the self behind and getting involved in something larger." Why not practice this from within philosophy which is dedicated to the big questions? Even more poignant are Bachelard's words, "Poetry forms the dreamer and his world at the same time" (1969). The poem for me is the witnessing of a soul in its becoming, where it explores its world on the edge of the breath of another, be that other a person, rock, or tree. "Then the thing becomes itself in the excitement of human consciousness" (Lilburn, 1997). As a young student I was put off poetry by my teachers who taught it to me as metaphor, line breaks, alliterations, enjambments, et cetera. And I was overwhelmed with philosophy which seemed abstract, unrelated to what I cared about. Now that I publish in both literary and academic worlds, I have become acutely aware of separations. Why separate the heart from the mind, the left from the right? Our world is separate enough. Now is a time to open the parentheses, to integrate. To heal. To make it whole. In the session I share my poetry with which I evoke, provoke, invoke, explore and enact how I live poetically in the midst of philosophy and how this is a political act.

Presentation B

Deirdre Kessler, University of Prince Edward Island, The Writers' Union of Canada, PEI Writers' Guild

Rearranging the Sky

The poetic process begins with a jump to the left, then a step to the right, followed by hands on hips and knees in tight. After time warping, sharpen pencil. Deirdre Kessler will talk about and read examples of her narrative and image-based poems that arise from very different sources—from the liminal and the quotidian.

Presentation C

Peter Hay, University of Tasmania

'The Poetics of Island Place' Revisited: Introducing Cold Island Poetry

The 1998 Mauritius Declaration, affirming the global significance of small islands, includes this imperative: “that islanders speak, and others hear, of the unique and positive cultural experiences of island living through literature and other forms of creative expression”. In this paper I outline some of the easements and some of the difficulties inherent in the practice of literature—specifically poetry—within small islands far from the planet's self-appointed cultural hubs. I identify some of the factors—recurrent themes within manifold island-specific particularities—that characterise island-engaged poetry, and use this to introduce a project upon which I am presently at work—an anthology of poetry from the world's cool/cold climate islands.

10:30-11:00 Break

11:00-12:00

Panel Presentation

Godfrey Baldacchino, Laurie Brinklow, Brent MacLaine, & John McIntyre, University of Prince Edward Island

The Intersection between Island Materiality and Metaphor

The ready resort to island metaphors, possibly culminating in islands as metaphors, reflects a widespread disposition towards a detachment from the material and physical; an increasing communion with the symbolic and the virtual appears to be moving in step with this progressive deterritorialization. And yet, while so many celebrate the collapsing of time and space induced by globalization, it is the same global forces that suggest a reawakening and rediscovery of place and context. This panel invites an investigation of such apparently conflicting thematics in the context of 'island poetics' and politics.

12:00-1:00: Lunch

1:00-2:30

Presentation A

Susan Walsh, Mount Saint Vincent University

Mindfulness and Poetry/Poetic Inquiry: A Performance/Workshop

In a performance/workshop I explore the ways in which the practice of mindfulness—"keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality" (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1976, p. 11)—can inform poetic inquiry. Mindfulness is characterized by attention to the breath and non-judgemental awareness. Klein (1995) notes that mindfulness is a different "subjective state", a different way of being and knowing for many of us in the Western world. The performance/workshop is based on the premise that poetry and poetic inquiry also have the potential for being and knowing in a different way through purposeful focus and attentiveness to rhythms such as that of the breath. This work is related to the questions: How does poetry act as a mode of perception, meaning-making, and way of knowing? How and what do researchers/poets/audience come to know through poetry/poetic inquiry?

The performance/workshop has three main intertwining threads: 1) breathing practices and (minimal) physical movements; 2) brief performances of original poetry and insights about mindfulness and attention culled from writers such as Klein (1995, 1997) and Thich Nhat Hanh (1976) and Canadian educators such as Bai (2001) and Ng (2000a, 2000b); and, 3) meditations on some of these words and some individual and collaborative writing. This forms the basis of a culminating discussion about poetry/poetic inquiry and mindfulness.

Presentation B

Alexandra Fidyk, Pacifica Graduate Institute

Visitor, Host & Chrysanthemum: Following the Way of Haiku in Daily Life

They spoke no word,
The visitor, the host,
And the white chrysanthemum.

"[I]n poetry" writes Jane Hirshfield, "a landscape is never only outer, it is also a portrait of a state of soul" (1998, p. 12). Understood as aesthetic mindfulness, haiku is a form of courtesy in Japan which signifies "nothing." Haiku is like "a polite host who permits you to make yourself at home" and who asks nothing of you (Barthes cited in Minh-ha, 1991, p. 214). Indeed, Chiyo-ni, a Buddhist nun and haiku master was said to have lived haikai no michi (the way of haiku); she used haiku as a *aisatus* (greeting) to others and to Nature in her everyday life by staying open to the present moment.

Good haiku captures a moment of awareness where mind and heart are one—a kind of engaged presence with self and the world. In this presentation, through attendance to haiku and image, the writings of Chiyo-ni, Basho, Li Po and others, I explore "haiku-mind" as a way of seeing and being in the world. To cultivate haiku-mind is to re-turn to

a knowing that there is no separation between the mundane and the sacred, that to live with the flow of life is to maintain a dialogical quality with all things. This approach is central to both contemplative traditions and Jungian psychotherapy techniques for it leads to the calming of the ego so the unconscious can emerge and be integrated with the conscious in a transcendent third. Creative haiku represents a healing union of intuition and sensation, past and future, and mind and body; haiku is a way to live with greater clarity, compassion and awareness.

Presentation C

Kate Galvin & Les Todres, Bournemouth University

Kindling Audience Participation: Carrying Forward 'Embodied Interpretations'

We offer an experiential process that engages the audience in participative ways with poetically re-presented research findings. As qualitative researchers in the health and social care field we are particularly interested in how poetry and research come together to advance knowledge. In developing 'embodied interpretation', a novel way of re-presenting research findings, (Todres & Galvin, 2008) we have become increasingly interested in the challenge of how audiences receive such poetically orientated findings and how they 'carry forward' what they come to evocatively know. We offer some examples of embodied interpretations from our own research, engage the audience in a guided contemplative process influenced by 'focusing' (Gendlin), and facilitate a collectively created 'embodied interpretation' inspired by the interactive form of Japanese Renga. The session closes with a conversation and reflection amongst participants about what this experience tells us about the question of what it means to live and engage in the world poetically.

2:30-3:00: Break

3:00-4:30

Presentation A

Rachel Larabee, OISE/University of Toronto

(En)Compassing Heart: Processing through Poetry

In my development and identification as a poet, social activist, co-creator of a youth-led, non-profit organization (POR AMOR Community Enhancement Initiatives) and academic, I have come to use words that form my poetry and poetry has used words to form that which becomes me. The emotion that generates my poetry moves me in a dynamics between head and heart, in a dialogue that births inspiration and action together. Carl Leggo (2001) contends that poetry makes room for creative responsibility to emerge in ways that allow artful, poetic expressions to reflect and process the

emotional and passionate undercurrents of experience. In my spoken word performances I use poetry to create an inspirational space of connectivity amongst response-able individuals gathered in common appreciation of the power of word art to weave meaning into the everyday. Poetry as an art form of creative expression provides space for a merging of the multiple meaning making that develops out of my work. As a form of inquiry, it helps me explore the resonate responses I use to engage the world. The performance of my poetry provides meaningful opportunity for me to embody the spirit of what I know on both personal and academic levels.

In the session I share pieces of poetry. Using the spaces between the poems I explain the important function my poetry plays in articulating an authentic representation of me in my work.

Presentation B

Kimberly Dark, California State University

Revealing the Contours of Gender via Poetic Representations of the Female Every-day

In this session I explore gender privilege through three poems: "Public Woman," "Effort to be Liked" and "Roadside, Perris CA". Through a symbolic interactionist lens, reality and meaning are mutually constructed through small interactions and language. Poetry and poetic performance are ideal media for communicating about the body and gendered experiences because the audience's usual defenses about gender are suspended during the "entertainment." These poems seek to inspire a critical awareness of gender through emotion-provoking auto-ethnographic experience and humor. These poems position the poet/performer as a gendered-being-making-meaning in communication with the audience. Poetry prompts an emotional re-living and re-framing of everyday events so that the contours of gendered experience come into view. In the session I do not intend to reify a gender binary—to look for "the truth" of gendered interactions. Rather, the poems complicate gendered experience through the experience of a female, queer poetic researcher.

Presentation C

Kedrick James, University of British Columbia

Writing Post-Person

Taking concerns for originality in writing and turning them upside down, writing post-person posits a vital, new understanding of poet-teacher-researcher in maintaining the literary relationship between people and the information environments they inhabit. I explore the art of the poet as cultural recycler, presenting results from a sixteen-month study using poetic inquiry to critically analyze the personal world of the writer in times of automated mass-address and informational excess. In particular, I use poetic inquiry as a remedial approach to info-waste in networked systems of online literate correspondence. I focus on the contemporary problem of spam, or unsolicited bulk and commercial email

and net abuse, in order to re-contextualize this juridical-technical problem from a personal and literary perspective. Spam poetry, or spoetry, enacts a kind of cybernetic dredging of data to extract and recycle meaning po/e/tential from robotically generated texts as they flow, encoded, through networked postal systems. Using cut-ups, acrostics, mesostics, and other chance generated techniques, I present examples of textual experiments to explicate a schematization of formal randomization in chance operations as a means of arraying various qualitative research practices from an experimental poetics perspective. Using these poetically-personalized, robotic spam texts I have created a multimedia performance meant to convey the dynamic state of post-personal correspondence with attention to how experimental poetics can be applied to everyday, automated, digital literacies to increase language awareness, stimulate student creativity and at the same time act as a barometer of linguistic and literary values in cyberspace.

5:30-9:00: Lobster Supper

Stanley Bridge Resort

Open Mic Celebration of Creative Works

Open to all Symposium Participants

Sunday, October 18, 2009—Mackenzie Theatre, Charlottetown

9:00-10:30

Presentation A

Sarah MacKenzie, Bucknell University

Intimate Engagements: A Poetic Rendering of the Pedagogy of Touch

As artists, (re)searchers, and educators, we often find ourselves in isolation, searching through the mazes of confused perspectives of relationship, self and other. We write, speak, perform, listen and reflect yet, as Boler (2000) notes, self-reflection many not be enough to lead to self-transformation; or even further, a living pedagogy of praxis cannot exist without vulnerability, thoughtfulness and sensuality between selves as they become fully present to place and Other. Sameshima (2007) remarks through poetry, "Intellectual conversation / community and conversation are not enough / We must know our location in relation to each other / we must touch" (p. 108). Yet this touch is so often is viewed as something violent, perverted, an invasion that must be avoided and many of us remain in isolation, fearful of the unknown or the inscriptions (Davies) that so readily etch themselves upon our bodies when we open ourselves up. Opening, we become vulnerable, we risk becoming the image we have spent so much time trying to escape. Within this poetic rendering, I share a story of communal becoming within a literacy methods course for pre-service teachers. Through poetry my students and I become vulnerable and aware as we involve ourselves in deep and engaged dialogue through a

poetic pedagogy of touch. It is the interactions that arise from this intimate space, that invite a new dimension of praxis and possibility within our understandings of what it means to teach, learn, and relate to one another and the world.

Presentation B

Nancy Davis Halifax, York University

The Seeping Walls of Memory: Home/less/ness, Poiesis, and Poetic Inquiry

To be a poet is to practice sitting in front of memory, the ashes and embers. This paper is about the moral consequences of abandoning the subjects of our perception, a question that has long preoccupied my work. Norman Denzin (1999, 2006) provides me with insight about ethnography and the inclusion of the self. He reminds me of the messiness of contemporary research when we are creatively engaged. He reminds me that every talk I give is more than a talk; it embodies and enacts knowledge. I perform the knowledge that I have received so that we will have a "more just, democratic, and egalitarian society" (Kincheloe & McLaren in Denzin, 2006, p. 422). This work is one of affective and lyrical inquiry. My fingers sigh, arms extend above my head, grasping articulate air. Affect is the way of being in the midst of thought. Affective inquiry brings "forth ghosted bodies and the traumatized remains of erased histories" (Ticento Clough, p. 3). My tongue thickens as I think through possibilities of words, of what I have to convey. As researchers we are used to talking about the lives of others; there is a hollow echo surrounding our own lives. And so in this work I connect my story to that of others knowing there is a history of homelessness that is shared.

I ask you who walks by poems
Like you walk by homeless girls
To attend.
Wipe the seeping walls of memory for drops I gather on rags.

Then a rising.
Wring these waters into a cup,
I drink.

Presentation C

Kathryn Ricketts & Lynn Fels, Simon Fraser University

BodyHeat Surveillance: Performing Technology in Poetic Spaces of Surveillance, Encounter, and Intimacy

We introduce participants to the poetic spaces of surveillance and intimacy through an embodied encounter with technology. In the encounter, dancer and videographer engage in a ten-minute inquiry to explore the collapsing borders between observer and the

observed, the researched and the researcher, the poetry and the poet. Improvisational dance inquiry becomes a place of dynamic possibility where the invisible and visible become exposed: What is tacit in our understanding and knowing of the body becomes disrupted with new meanings. This engagement provokes conversations around visual, poetic, and performative exploration, moments of encounter, issues of intimacy and surveillance, and calls attention to metaphor and metonym that are found in the interface between movement and technology. We engage audience members with free writing and readings in immediate response to the performance. This presentation invites a witnessing that is itself a new poetic inquiry, eliciting new interpretations of poetic spaces through embodied engagement. The intention of the presentation is to provoke a new questioning of the role of body and technology in the creation of poetic spaces to evoke the "heat" within poetic spaces of encounter, surveillance, intimacy, and retreat.

10:30-11:00: Break

11:00-12:00: Closing Session