


Editorial

A poem is like a butterfly. A moment seeds itself inside us. A memory. An experience when we saw, we felt, perhaps even, we knew. It touches deep in us. Deeper than words. And something begins, in that inner space. Something that is uniquely ours to speak of ... There is a poet in all of us. However unknown or neglected that part of us may be, it is there often just waiting for the right conditions to present themselves. (Ramsay, 2009, pp. 1–3)

Poetry concisely registers on the nerves the whole skein of human emotions. It harrows, enthralls, awes, dazzles, confides ... The soul is the depth of our being and poetry is one means of sounding that depth ... A poem doesn't wile away time; it engages our fleetingness and makes it articulate. It seizes and shapes time. (Wormser & Cappella, 2000, p. xiii)



In this exciting and seventh issue of LEARNIng Landscapes on poetry and education, our contributors make these quotations come alive. Through their voices we are propelled into memories, reflections, connections and understandings—embodied nuances of poetic possibilities.

Our wonderful array of commentaries from outstanding poets and poet educators weaves together a tapestry of poetic thought and experiences that provides an excellent backdrop for what follows. Dr. Maya Angelou, renowned poet and writer, a “phenomenal woman,” and the Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, describes in an interview how at a young age, with the support of her grandmother and brother, poetry became her lifeline to the world around her. Poetry literally gave her a voice with

which to speak and to break out of the silence to which she had withdrawn to escape the darkness that had enveloped her early years. Dr. Patrick Dias, Emeritus Professor of Education at McGill University and well known for his longtime contribution to the teaching of poetry, argues that poetry is the “sustaining genre of our literary tradition” and wonders why, and for so long, poetry has been relegated to the margins of the curriculum, and even when included, is frequently incorporated in stilted and disengaging ways. He offers helpful suggestions for change. Dr. Corrine Glesne, a former Professor at the University of Vermont and currently an independent educator, researcher, and author, explores her journey of poetic inquiry illustrating how increasingly researchers have turned to both “found” poetry (using the words of others) and “generated” poetry (using their own words) to gain insights into and to represent their work (Butler-Kisber, 2010). These narrative and embodied forms of research produce different and important understandings in inquiry. Sophie Hillcoat, an eleven-year-old student attending elementary school in Montreal and a budding poet, discusses in her interview how the poet within us emerges when given space, time, opportunity, and encouragement. She talks cogently about her poetic process and provides excellent suggestions for other young poets in the making. Jane Hirshfield is another renowned poet who has taught in a variety of disciplines. For five years she was a poet-teacher in the California Poets in the Schools program. She discusses the “three keys” she believes are necessary for “opening the gates” of poetry to young writers. The first is the passion of the teacher, which when communicated to students, fires their imaginations. The second is freedom of the mind which encourages exploration without pre-determined limitations. The third is the invitation to write where she provides some innovative ways to get students engaged by letting their imaginations and creativity lead the way. Dr. Laurel Richardson is a poet, a sociologist, and a Professor Emeritus at The Ohio State University. In the early 1990s, her use of found poetry in qualitative research had a dramatic impact on the field. While poetry had been used in research circles before then, it was Richardson who moved it into the mainstream and opened the doors for others to follow. In this commentary she provides a poetic overview of her journey through academia and illustrates the instructive function of poetic memoir. John Stewig, who is the Director of the Center for Children’s Literature at Carthage College in Wisconsin, and a longtime teacher of language arts and children’s literature at both the elementary and university level, shows with examples how poetry can be used in pivotal ways to develop early literacy learning.

The first group of authors in this issue turns to poetry as a means of life-writing or self-study. Carl Leggo is a poet and Professor at the University of British Columbia. He weaves together poetry and text to illustrate the importance of knowing the self and how poetry in its poignancy, simplicity, and ambiguity, provides an

ideal vehicle for this work. Sheila Stewart is a poet, an adult educator and a Ph.D. student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. By letting fragments of poetry infuse her text, she shows how she uses her poetry to explore relationships and delve more deeply into her understanding of her voice and self. Ahava Shira is a poet and recent recipient of a doctorate from the University of British Columbia. Using poems, photographs and texts in a “loving inquiry,” she explores her life journey as it moved from a place of pain to places of serenity, tranquility, and gentleness—at one with nature, other, and the self. Cynthia Morawski, an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Carleton University in Ottawa, illustrates how thoughtful teaching emerges from a thorough “mapping” of the self. Her poetic/photographic inquiry portrays the beauty in the dailyness of life, and provides a pause to live and teach poetically. Margaret Dobson is a Ph.D. student in the Faculty of Education at McGill University. Margaret transforms her childhood memories into poetry. She discusses how this unlocks and conveys the “invisible,” “immeasurable,” “intrinsic,” and “essential elements of education.” In so doing she argues for knowing thoroughly the self for authoring a poetics of education.

Mandrone, Molnar, and Leavy use poetic inquiry in their research with others. April Madrona is a Ph.D. student in the Art Education Department at Concordia University in Montreal. After discovering the compelling nature of found poetry in research, she relates how she was catapulted back to her early experiences of creating poems and became inspired to work with her young participants to gather narrative field texts and transform these into found poetry. She suggests this produces a “less filtered” way of knowing and understanding for both the researcher and the participants. Tim Molnar is an Assistant Professor in curriculum and instruction at the University of Saskatchewan. Molnar builds on the philosophy of Derrida and Levinas and describes how he used found poetry to help remove the distance of difference between a group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators. Found poems allowed him to return recursively to his research and to retain participant voices and their cultural beliefs at the forefront. Patricia Leavy is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts. She discusses how she used a variation of found poetry to produce a “tri-voiced poetic” approach to her research to include participant and researcher voices, as well as those from literature, to represent the complexity of the inquiry process and to reach a wide variety of audiences.

Guiney Yallop and Cappella provide an excellent transition from the world of self-study and other research into the world of poetry in education. They each show in wonderful detail how poetry is sculpted from its birth to product while tracing the creative process. John Guiney Yallop is a poet and Assistant Professor in the

School of Education at Acadia University. He gives unusual insight into the research/thesis process by opening up to scrutiny how he crafted two evolving poems through a number of iterations that were scaffolded by his supervisor, others, and his own reflective process. David Cappella is an Associate Professor of English at Central Connecticut State University. He examines the poetry revision process, from “impulse” to words and then how a poem is subsequently altered over time. He illustrates that the creative process is shaped profoundly by re-visioning, reflecting, exploring, distancing, and risking. He concludes that the “miracle” of poetry is usually the result of a birthing process and not a particular eureka moment.

The work of the final cluster of authors, Sze, Wiebe, Pasquin, Gannon and Nguyen, MacKenzie, and Tracey turns to the teaching of poetry. Gillian Sze is a poet and a Ph.D. student at the University of Montreal. She suggests ways to debunk the stereotypical notions of poetry held by young students and to free them up to risk, explore, and play with language. Sean Wiebe is an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Prince Edward Island. Wiebe describes how his encounters with poetic inquiry inspired him to let go of teaching poetry units in secondary school. He replaced them with an inquiry approach that included creating and exchanging poems with other students and taking ownership of the creative process. Wiebe argues that with agency in the poetic process, the students were moved to more democratic and critical perspectives that also may extend agency beyond the walls of a classroom. Lesley Pasquin is poet, a former elementary school principal, and an instructor in the Faculty of Education at McGill University. She believes strongly that poetry matters and that undergraduate education students need to develop a passion for poetry by “breathing in, and breathing out” poetry. She illustrates with examples how she uses her passion, poems and prompts to inspire and build confident teachers and lovers of poetry. Susanne Gannon is a Senior Lecturer of English education and Diem Chi Nguyen is an M.A. student in secondary teaching. They are both at the University of Western Sydney. Together they show how students were able to take fragments from their reflective journals about student teaching experiences and translate these into meaningful and insightful poems that pushed the reflection further. Sarah MacKenzie is an Assistant Professor at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. She describes how she has built on her own reflective process in writing poetry to engage students in her literacy methods. They use the creation of Haiku poems to cull meaning from their course readings. She suggests that this process “creates space for varied perspectives and possibilities.” Shelley Tracey is a poet and teacher educator in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She shows how she risked and overcame her reluctance to share her identity as a poet with her education students. Her merging of the personal and professional inspired and engaged her students in poetic practice and in deeper and more critical reflection.

Last, but certainly not least, it is fitting to end this issue with a contribution from David Lewkowich who is a Ph.D. student in the Faculty of Education at McGill University. He turns to Tom Wayman's poem, "Did I Miss Anything?" to act as a prompt for critical reflection and a philosophical discussion about education. Lewkowich suggests and shows how a poetic encounter may unsettle and disrupt, and generate agency, voice, and possibility. His article harkens back to the opening commentary of this issue by Dr. Maya Angelou.

References

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Lynn Butler-Kisber (B. Ed., M. Ed., McGill University; Ed.D., Harvard University), a former elementary school teacher, is a Professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education in the Faculty of Education at McGill where she is Director of the Centre for Educational Leadership and the McGill Graduate Certificate in Educational Leadership Programs. She has served as Director of Undergraduate Education Programs, Director of Graduate Studies and Research in Educational Studies, Associate Dean in Education, and Associate Dean and Dean of Students, and on numerous committees inside the University and in the educational milieu. Just recently she was appointed to the Board of Directors of St. George's Schools. Winner of the 1997 YWCA Women of Distinction award (Education) and 2008 Canada Post award (Educator), she teaches courses on language arts, qualitative research, and teacher education. She has a particular interest in feminist/equity and social justice issues, and the role of arts-informed analysis and representation in qualitative inquiry. Her current research and development activities include the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Efficacy Study, as well as projects with Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, England and Indonesia, and teachers and school leaders in Quebec. The focus of this work is on literacy learning, student engagement, leadership, professional development, and qualitative methodologies and she has published and presented extensively in these areas. Most recent is her book entitled, *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Formed Approaches*, published by Sage.

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