



Poetic Breath

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Abstract:

This special issue of JCACS amplifies and intersects multiple themes that challenge our capacity to access air. We invited research presented at the 2019 International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry, as well as new poetic inquiry that engages, plays with, ignites and challenges notions of action in a time of legislated inaction, work that counteracts silencing the breath inside our bones. We looked for oxygen where there was none. The editors of this special issue all use poetry as a form of inquiry in their lives and academic work, and we are delighted to share the work of our colleagues from the poetic inquiry community. We believe that this issue demonstrates the value of using poetic inquiry in academia to highlight the voices of those underrepresented and thus is a vital contribution to the research community.

Keywords: editorial; poetic inquiry; breath; air; Indigenous; land; ethnicity; multiculturalism; identity; race; ancestry; silence

Le souffle poétique

Résumé :

Ce numéro spécial de RACEC amplifie et croise de multiples thèmes qui remettent en question notre capacité à accéder à l'air. Nous avons invité des recherches présentées au Symposium international sur l'enquête poétique 2019, ainsi que des nouvelles enquêtes poétiques qui engagent, jouent avec, enflamment et défient les notions d'action à une époque d'inaction légiférée, un travail qui contrecarre le silence du souffle à l'intérieur de nos os. Nous avons cherché de l'oxygène là où il n'y en avait pas. Les rédacteurs/trices de ce numéro spécial utilisent tous la poésie comme une forme de recherche dans leur vie et leur travail universitaire, et nous sommes ravis de partager le travail de nos collègues de la communauté de recherche poétique. Nous pensons que ce numéro démontre la valeur de l'utilisation de l'enquête poétique dans le monde universitaire pour mettre en lumière les voix de ceux qui sont sous-représentés et constitue donc une contribution essentielle à la communauté des chercheurs.

Mots clés : éditorial; enquête poétique; souffle; air; autochtone; terre/Terre; ethnicité; multiculturalisme; identité; race; ascendance; silence

We cried and sobbed and wept and bled tears. But when we were finished all we could do was continue living.

(Nnedi Okorafor, 2010, p. 31)

The authors whose work appears in this issue of JCACS come from many lands and bring their own diverse, lived experiences, as individuals and community members, to their writing. As guest editors, we acknowledge with gratitude each of the authors and the land they write from, on or about. We also acknowledge all Indigenous Peoples on those lands, whether they are named or not named in this publication. Though imperfect, we hope this acknowledgment of land and people will be accepted by those to whom we offer it.

On June 29th, 2020, The New York Times published an article surveying over 70 cases in the United States where people have died in police custody after uttering the phrase, "I can't breathe" (Baker et al., 2020). The brutal killings of Black people such as Eric Garner, George Floyd, Ahmad Aubrey, Breonna Taylor, and countless others, have caused indignation across the world, prompting us to frame White supremacy and police brutality as a theft of breath. Indeed, the post-Covid era has been a time of reckoning for many people, as widespread wildfires and other environmental disasters have encouraged artists and academics everywhere to reconsider the preciousness of breath. The tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people, along with the discovery of unmarked graves of Indigenous children, has garnered increased attention and urgency across Canada and the United States.

In building upon the momentum gained during the 2019 International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry (ISPI) and its theme of honouring the International Year of Indigenous Languages, this special issue of JCACS amplifies and intersects multiple themes that challenge our capacity to access air. We invited research presented at the 2019 ISPI, as well as new poetic inquiry that engages, plays with, ignites and challenges notions of action in a time of legislated inaction, work that counteracts silencing the breath inside our bones. We looked for oxygen where there was none.

The editors of this special issue all use poetry as a form of inquiry in their lives and academic work, and we are delighted to share the work of our colleagues from the poetic inquiry community. We believe that this issue demonstrates the value of using poetic inquiry in academia to highlight the voices of those underrepresented and thus is a vital contribution to the research community. In "The Knot Itself: Tangling With Multiculturalism", Sonja Boon and Deirdre Connolly, two authors of different backgrounds, use poetry to interrogate complicated notions of ethnicity, multiculturalism and identity in current day Canada. In "Signs of Life: Affect, Language and (Extra)Humanness", Adrian Downey and Gonen Sagy examine poetry about racial microaggressions to consider how language helps us stay human in an era of amplified hatred. In "A Poetic Inquiry Into (Re)Connecting With the Language of the Land: Walking With *dij ndéh*", Anita Lafferty uses poetry to explore the language of her Dene ancestors in order to reconnect with the land around her. In "Dot-Dot-Dot: A Feminist Critical Poetic Inquiry of Silence in Teacher Candidates' Responses to Teaching Sexual Assault Narratives", Amber Moore uses poetry to explore the impact of silence in testimonies of abuse. And

in "Ordinary Things: A Reflection on Race and Capital in the Pandemic", Lana Parker examines topics of systemic racism by synthesizing her experiences with the writings of author Arundhati Roy.

The poet-researcher Camea Davis (2018) states that poets yield a particular power to "resist passivity, and critique the prescribed politics of their lived experiences" (p. 124). It is critical in the current state of a pandemic and of civil uprisings, where large segments of humanity are struggling for breath, for this poetic power to be harnessed to bring to the centre and amplify the voices of the marginalized. Poetic inquiry offers us a means to be bold in a fragile time (Prendergast et al., 2009; Faulkner & Cloud, 2019). It is a way to paint a concrete depiction of a world that appears to be falling apart. It is a way to brand complex political messages to stake out and occupy a new space when life says we cannot.

In addition to the contributors who waited patiently while we navigated a drawn-out pandemic, we would like to thank Pauline Sameshima and Holly Tsun Haggarty for their tireless work in bringing this issue forward. We are also thankful for the reviewers who provided valuable insights, and for the teams who contributed to its development and publication: Assistant Editors, Rita Forte, Carol Lee and Suzanne Windsor-Liscombe; and Production Team Members, Stephanie Bartlett, Erin Crawford, Mark Currie and Mohamed Kharbach. Thank you all for your dedication and hard work. And finally, we are grateful for John Guiney Yallop's support and preliminary work towards this publication that brought us all together. Thank you for your guidance and continued commitment to poetic inquiry.

All Our Relations.

"Let me find my talk." (Rita Joe, 1989, p. 28)

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