



A REVIEW OF: POETIC INQUIRY: ENCHANTMENT OF PLACE

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Abstract: A review of *Poetic Inquiry: Enchantment of Place*, an edited book by Pauline Sameshima, Alexandra Fidyk, Kedrick James, and Carl Leggo, and published by Vernon Press, 2017.

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The word “place” will conjure up different things to different people. Place can both be literal or figurative – a geographical location or a state of mind. I welcomed a book on poetic inquiry like the thirsty might a proffered cup of water. Those of us who read poetic inquiry and especially those who use it as a methodology will be grateful for this volume. While the bright cover evokes a “rootedness” brilliant and vibrantly rendered by Darlene St. Georges, what lies therein is varied and colorful, and is representative of many experiences, and many ways of being a poet/researcher in the world.

An enlightening poem by Monica Prendergast (p. 11) employs the method itself providing the perfect context for the wide variety of works contained therein. The book is divided into several sections covering method, place, family, healing, media and finally pedagogy. The book, as discussed by Kedrick James in “what lovely words might also mean,” (p. 24) commemorates 10 years since the *First International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry* held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. In this piece alone, we get somewhat of a panoramic view of poetic inquiry over the years, how it began, where it is now, where it might be going.

The underlying message is that poetic inquiry has not only grown exponentially in readership, writers using the methodology and acceptance in the academic environment, the future of the methodology is blindingly bright and important. James astutely points out that poetic inquiry, though we think of it as new and innovative is, for all intents and purposes, “an ancient method of understanding the world” (p. 23). This helps to contextualize the practice as a way of not only making meaning, but to be able to express local and universal truth as one experiences it. But James makes a good (and necessary) distinction between the polemic that “separates rational and emotive methods” (p. 25).

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That distinction is made all too often, where instead of exemplifying research through poetic inquiry it is explained, justified, ripped apart, and poked with a long stick. This volume begins with a wonderful contextualization of poetic inquiry and its place in research, but then lets the pieces speak for themselves – and the array of subjects and the beyond creative ways in which they are handled is like a veritable feast. For me, some of the best pieces

were those that were *just* poetry, where I could read the words on the page, then sit with the poems and participate by adding my own layer of meaning and understanding.

This book is for anyone who loves research, poetry, poetic inquiry, and feels more than just an academic pull to their work. What this book offers is not only theory, evidence of practice, first hand accounts of process, research poetry and wonderful variety, but it shows a way in, through and around the possible in research. *Words matter*. How we use words to make meaning matters. What form those words arrive in and, by extension, how we receive them is the difference between understanding and alienation. Poetry elucidates when we want to humanize and distill human experience. Kedrick James sums it up nicely: “Perhaps uncertainty is the catalyst that turns attention to poetry as a way to find what we missed with out other approaches to understanding” (p. 26).

REFERENCES

Sameshima, P., Fidyk, A., James, K., & Leggo, C. (Eds.). (2017). *Poetic Inquiry: Enchantment of Place*. Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press.