



TRACING PATHS OF LOVE THROUGH POETIC INQUIRY

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Maya T. Borhani is currently completing a dissertation in Educational Studies at the University of Victoria, BC. Her thesis explores “living poetically” (Leggo, 2005a, p. 178) through the eyes of an older, single woman, and emphasizes research interests of poetic inquiry, autobio/ethnography, language and literacy, applied theatre, and place-centered pedagogies. <https://poetmayabel.wordpress.com/>

Abstract: In response to this call for poetic inquiries that speak the dynamism of an animate pluriverse, that honor what we hold sacred, and that might serve as medicine during these cataclysmic times, these poems-as-research offer a meditation on the power of love in myriad forms, to teach, inspire and sustain us. Weaving mythopoetic thought and imagery amongst everyday events and mundane realities, love surfaces as core currency. Evoking the wonder of children, and the love and care of teachers, mentors, and friends, these poems sing love in the world, and love *of* the world—the animated natural world, and the written wor(d)ld as expressive animation of what we love. Specifically, this poetic inquiry traces three synchronous veins of love in my life as they weave through my writing-as-research: love for my daughters (and the intractable wonder of childhood); love for a beloved teacher and mentor, American poet Robert Bly; and love as secular-spiritual awakening, the beating heart of social justice and personal/political activism. Tracings of love in our lives, etched and echoed through poetry as inquiry.

Keywords: poetic inquiry; models of love; synchrony; research poetry; poetic activism

Positionality

To begin, I offer my gratitude and respect to the Nisenan (Southern Maidu) and Wašiw (Washoe) people on whose traditional unceded territories I currently live and work, here on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains in Northern California. *Heo!*

I come to this research as a lifelong poet and educator, and recent returnee to the academy; I am in the final stages of completing a PhD in Educational Studies at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. I come from mixed immigrant (Iranian) and European settler (German, Swiss, Irish, and Scottish) ancestry, and have lived in California and Washington state most of my life, accented by fruitful years spent in British Columbia as a graduate student. My experience as an educator spans that of a homeschool parent, a teaching poet-in-the-schools (K-12), and a community college instructor in English literature, memoir, and public speaking. I was also a longtime stage manager and production assistant, dramaturge, and sometimes-choreographer for a youth Shakespeare company in the rural San Juan Islands of Washington state. This decade-plus of experience on the boards revealed a passion for educational theatre and applied drama (Prendergast & Saxton, 2013; 2016) that complements well my work as a poet and poetic inquirer. A lifetime of other performative practices also weaves through my educational and inquiry praxes: non-commercial community radio disc jockey, dancer, ritualist, closet musician, and singer. Additionally, a longstanding inquiry into relationships of place—human and other-than-human—fostered through years of homesteading in the mountains of California and on remote islands in the Salish Sea, has blossomed through my PhD studies into a more thorough embracement of place-centered pedagogies, deepening my own relationships with the land, and all my relations on/in it.

Autobiographical Life Writing and Poetic Inquiry

This poetic inquiry swirls up from ongoing autobiographical life writing (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009) and autoethnographic inquiry (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) into the art and pedagogy of “living poetically” (Leggo, 2005a, p. 178). Living poetically is both ethos and praxis, poetry embodied in our beings and actions. Walking this path in my life and work, I emulate Carl Leggo’s ideas on living poetically. These include dedicating myself to “live in language” (p. 178); that is, fearlessly, capriciously and capaciously, courageously and completely. Living poetically means leaning in to love (p. 180) in all our affairs, and fueling our poetry with love. Living poetically, I roam the “gardens and backyards” (p. 182) of my locale, where “I am learning to breathe with the heart’s rhythms as I seek to disclose and know again my location situated in *local geographical*

spaces that represent a *location for locution* in the bigger world” (p. 182, emphasis added). Receptively, living poetically—like poetry—invites and reminds me how “to be still” (p. 185), in tune with the oneness of all things; I grow quiet, return to listening, pay deeper attention. Living poetically teaches me “to live with trust” (p. 188), and “to laugh with indefatigable hopefulness” (p. 191), embodying an attitude of love even in the face of challenge, grief, or despair. Living poetically embodies a way of being, and a way of being in poetry and in pedagogy.

Life writing (as autobiographical inquiry) invites me to tell stories, to get personal, to connect the personal to the communal, and to honor the value of stories in education. I can weave academic texts with poetic or storied vignettes, write in tandem with others through intertwined narratives, and generally dance outside the margins of expected academic writing styles. For me, life writing blends well with poetic inquiry by creating a *mélange* of memoir style essays with complementary poems on similar themes.

Poetic inquiry (Owton, 2017; Prendergast, 2009, 2015, 2020; Vincent, 2018), an arts-based methodology that engages the use of poetry in its methods, invites me to poetic method and reverie at every stage of the inquiry process: in gathering data, in interpretation and analysis of that data, and as a way to present research findings. Poetry has the generative attunement (fascination) “to ‘crystallize’ and present findings in both aesthetic and accessible forms” (Prendergast, 2015, p. 683). Similarly, poetry offers an opportunity to honor emotional aspects of research inquiry, to tell writing-stories (Richardson, 2001), to winnow and/or craft differing threads of data in creative or unexpected ways. Poetry helps me think; like Laurel Richardson’s experiences with writing (2001), poetry is *how I know*. Through practicing poetic inquiry, I come to know myself and the world around me better; I seek to hear what the heart has to say and share that vulnerability; to animate *eros*, love, within inquiry processes and pedagogy.

Tracing Paths of Love through Poetic Inquiry

Evoking the wonder of children, and the love and care of teachers, mentors, and friends, these poems bespeak love in the world, and love *of* the world—the animated natural world, and the written wor(d)ld as expressive animation of what we love. Specifically, this poetic inquiry traces three synchronous veins of love in my life as they have woven through my writing-as-research: love for my daughters (and the intractable wonder of childhood); love for a beloved teacher and mentor, American poet Robert Bly; and love as secular-spiritual awakening, the beating heart of personal and social justice-political activism. Tracings of love in our lives, etched and echoed through poetry as inquiry.

Raising my two daughters as a single mother in rural places (islands off the coast of Washington state and remote mountains of Northern California), we were money-poor but spirit-rich. Love was our sustaining resource. While the girls were still young, I fell in to study with the unconventional American poet Robert Bly; like tumbling into love or a deep mythical well, unexpected wonders unfolded, excellent teachers arrived, and lifelong friendships were forged. Finally, poems of spiritual love and meditative wisdom arose in tracing lessons of love in spiritual study, and in personal-political activism. Poetry became both vehicle and voice for how the spiritual twines through the secular in our lives and awakens love's beating heart in the process.

These three synchronous streams of love flow abreast, concurrently, intertwining through my parenting, writing, and spiritual experiences. In this poetic inquiry, I explore these intertwining streams and their common themes of love and synchrony.

Synchrony in Poetic Inquiry

The word *synchrony*, as in “simultaneous action, development, or occurrence” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2022a), offers an invitation to wander in the rhizomatic overlap of three synchronous veins of love in my research and writing. “Synchronous”: “existing or occurring at the same time” (OED, 2022b), as in (for example) the orbit and rotation of celestial bodies in the sky. The orbital revolution of planets around the sun, satellites around planets, and the rotation of planets on their axes occur synchronously. This image of overlapping, intertwining circular paths of movement—celestial bodies in rotation and revolution—seems an apt metaphor for the path of love and the power of synchronicity: things happening, developing, at the same time; in proximal development or influence. Like the pull of gravity and the elevation of weightlessness; the vibration between the two.

I think I have always known that synchronicities signal a connection to the divine. Pay special attention; listen ever more carefully; this moment will be gone in an instant. This is how love beats time, too: a vibration radiates from the eye of synchrony, a whirling invisible force that draws us in. Sometimes we are so mesmerized—caught like hummingbirds in a state of “torpor” (Andreotti, 2016, p. 82)—that we're unsure what grips us, frozen and unable to respond. Other times, awakening, we instantly recognize love's vibration, “the force behind the force of the aesthetic, the erotic, the hilarious, the more-than-human, and the divine” (Andreotti, 2016, p. 88). We take flight again, more in sync with ourselves and the world; living in love.

A note on synchrony and poetic method: some of the poems in this suite emerged from that rarified synchrony of lived-experience and poem-arising that unfolds

indistinguishably, inseparably, one from another. Poem speaks as moment unfolds; a synchronous occurrence between body, mind, and lived experience. Not all poems emerge like this. I have found this kind of synchronous poetic encounter arrives unbidden—rarified within the writing life, and often reflective of something equally rarified in our lived experience. I believe such synchronously crafted poems, that sprout and fly in the same moment, are differently sourced than those poems which are written upon reflection after an event has already occurred. Attending to such occasions (which sometimes defy rational thought), a presence of being and becoming speaks insistently, and unfolds in writing. A synchrony of writer, writing, and world resonate as one.

If we are lucky, we *catch* such moments of lived experience and poetic inspiration, their almost magical synchronicity of word, time, essence and being. Like sociologist Kurt Wolff's (1972) phenomenological *surrender and catch* method, we cannot predict or anticipate what will arise; rather, from acute attentiveness and presence in the world (surrender), poems arise and speak themselves (catch) in synchronous flow with the world around us. As Monica Prendergast (2015) notes, this method is "uniquely suited to arts-based research in general and poetic inquiry in particular" (p. 682). In Wolff's words:

"Surrender" is synonymous with "being" or "experience of being." Its seminal meaning is cognitive love: whatever other meanings it may have flow from it. Among them are total involvement, suspension of received notion, pertinence of everything . . . To surrender means . . . to meet as immediately as possible whatever the occasion may be, that is . . . to meet it as much as possible in its originality, its itself-ness. (Wolff, 1972, p. 453)

We surrender to what is, catching what arises or remains. Surrender means letting go of perceived notions of time, necessity, external requirements, or what we think will show up. Only then are we ready to catch what surfaces, floats into view, and calls to us.

"Catch" is the cognitive, intellectual, existential result . . . of surrender, the beginning (*Anfang*) made in it But what is caught . . . what catching . . . means cannot be anticipated (otherwise surrender would not be as unconditional as it is) The experience recedes from the surrenderer like water from the net, and challenges him [*sic*] to explore it, to invent. (Wolff, 1972, pp. 453-454)

Like love, surrender must be unconditional. Likewise, catching is not a planned process (pedagogically or poetically). These are lifelong lessons in being; we are all in the learning of surrender and catch.

When least expected, often when we are not looking, these liminal states of being and writing (e)merge and (en)fold within profound moments of love in the world, yielding poems of synchrony and love. Rising from the deep unconscious to greet the light of day, these poems weave mythopoetic thought and imagery amidst everyday events and mundane realities, resting firmly in love as an ethos to live by. Riding a low-swinging branch on a gnarled old pine when my daughters were small, laughing in an attitude of love. Hearing a friend's adventures making homemade wine; tasting love. Watching my beloved mentor gaze, rapt, as the sitar plays, his fingers dancing in the dust mote laden air, pure love pouring from every cell. These poetic moments offer opportunities for restorative breaths, a curative balm for the heartaches and ills of the world; precious moments that sparkle with resilience, reminders of what we share in common over what sets us apart. Love, in its varied and storied forms, resonates in our lives as poets, teachers, and researchers, leaving tracings of love in our lives.

Love of Children

I raised my two children in rural places where a life “far from the madding crowd” (Hardy, 1874/2003) was within reach. There were trade-offs. The kind of jobs I was trained for were hard to find in these remote places, so I found ways to get by on less, believing that what my girls could learn living in the country was well worth the price of admission. My daughters grew up beneath the protective canopy of tall conifers, toes dug into sandy seashores and scrambling across rocky outcroppings; eagle, osprey, frog, and newt were their early companions and teachers. We grew our own food whenever possible, and made sure to spend lots of time outside, wandering and wondering. Living far from town bought us “the peace of wild things” (Berry, 2018), complement to my writing-wandering-inquiring need for quiet, solace, wide open spaces, and conversation with all of creation.

Home-schooling my daughters, I learned from them. They embodied freedom in all their movements, flowing with ease in their bodies. They came to understand gravity, the physics of motion, of pump and fly on an old wooden swing, of diving like an arrow through deep water, and floating on its glassy surface like a weightless leaf. As they grew, I was learning to see their wisdom in all our endeavors and came to better appreciate the beauty of a child-guided learning experience (Holt, 1971). We were learning together, in love.

The poems in this section are born of that love. The first two arose synchronously in the moments/experiences the poems describe; that is, as the girls and I were having these adventures, I heard (most of) the words of the poems in my head. I carry a little

notebook wherever I go for just this reason: to jot down (catch) droplets of inspiration as they fall. In such moments of poetic synchrony, surrendered to what is unfolding, perhaps love catches us.

To be clear, as a single mum living on limited resources, I was not always this present. When we were at home together, I could be stressed, distracted, busy juggling multiple tasks and responsibilities. Mama was often grumpy but, when we were out playing together in the wider world, I treasured these sparkling moments—mere moments—of relaxed love and connection. Perhaps that is why the poems arose so spontaneously, out of a relaxed state of mind and being. A state of love and synchrony?

The final poem in this section, *Filling Out the FAFSA*, materialized differently. It arose as resistance, as a way to reclaim sacred boundaries in our lives, inspired by love for my daughters and my faith in what I had taught them. In the midst of a system's simplistic summation of our family's worth, writing this poem helped me remember that love reigns supreme; that sometimes, things work out (whether from grace, magic, or miracle); that trust and faith are part of the process. (As Carl Leggo later repeatedly told me and all his graduate students, *Trust the process*). This poem calls on love—as faith—to see me through, focusing on a fractal beauty greater than mere mechanistic reduction.

The wisdom of a child—loving trust, profound insight—inspired delivery. The grace of synchrony to be awake to notice. Tracing floes of love in life and learning.

Sand Dollars

My daughter who is five tells me
 “there’s an infinity of sand dollars”
 out there in the mucky shallows of the bay,
 where water and friction transmute
 sand into pearls, clams squirt their juicy
 gasp to the surface from lives buried
 shelled, clustered in calcified houses
 under the tide’s tumultuous wash.
 Infinity. Where does this mystery of numbers
 a child’s infinite capacity for comprehension
 spring from—untamed, untethered
 to flash me with her knowledge—
 the very sunlight dazzled
 by the jewels she hauls in from the sea.

Elegant Angel

We're riding bronco on an overhanging tree
my girls and me,
Mount Shasta rising snowclad behind us
endless blue of California's mountains
and then the valley green
rolling out before us

when Petra informs me
she is the Elegant Angel
of this tree

Elegant Angel
I muse,
gratified
by this startling wisdom

and I am her
Elegant Angel,
she continues

humbling me
by the grace with which she sees me

Filling Out the FAFSA*

(*Free Application for Federal Student Aid, a form that must be filled out annually in order to apply for college loans through the U.S. Department of Education)

"If net worth is negative,
enter zero."
My daughter peers over my shoulder,
knows the weight of what can't
be measured or held:
open sky, heartache
new leaves unfurling
to a dying sun.
She factors endless love into the equation;
I type zero, press Enter.

She qualifies for maximum aid
 at prestigious university,
 follows her dream into art's
 wild wooly world
 like I followed mine,
 climbing into hills
 where I studied the masters
 forgot to worry about the future.
 Some days I ponder
 what lacking a net worth brings,
 the trade-offs gained
 in this wandering life.
 I bet Han Shan
 didn't have a net worth either,
 climbing mountains, writing poems,
 mind relaxed as plum blossoms
 floating downstream.

Love of Great Teachers

A series of fortunate (and strangely synchronous) events unfolded in my life from falling in with the American poet Robert Bly: career doors opened, artistic and spiritual connections flowered, and my poetic and teaching life catapulted to new levels. Over many years of getting to know Robert, a great love (deep fondness, affection, and immense respect) grew for him—that of student for mentor, or child for a beloved parent. I have written many poems to this beloved teacher; at one point, I started sending him a poem every year for his birthday (see Borhani, 2021). These next three poems describe the love—alignment of heart, mind, and *métier*—that unfurls when one finds a great teacher, mentor, and guide as storied, intellectually curious, and motivated by love as Robert Bly. His engagement with the mythopoetic imagination was staggering to witness and partake in; inspirational, generative, and communally fed in reciprocal call and response.

Born on December 23, 1926, Bly was ninety-four when he died on November 17, 2021. Accordingly, the third poem in this sequence is an imagining of a birthday out of time that has not occurred and will never occur in time and space. Synchrony, however, like love, transcends and permeates fixed assignations, so anything might be possible.

I knew it was a halcyon time, that it would not last forever. While it did, we exchanged correspondence (actual paper letters), he met and inquired after my young

daughters, and encouraged me in my pursuit of graduate studies that had begun so much later in life. I would meet him when he was in Vancouver for a reading or workshop, and we would go out afterwards for wine and dessert (me), a late dinner for him. We would talk about Rumi in translation, the state of the world, how my studies were progressing, and discuss mutual acquaintances or beloved friends (whom I'd met through attending his conference). His interest in my studies and writing soothed an old wound sourced from my blood father's patent disapproval of my call to poetry. With Robert, I found love and support for my way of being in the world, and a key encouragement every child (even a grown one) needs: the belief that our gifts and talents are vital, even necessary.

The synchrony in my mentee relationship with Robert Bly flourished like a thousand birds loosed at once, so many literary and spiritual connections made, so much support for my writing practice, so many artists, poets, writers, musicians, scholars met and embraced, a community of raggle-taggle dreamers committed to the pursuit of love in the world. A family we had known our whole lives but never met before, finally reunited. With the strength of his tall frame, broad shoulders (signature of his Norwegian-Minnesota farm stock), shock of white hair atop his head, and his largesse of leadership and regal comportment, a comparison arose to the great white bear King Valemon (a story Bly often told). Following Bly's lead through cavernous forests and over steep mountain peaks of a socially-politically fraught global passage, we learned firsthand the meaning of, "Have you ever sat so softly; have you ever seen so clearly?" (White Bear King Valemon, 2016, para. 8), the burning question the bear asks of the king's three daughters in the story. The correct answer (in the story and in our experiences under Bly's tutelage) is *No, never have we ever seen so clearly, nor have we ever sat so softly* as when riding across storied poetic landscapes on the back of this great white bear. Turning the eyes of story and poetry to our own lives, we practice what we learned at the feet of this eminent poet and mentor; we strive for beauty and sustenance in word and deed. Woven within this larger poetic inquiry on synchrony and love, these poems attempt to evoke some of my immense wonder at this great love with a revered poet and teacher.

So, here's to "old teachers" (Bly, 1999, p. 205; Borhani, 2021); the love they give and the love they leave behind, that resonates in space and time, filling our cups even after they are gone. I feel that I am "part of the *spaciousness* that Robert gave [us]" (Nils Peterson, personal communication, June 8, 2022). I linger with Robert's gifts of generosity and capaciousness; pensive and portal to inner and outer worlds, rooted in love of the wor(d)ld.

For Robert Bly, On the Occasion of His 85th Birthday

Such a dream, of kingfishers diving
 in wind-tossed cerulean seas,
 rakish crests aimed skyward
 like yours, wild white sails
 propelling us forward
 into the deep
 and halcyon days we spend with you
 rocking in our small boats
 on tawny waves of grief and desire.
 Linger with you,
 the chatter departs.
 The weight of ecstasy dwells in between
 the tide's tempestuous sway
 and the mystery of moonrise,
 a lost pearl swimming through so much sky,
 dark and inviting.
 Such luminous signs to guide us,
 like your hands dancing to the sitar's
 sinuous tones, a private symphony
 only your ten fingers know,
 conducting a score for the secret Friend
 hidden in the folds between every note.

***Listening to Grieg's "Peer Gynt, Suite 1"
 (To Robert Bly)***

Dear Robert, did you listen
 to this soaring primeval music
 on silent mornings
 when the white mantle
 lay deep on the land,
 working your translation
 of that (foolish) hero's journey
 (unknown) into the self
 and
 (nimble)

 back again?

Song for Robert's 100th Birthday

How did we get here so quickly,
this day in December
so close to the holy birth,
the return of the light,
our grief "admired in a thousand galaxies"¹
as we tumble through darkness and deep winter
under sighing eaves of the snow-weighted barn.
We are poor children awaiting one more word from our teacher's mouth
heads bare, tilted skyward
snow melting on our outstretched tongues
hands stuffed into warm mittens swirling with mystery
inside that scratchy woolen dark—
a golden light
itching to come out
as song

a song
not yet sung, already sung, always sung.
Hands dance in the dark, picking up Morse code
from the ancestors, messages from other times,
other realms, sparks into tomorrow
remembering other hands, gestures
and tentative speech.
A poem on the wind,
hitchhiker on a traveling moon.

All the years roll into one:
just yesterday you were sixty-five,
already seventy-four by the time I met you, turning
one hundred today, the day the horses escaped the corral
the acorn woodpecker boring hole after hole
into old joists supporting the barn, punching
acorn after acorn into each oblong-shaped hole,
perfectly placed, a Fibonacci sequence of
connect-the-dots for winter and dark days ahead.
Genius!
While the horses run free in the snow-covered field.

Love as Spiritual Meditation and Activism

The final poems in this *triskele*—these three interlocking spirals of poetic inquiry into synchrony and love—speak to a spiritual-meditative kind of love. These poems consider love as secular-spiritual awakening: a love found in spiritual presence, in engaged social-political activism and imaginative dreaming; beatific flashes amidst ordinary life. Whether through meditation, chopping wood, or picking up one's pen to write, an energy of love flows through these actions and the poems that arise from them. They express love of being alive, and a reciprocity of gladness. I think of Saraswati, Hindu goddess of education, music, and the arts, pictured playing her sitar in most images; love pours from her eyes. Perhaps these poems bestow that kind of love; as poetic inquiry, these poems seek to light a divine, ineffable spark that feeds the love in us all.

A longtime friend (and member of my extended Bly community) recently offered a lay sermon at the Unitarian Universalist Coastside Community fellowship in Half Moon Bay, California. Sourced from William Blake's visionary poetry and artwork, Tom Devine spoke on Blake's vision of building a spiritual Jerusalem (in the heart, in our communities); not hierarchical or authoritarian (run by the church), but one where *communitas*, love, and the divine imagination in all of us are organizing principles.

The Human Imagination IS God: but we forget who we really are and fall asleep. Sleep consists of taking things for granted: thinking that things can't be changed, either in ourselves or in the world. Accepting someone else's vision of things without questioning it. Falling into despair. Letting that fire in our souls go out, or at least go down to a state of merely smoldering. And our job, according to Blake, is to rekindle that fire, to wake up into our own vision, our own creativity, and ... to choose Hope over cynicism. (Devine, 2022)

Rekindling this fire in our souls tunes everything to a higher vibration; love radiates around (Johnson, 1985) more effortlessly, more abundantly when our internal fires are lit and fed.

Love and synchrony are all around us, enfolding and radiating all the time; but when we fall asleep, we forget or aren't aware of the sparkling magnificence all around and within us. Awakening involves beauty: noticing beauty, creating more beauty; this, in turn, feeds the love in our souls and the soul of the world. The following poems speak to that stirring, when we notice beauty anew, when love unfurls like a starry galaxy inside our hearts, connecting synchronous streams of spiritual love and meditative wisdom.

The Secret Friend

Grandiosity intact in the mythic realm.
Love pours from every cell.
Returned to earth,
a fall is predictable.
How to balance this load
—jug full to overflowing,
never spilling a drop—
embodies everything.
So dance in praise
and bend a knee
to the Secret Friend!

Eros and the Philosophers

How can I study philosophy
in springtime
when Eros' sap
flows molten inside me
golden honey
slowing my mind
green fire
burning from within

I am caught in this radiance
green vines tangle inside my chest
draw me out in tendrils
flames of love breathed to life
flowering fearlessly ablaze

Preferring Revolution²
(For Edward Snowden)

I can't watch the news
listen to the radio

read the online updates

without losing myself in the morass:

it's just more genocide
or politicians' lies about

what I never agreed could be done
in my name.

And now it's election time
and they want to persuade me

the outright lies of one are worse
than the secrets the other never tells.

My friend, who writes novels, tells me
never watch *Democracy Now*.

It's too depressing and you'll never
write a thing. How can our small words

ever begin to approach
the weight of that boulder?

I know she's right, that my pen dries up
while my mind, my heart

try to make sense
of what's incomprehensible.

I want to chop wood again,
carry water, be grateful

for what I don't know.
I want to drink wine

my friend Zhenya pressed
by hand, ask her how it was

in Russia when the people had
no voice, no bread, no hope

but stuck together,
knowing revolution would come.

Postscript: Preferring Revolution, 2022

Global pandemic three years running.
Everyone's tired, tired, so damn tired.

And now, war in Ukraine.
Russia, aggressive old bear

showering bullets bile and steel.
Rusty iron curtain crumbling as it falls.

The United States of America
once a bastion of freedom

descended into depths of hell:
bearing arms in public

stripping women of rights to their own bodies
trans queer lesbian bi and gay

left out in the cold, cold, dark
dark night of America's soul.

Foaming white supremacists
insane brainwashed disembodied megaphones

criminals back-paddling
like oil hitting water

while the courts crumble
under deceitful jurisprudence.

No way back but forward
total revolution

and we'll all be there
riding freedom's lion³

golden paws unshackled
mighty jaw raised

roaring fire
into the people's hearts again

Circling Back ...

Love is mysterious. The poems of this inquiry speak to that mystery where something larger than us, outside of ourselves, supports and guides us. Beyond our singular selves alone, we are part of a vast turning pluriverse where our actions—our love and hope—matter. Feeding the soul of the world, we feed one another.

Love is a feedback loop. Love nurtures us and we must nurture love in return. Love is a renewable resource if we treat it as such, and its fertility ... wants to help us nurture our dreams into being. (Chani, 2022, Tarot card of the week)

These research-generated poems, arising from flocks of love and synchrony in my autobiographical experiences of living poetically, are intended as restorative balm to an increasingly distressed, often disheartened, world. Sharing poetic inquiries of love and synchrony requires vulnerability, reciprocating with the world's vulnerability. I offer these poems about love for my children, love for my mentor, and the love of spirit in community in the hopes of reminding others how each of these humblest of bonds radiates a love in our lives that touches another corner of our lives ... and another, and another. The ripples roll on into infinity. Perhaps poetic inquiries of this nature will inspire others in the social sciences to speak from their hearts more easily, more radically.

Like Carl Leggo, I believe transformative learning can be effectively promoted by giving attention to poetry and poetic knowing and poetic living. I am learning to live poetically, and I am learning that the heart of pedagogy is revitalized and sustained by poetic knowing, being and becoming. Poetry engages us with language, nurtures the inner life, acknowledges the particular and local, encourages us to listen to our hearts, fosters flexibility and trust, and invites creativity and creative living. (Leggo, 2005b, p. 440)

Each of these aspects of living poetically also furthers the engagement of love in pedagogy. The energy of love is not separate from, nor should it be separated from educational undertakings; love as ethos and currency. Toward

that goal, how might an attitude of love help in stream rehabilitation, for example? How has love made a difference in history? In politics? Let's talk about the synchrony and elegance of numbers: what's not to love about $2+2$, or the rhythmic patterning of our times-tables? Let's expand our vocabularies and encourage expressions of honest vulnerability as a titer of love in pedagogy. Teachers and educators need not shy away from love as a topic of discussion and inquiry with students; in the process, we surely build more of the connective tissue in which our pluriverse twines, and of which we are all created: the living, pulsing tissue of love. We are turning the wheel of the world together. One breath, one step, one act of love—and one poem—at a time.

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ENDNOTES

1. A line from Robert Bly's poem "Keeping Our Small Boat Afloat" (2011, p. 23).
2. The first part of this poem previously appeared in *English Practice: The Journal of BC Teachers of English Language Arts (BCTELA)*, 56(1), 6 (2014).
3. Referring to Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous poetic sequence from "The Masque of Anarchy" (1819):
Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you
Ye are many—they are few.