

**Call for Submissions: Special Issue, *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry (CPI)*
Winter 2022**

Beauty and the Beast: Using creative expression to envision a just society amid post-truth politics, pandemic, and climate change

Guest Editor: Veronika Bohac Clarke (University of Calgary)

*We are stardust
Billion-year-old carbon
We are golden
Caught in the devil's bargain
And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the garden*

~ Joni Mitchell ~

Through scholarly and creative work, this CPI Special Issue explores central aspects and impacts of the currently dominant neoliberal perspective and corporate power structures in government, financial systems, business and education, as they collide with unprecedented forces from climate change and the Covid 19 pandemic. The question within this context is whether creativity and authenticity still have a place in academia – and how these epistemologies might produce novel solutions for creating a just human society that exists harmoniously with all life on the planet.

In his 2017 book *Trump and a Post-Truth World*, Ken Wilber, an Integral theory philosopher, analyzed the question on many people's lips after the US presidential election: "how could this happen?" Wilber identified the pathology of the Post-Modern pluralistic perspective – which derailed the great hope for future social development, into a divisive, hyper-individualistic stance, which has resulted in unexamined (but taken for granted) relativism, leading to two general outcomes: infantile narcissism and nihilism. The Post-Modern pluralistic pathology has certainly infected academia, as well as a significant portion of the general population, particularly in the western countries. This was a prophetic analysis, in many ways, identifying some of the structural and ideological problems that became ubiquitous by the fateful year 2020. One look at Facebook, Twitter, and other social media will provide ample evidence of the divisive, often vicious individualism. This behaviour is encouraged and manipulated by the social media providers, as is readily demonstrated by research-based as well as popular articles widely available in journals and on the Internet. The divisiveness, coupled with relativism and its by-product – political correctness enforced by vicious criticism – has created a situation where decision-making is paralyzed. Wilber gives an example of Germany during the 2015 migrant crisis. This leadership vacuum has provided a perfect entry for national leaders holding patriarchal, authoritarian and often fundamentalist perspectives. They have no problem making decisions and imposing unilateral rules on the populace.

Parenthetically, in the case of education – from K-12 to post-secondary – this has meant the exertion of authority through severe funding cuts and the escalation of algorithmic governmentality. Research grants have become steering grants, and the performance targets have escalated, along with an imposition of a template-based approach to research and writing. Thus, under the newspeak of “collaboration”, a vicious competition has been established between universities as well as between faculty members.

The reaction from the public to the new order in the US gradually changed from “this can’t be happening” to pessimistic acceptance, and “post-truth” and “fake news” became the expected *modus operandi*. This divisive approach to governance, in many parts of the world, has begun to be seriously tested by the end of 2019, and catastrophically so in 2020. The impact was global. Fires had been followed by floods, mudslides, locust infestations, all costing lives and setting off hunger in many parts of the world. This was followed by the Covid-19 pandemic. All of these events called for a collective response and genuine collaboration. The divisive and patriarchal perspectives, however, which valued some lives more than others, created a perfect setting for social unrest – not just in North America. The match that lit the fire in the US was the murder of George Floyd, still amid the Covid pandemic, thereby creating even more pressure on the already traumatized emotional state of that nation. The collective trauma has found resonance in many other nations around the globe. Ironically, the shared pain could become a common denominator from which collective healing and reintegration might arise. The crucial ingredient for collective healing would be hope.

It may seem naïve to speak of beauty, creativity and hope at this chaotic time – let alone authenticity – however, in a time of extreme collective trauma, creative expression of authentic feelings, fear and hope may remind us of the Beautiful, Good and True through a language beyond words.

Submissions are invited to address topics which:

- take up these and related issues of current impact of politics and economy on education’s ability to lead and guide in times of crises such as in 2020;
- consider the short- and long-term impacts of such emerging changes on the role of education in society, and educators’ ability to speak to power;
- consider how the corporatization of universities affects their usefulness, responsiveness and contribution to solutions of real-world problems;
- show the complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty, of redefining a just and responsible society in a suddenly chaotic world;
- consider how the current global and local crises impact the teaching-learning experiences and research, and what opportunities might universities have to contribute to a major perspectival reset; or
- engage the call and topics in any way interpreted by the contributor.

Submission Guidelines

Submissions (essays, poems, and art including photographs) are welcome from established and emerging scholars and artists.

Artistic and Creative Contributions:

There are two sections for Artistic and Creative Contributions. One section, entitled “*Voices from the street*”, explores how poetry and art depict the current reality as well as hopes for the future. This section addresses specifically the issues around how people understand the uncertain present, the unknowable future, and impending catastrophes – and their hopes for preserving a humane humanity.

Additional artistic and creative contributions are invited for the section “*You are the planet*”. This section focuses on the interconnectedness of all life on the planet and the inevitable conclusion that harming one part of the planet ultimately results in all parts of the planet suffering. Joni Mitchell was correct when she sang “we are stardust” – our planet was formed from stardust, and humans would do well to remember that their bodies are the same molecules which comprise planet Earth. It is up to our collective efforts to demonstrate whether “we are golden.”

Essays:

Essays may address any aspect of the topics listed above.

Essays may also explore how the aspects of beauty and authenticity might be a positive influence in individual and social responses to the unprecedented context of 2020.

Submission Details:

- Essay submissions should be a maximum of 5000 words in length (including references). Essays should be formatted using APA.
- Poetry submissions may be of any length and can address any of the topics identified above.
- Art and photography should be thematically aligned to the Artistic and Creative sections.
- Essays and poetry should be submitted as Word files in Times Roman 12pt font.
- Art and photography should be submitted as JPEGs scaled to print as either half-page or full-page images.

Please send fully developed submissions by email to the Guest Editor:

Veronika Bohac Clarke: bohac@ucalgary.ca

Schedule:

June 15, 2021: Submission deadline for complete manuscripts (essays, poems, art).

July 1, 2021: Authors notified of acceptance and peer review.

August 15, 2021: Peer review comments sent to Authors.

October 15, 2021: Authors return updated camera-ready submission to Editor.

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