

Conclusion: Poetic Inquiry as an Ethic of Attunement

In *Arts-Based Research Methods in Writing Studies: A Primer*, Kate Hanzalik (2021) predicts a promising future for arts-based research in writing studies: “Artistic ways of knowing,” she argues, “can stir emotions, encourage empathy and self-inquiry, promote openness to ambiguity, and encourage people to act, all of which are important for WS [writing studies] at a time when learning, teaching, social justice, and individual well-being are all at stake” (p. 102). Previous chapters in this book have demonstrated how particular approaches to poetic inquiry, one of many arts-based research practices, can achieve those ends. Although poetic inquiry is not appropriate for every research context and question, it does offer a range of “flexible, recursive, and open-ended” approaches that can meaningfully “disrup[t] conventional research standards” (Hanzalik, 2021, p. 102). Indeed, because poetry reveals the deepest parts of humanity, poetic inquiry has been employed in hundreds of published studies by qualitative researchers across disciplines and from around the globe (Prendergast, 2009; Galvin & Prendergast, 2016; van Rooyen & Pithouse-Morgan, 2024) to theorize from “flesh and blood experiences” (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 19), capture the “livedness” (Furman et al., 2007, p. 302) of diverse physical realities, and consider conditions of living in all their multidimensional complexity. With roots in theories of the flesh, poetic inquiry conjures abstract, multivalent meaning, attends to silence, evokes emotion, and articulates human experience that doesn’t “fit” dominant ways of knowing, being, or doing. In short, poetic inquiry lends itself to the complexities of writing research and can support the goals and commitments of many writing studies researchers dedicated to critical feminist praxis and transformative justice.

Over a decade ago, reflecting on contributions to the foundational collection *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies* (Nickson & Sheridan, 2012), Rebecca J. Rickly proposed that “new (and ‘messy’) contexts” involved in researching writing might well call for “new (and ‘messy’) methods” (p. 262). Citing sociologist John Law (2004), Rickly (2012) explains that when our research problems and contexts are “‘complex, diffuse and messy’ ... then we need to ‘find ways of knowing the indistinct and the slippery without trying to grasp and hold them tight’” (p. 262). Of course, the messiness of writing research contexts has only intensified in the wake of the “dual pandemics” of COVID-19 and increased attention to systemic racial injustice (Yeh et al., 2022, p. 2366), historical shifts in the nature and future of higher education, and “unfathomable upheaval, rising out of ... concurrent social, economic, racial, and political reckonings that continue to exert extreme tolls on (all of) our lives” (Tachine & Nicolazzo, 2022a, p. 3). Given that the research practices we choose “not only describe but also help to *produce* the reality that they understand” (Law, 2004, p. 5), if we

crave alternative realities, “we need to go beyond a traditional understanding of methods/methodologies to (as Law asserts) ‘teach ourselves to think, to practice, to relate, and to know in new ways’” (Rickly, 2012, p. 262). Amanda R. Tachine and Z Nicolazzo’s collection *Weaving an Otherwise: In-Relations Methodological Practice* (2022b) offers possibilities toward that end by honoring the “interconnectedness of storytelling” and the “creative energies” involved in embracing qualitative methodologies that “align research with our heart, values, visions, and hopes” (Tachine & Nicolazzo, 2022a, p. 2). I humbly suggest, and hopefully have demonstrated throughout this book, that poetic inquiry can meaningfully contribute to this project.

Sandra Faulkner (2020) outlines when and why qualitative researchers might turn to poetic inquiry, citing examples of researchers who illustrate each exigence:

- when they feel that other modes of representation will not capture what they desire to show about their work and research participants (Faulkner, 2005; Reale, 2015),
- when they wish to explore knowledge claims and write with more engagement and connection (Denzin, 1997; Pelias 2005; L. Richardson, 1997),
- when the researcher’s story intersects or entwines with research participants’ lives (Behar, 2008; Krizek, 2003),
- to mediate different understandings (Leggo, 2008),
- to present embodied experience (Ellingson, 2017; Faulkner, 2018c; Snowber, 2016), and
- to reach more diverse audiences (L. Richardson, 2002). (p. 17)

Reading over this list, I am struck by how the goals and commitments of so many writing researchers could be bolstered with poetic inquiry. It’s surprising how few writing studies scholars publicly claim poetic inquiry as part of their methodological repertoire, especially given the commitment of so many in our field to developing innovative methods that meaningfully challenge cis, white, Eurocentric, male, hetero, notions of writing, rhetoric, knowledge, and academia—methods such as academic memoir (Inoue, 2021; Rose, 2005; Villanueva, 1993; Yergeau, 2018); methodological surrender (Restaino, 2019); counterstory (Martinez, 2020; Treviño & Ozias, 2022), quilting (Arellano, 2021), feminist filmmaking (Hidalgo, 2017), “research as care” (Novotny & Gagnon, 2018), mixtape/essay (Carson, 2017, 2024), and what Gabriela Raquel Ríos calls *bruja methodology* (works in progress) to name a few. Many of these examples are also arts-forward, demonstrating, along with collections like *Exquisite Corpse: Studio Arts-Based Writing in the Academy* (Hanzalik & Virgintino, 2019), that performative forms of research and pedagogy are indeed happening in writing studies (Hanzalik, 2021). By advocating for and modeling poetic inquiry as a critical, feminist methodology in the context of writing studies, *Research is the Poetry* joins this body of work in exploring arts-based ways to challenge stock stories of writers and writing, to honor and learn from those not typically supported by dominant systems,

structures, and institutions. I've found poetic inquiry to be one way among many to make "qualitative research ... a profound space/time/feeling through which we weave otherwise" (Tachine & Nicolazzo, 2022a, p. 10), and I hope to have inspired researchers to try it for themselves.

Toward that end, I've theorized and demonstrated ways qualitative writing studies researchers might experiment with poetic inquiry. I've described how I came to the method as a post-tenure researcher looking to reignite my passion for the work. I've summarized debates about criteria for poetic inquiry processes and products and shared my own frameworks for intuiting when poetic inquiry might be a promising path, for knowing when I was on the right track, and for gauging success. In each chapter, I've explained what brought me to a particular approach to poetic inquiry, outlined the steps I took to feel my way into the method, acknowledged the resources that supported my efforts, and presented and analyzed some poems at the heart of my inquiries. If you are intrigued by what poetic inquiry offers, I urge you to dive in; don't wait until you feel confident or sure. Follow your intuition, seek out examples, read about practices and approaches, enroll in workshops and join conference sessions that expose you to possibilities and opportunities to experiment in the company of generous colleagues who will think creatively and hold you accountable.

I am sympathetic to those new to poetic inquiry who might crave more explicit guidance, a clear way forward. Many resources exist with exercises to try and heuristics for reflecting on poetic inquiry experiments—Faulkner (2020) and vanRooyen and d'Abdon (2025) are two of my favorites. At the same time, I hesitate to outline specific steps. Every context is different, each researcher-writer-poet is unique. Poetic inquiry is about more expansive ways of thinking, being, and doing. It is ripe with potential for researchers of all kinds—graduate students new to qualitative research and qualitative researchers new to poetry, mid and late career faculty feeling stifled by their training and rigid disciplinary norms, those in any career stage who feel judged, discouraged, excluded, or pushed out because traditional approaches to writing and research just don't "fit" for them. How can I presume to articulate the best path for every researcher? Thus, in the spirit of *Weaving an Otherwise* (2022), I offer this book as "more of a compass and a reveal than guidebook" (Patel, 2022, p. xi). I hope readers find in my approaches to poetic inquiry many of the qualities Patel (2022) sees in the contributions to *Weaving an Otherwise*, and I invite you to linger in the "folds and stretches" (p. xi), to dwell in the "loops and twists" (p. xi), to imagine possibilities "while cooking, while walking, while resting, while grieving, while living" (p. xii). Like the counsel Margaret Kovach (2009) gifted a young student craving guidance in choosing Indigenous methodologies, my best advice is to "start where you are, it will take you where you need to go" (p. 10).

In conclusion, I highlight four interlocking dimensions of methodological surrender with/through poetic inquiry: rhetorical, pedagogical, ethical, and material. In what follows, I reiterate how poetic inquiry enlivened these dimensions in my own research project by scaffolding new ways of listening and in so

doing changed the trajectory of my writing and research; the essence of who I am as a researcher, writer, and human; and the potential for who I can be/come in and through my work. In the process, I hope to crystalize the transformative, subversive potential of poetic inquiry and spark the imagination of researchers considering experimenting with or deepening the use of poetic inquiry practices in their own unique contexts.

Poetic Inquiry Is a Rhetorical Project

The decision to incorporate poetic inquiry practices into a research project is a methodological one, to be sure. It is also a commitment to a particular rhetorical orientation. According to Restaino (2015), the “relinquishing of control” that comes with methodological surrender, in this case through poetic inquiry, “is founded upon a willingness to hear and feel what emerges rhetorically and to continue to follow even in uncertainty” (p. 83). Although I find uncertainty terrifying, poetic inquiry, the nature of poetry and the kind of mind-body-spirit experience it conjures, helps me see “rhetorical value in the unknowable” (Restaino, 2019, p. 54); it gives me faith in a rhetorical orientation that feels unfamiliar and scary, yet urgent and necessary.

Poetic inquiry throws into relief and into question what I hope comes of my work, my rhetorical purpose. I believe with Waite (2017) that conventional approaches will only ever say conventional things and, conversely, “that changing our patterns of thought can change the world” (p.189). Oleksiak’s (2020b) invitation to contributors in his introduction to the *Peitho* Cluster Conversation “Queering Rhetorical Listening” captures the promise of poetic inquiry for working rhetorically toward transformative ends. With the goal of pursuing more radical openness and “an unending commitment to be transforming,” Oleksiak (2020b) invited contributors to write in the spirit of feminist scholars like Restaino (2019), Becky Thompson (2017), and Lisa Blankenship (2019) with “more kindness and generosity of spirit as we reach toward each other.” In my view, poetic inquiry heeds that call. It invites writing researchers to listen differently—to ourselves, to each other, to the human beings at the heart of our projects—and to write in ways that inspire readers to do the same, manifesting for all of us “more generous patterns of living” (Ervin, 1999, p. 323).

Poetic Inquiry Is a Pedagogical Project

Not only is methodological surrender through poetic inquiry a rhetorical project, it is also pedagogical one. As I’ve explained elsewhere (Tarabochia, 2017) my understanding of pedagogy is rooted in the work of Chris Gallagher (2002), Paul Kameen (2000), Amy Lee (2000), Donna Qualley (1997), and Shari Stenberg (2005), among others; I see pedagogy as “an inquiry-based process of collaborative meaning making undertaken by teacher-learners” in contexts including and

beyond traditional classrooms (Tarabochia, 2017, p. 7). Pedagogy is epistemic—a process of “shared knowledge building” (Gallagher, 2002, p. xvi); reflexive—a practice “of turning back to discover, examine, and critique one’s claims and assumptions in response to an encounter with another idea, text, person or culture” (Qualley, 1997, p. 3); and relational—a “collective activity” that has to be made and remade among particular people in particular contexts (Stenberg, 2005, p. xviii). My use of poetic inquiry is a pedagogical project in that I set out to embrace the processes, practices, and actions inherent in a pedagogical stance and beckon readers to join me in the endeavor.

Poetic inquiry models and invites readers to embrace what Stenberg (2011) calls, “a pedagogy of listening” (p. 251), a theorized enactment an extension of Ratcliffe’s rhetorical listening. Invoking Heidegger and Gemma Corradi Fiumara (1990), Stenberg (2011) explains that when we are immersed in a pedagogy of listening we “let something lie before us, not to accumulate another’s ideas but to safely keep them, to provide shelter for what has been gathered” (p. 252). By enacting a pedagogy of listening, poetic inquiry subverts traditional methods of meaning making and knowledge production. Too often in academic culture “others’ ideas are seized, appropriated, and discarded according to a predetermined agenda” (Stenberg, 2011, p. 252). In the context of my interest in faculty writers, I’ve observed this tendency in the academic success literature focused on distilling best practices of productive, publishing scholars into lessons for struggling writers. For me, poetic inquiry offers an alternative, a way of “laying-to-let-lie-before—[of] listening—[that] requires us [researchers, writers, and readers] to nurture, tend to, and safely keep that which we engage” (Stenberg, 2011, p. 252). It is a relational practice of teaching and learning through difference, attending to self-in-relation-with-others.

Poetic Inquiry Is an Ethical Project

In addition to being a rhetorical and a pedagogical project, poetic inquiry is an ethical project. It is ethical in the sense that a poetic approach calls researchers to reflexively and recursively ponder and name the values and principles we want to drive not only our writing and research but also the way we move in the world. Main chapters of this book demonstrate how I have engaged with poetic inquiry, identify techniques I’ve used, model processes, and speculate about the value of each approach. I hope they also make clear the extent to which poetic inquiry, as part of a feminist ethic—rooted in commitments to intersectionality, diverse perspectives and multiple truths, material lives and embodied experiences—can compel researchers to embrace our ethical obligations as writers, researchers and humans holding fellow humans at the heart of our projects. As Jennifer E. Potter (2015) points out, theorizing about lives, people, identities ...

without exploring the lived experience of one’s own identity
does not engage the heart of the issue, nor does it add theoretical

insight. Theorizing through self-exploration and reflexivity, however, creates the potential for a much more nuanced and complex approach to explaining the contextualization of individuals within a larger social construct. (p. 1436)

In that spirit, as I hope I've shown, poetic inquiry holds space for ethical work, for "theorizing through self-exploration and reflexivity" in pursuit of the nuanced insight Potter describes.

Particularly in chapters on collaborative poetry, cluster poetry, and poetic approaches to deep listening, including reverse interview and I-poems, my poems and reflections show not just what poetic inquiry looks like, but also what it *feels* like in practice, in all its muddled messiness, as I attempt to hold myself accountable—to writers in my study, to readers, to myself—by reckoning with who I am in this work. Educational researcher H. Richard Milner IV (2007) argues that danger lurks when researchers forego such reckoning, when we do nothing to "circumvent misinterpretations, misinformation, misrepresentation of individuals, communities, institutions, systems" (p. 388). As a qualitative researcher, I feel the gravity of this possibility acutely. Milner (2007) offers a Framework of Researcher Racial and Cultural Positionality to guide researchers in navigating dangers "seen, unseen, and unforeseen" (p. 394), which involves "researching the self, researching the self in relation to others, engaged reflection and representation, and shifting from self to system" (pp. 394-395). I gravitate toward poetic inquiry in part because it prompts critical reflective work in each of these areas. It forces me to attend differently to important research decisions along with "unanticipated or unpredicted" outcomes of my choices, especially "those that are hidden, covert, implicit, or invisible" of which I may be initially unconscious (Milner, 2007, p. 388).

For example, I did not deliberately structure my research on faculty to interrogate social categories; I did not establish comparative samples to determine "the social significance of interlocking systems of oppression" (Cuádras & Uttal, 1999, p. 170). However, as Gloria Holguín Cuádras and Lynet Uttal (1999) point out, ignoring the existence of social categories in interview-based studies creates a methodological dilemma, "a false approach that assumes equality and that individuals have been exposed to equal opportunities and conditions" (p. 170). Like Cuádras and Uttal (1999), I wanted "to understand individual stories" of research participants *and* "bring in the sociocultural context within which their [/our] lives [were] taking place" (p. 171). Like them, I turned to feminist in-depth interviewing, which "encouraged individuals to explain how they viewed their circumstances, to define issues in their own terms, to identify processes leading to different outcomes, and to interpret the meaning of their lives" (p. 160) along with me. I found that poetic inquiry both aligned with my approach to data collection and my desire to "respect the data enough to follow it into relevant social dimensions without imposing the race, class, and gender matrix on

the data” (Cuádras & Uttal, 1999, p. 165) Approaches to poetic inquiry—such as reverse interview poems and cluster poems, for instance—provide an opportunity to “problematiz[e] the lack of critical stance” toward difference—when the lack occurs in participants’ as well as researchers’ stories—and “ma[k]e its taken-for-grantedness an explicit part of the analysis” (Cuádras & Uttal, 1999, p. 171) by honoring and probing the sociocultural context of our lives.

Poetic Inquiry Is a Material Project

Just as the act of methodological surrender through poetic inquiry is a rhetorical, pedagogical, and ethical project it is also a material, embodied one, for it “is in many ways an exercise in destabilizing bodies (and ‘bodies’ can include researcher-participant bodies but also bodies of data and text) and coming to know these bodies as capable of illness, destruction, loss, and not-knowing” (Restaino, 2019, pp. 14-15). There is a danger in rhetoric and writing studies, says Michael J. Faris (2020), in “privileg[ing] the discursive and epistemic at the expense of the embodied and material.” Poetic inquiry as a form and practice has the potential to “disrup[t] traditional binaries between discursivity and materiality, challenging us to see how rhetoric [and I would argue writing and research] is always about the intertwinement of bodies, desires, sensations, affects, materiality, and discourse” (Faris, 2020). Indeed, I remain enticed by poetic inquiry in great part because it is an embodied practice.

Of course, a rich body of writing studies scholarship demonstrates efforts to capture the lived, material reality of writers, offering methods for studying and theorizing writing “by engaging the whole material surround of writing” (Micciche, 2014, p. 502; see also Caswell et al., 2016; Micciche, 2017; Vieira, 2019). As these studies affirm, writing (the writing we do and the writing we study) cannot “be plucked from the everyday and treated as a stand-alone activity, one that reaches outcomes, fills preexisting genres, serves as stable evidence of one kind or another” (Micciche, 2014, p. 501). Rather, explains Laura Micciche (2014) “writing is [and writers are] codependent with things, places, people, and all sorts of others ... part and parcel of the dwelt-in world” (p. 501). Poetic inquiry offers another way to honor this “economy of connectedness” (Micciche, 2014, p. 499), this relational enmeshment.

Drawing on Eileen Schell’s (2012) definition of the material, it is easy to see how poetic inquiry is fitting for researching the contextual, codependent, connectedness of writing lives because it throws into relief writers’ experiences of material conditions (conditions of employment, professional status, and respect, for example) and labor of writing; our “material social relations ... which include and are influenced by gender, racial, class, disability, and sexual hierachy” (p. 123); the materiality of bodies—writers’ bodies, readers’ bodies, and researchers’ bodies; “the materiality of space[s], place[s], cultural contexts” (p. 123) in which writers live and work; and

the materiality of “lived experiences” (p. 123) more broadly. As I’ve shown, research poetry crafted from interview transcripts captures in a way traditional data analysis and prose cannot how writing experiences, perspectives, and lives “are muted or controlled by specific material conditions—pregnancy, childrearing, domestic labor, and care of others” (Schell, 2012, p. 128) to name a few. In a similar vein, my experience of poetic inquiry has been an embodied, material one. I feel the work in my body, a connected awareness of myself in relation to others, even as I am aware of my proclivity, as a student of the academy, to hide, dismiss, ignore bodies, of all kinds, to live in my head. Poetic inquiry compels and empowers me to notice and resist normative inclinations like these.

Indeed, the material dimension of poetic inquiry reveals how research norms often privilege rational subjects despite the reality that humans are material, non-rational beings who experience rhetoric and writing as embodied, sensorial practices (Faris, 2020). The materiality of poetic inquiry obliges me to ask what a pedagogical ethic of rhetorical “listening might look like when we attend to materiality, embodiment, sensations, and affect” (Faris, 2020). Toward that end, poetic inquiry resists meaning or knowing from an isolated angle of perception or moment in time and offers instead a “habituated, embodied” and “multisensory” (Faris, 2020) way of being that is materially practiced.

Poetic inquiry, as method, methodology, and rhetorical form, entices researchers to “write passionately and with emotional abandon,” as Oleksiak (2020b) puts it, and with what he calls “academic lyricism” or “writing that moves the mind, body, and heart.” Drawing on Toni Morrison’s distinction between being touched and being moved, Oleksiak (2020b) emphasizes the vital difference between the two, noting “to be touched is to feel the joys and horrors of the world deeply,” while “to be moved is to allow what touches us to transform the ways we act in the world.” The material, embodied nature of poetic inquiry infuses it with potential for the latter. Of course, as Oleksiak (2020b) points out, moving self and others to be and act differently is a shared responsibility, it happens in relation. Hence the importance of each dimension—rhetorical, pedagogical, ethical, and material—of poetic inquiry as a way of being. In teasing out these four dimensions, I’ve reinforced the disruptive and transformative value of poetic inquiry for me and for writing researchers hoping to experiment with poetic inquiry as method/ology and guiding ethic. Poetic inquiry offers an ethical, material way of being in our work and a rhetorical, pedagogical strategy for inviting, guiding, and enticing others to try on new ways of being as well.

Poetic Inquiry as Interlistening: Embracing an Ethic of Attunement

Taken together all four dimensions of poetic inquiry constitute a cohesive, principled way of being, or what Lisbeth Lipari (2014) calls “an ethics of attunement” (p. 2) rooted in the practice of “interlistening” (p. 9). Interlistening Lipari explains,

is a resonant, symphonic way of attuning to self and others, “not unlike the vibration of strings” (p. 158).

Just as musical instruments and other objects can resonate sympathetically in response to vibrations produced by external bodies, interlisteners too can hum in and out of rhythm, harmony, and time in dialogic interaction. Interlistening thus brings ... an acknowledgment of the attunement, attentiveness, and alterity always already nested in our process of communication. (Lipari, 2014, p. 159)

The concept of interlistening as part of an ethic of attunement further theorizes the deep listening practices poetic inquiry scaffolds, many of which I’ve highlighted throughout the book, by emphasizing the intentional, ongoing act of methodological surrender.

Of course, listening can be a mechanism for colonization and exclusion (Clark, 2021; Jackson & DeLaune, 2018; Smilges, 2020). As Rachel C. Jackson points out, ways of listening grounded in Western traditions, even Ratcliffe’s rhetorical listening aimed toward “cross-cultural dialogue carries forward western binary logics that reassert meaning making as a process occurring between two parties” (Jackson & DeLaune, 2018, p. 44). Restaino (2019), citing Jessica Benjamin (1988), names a similar, problematic “push-me-pull-you, doer-done to dynamic” (p. 46). Sometimes, ways of listening rooted in Western traditions preclude communicative interaction altogether. As Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder and Shannon Kelly (2022) explain in their chapter on arboreal rhetorics and tree-human relations, listening practices that depend on Euro-Western communication expectations are predicated on understanding and correcting misunderstanding; humans need not listen to those who “communicate differently or otherwise” (p. 69). Alternatively, interlistening emerges from an ethic of attunement, a commitment to what Pflugfelder and Kelly (2022), inspired by Lipari (2014), might call “listening otherwise,” listening “from a position of not-knowing,” acknowledging “the precarity of [others, including other] species we may never understand” so as to “avoid reduc[ing] or subsum[ing] any other” (p. 69), while simultaneously maintaining a “proximity” (Lipari, 2014, as cited in Pflugfelder & Kelly, 2022, p. 69) that upholds mutual responsibility. Interlistening entails a collaborative, intersubjective act of surrender like the one Restaino (2019) describes, that is rhythmic, recursive, responsive, and rooted in shared vulnerability.

The interlistening enabled by poetic inquiry is akin to what Oleksiak (2020b) calls “queer rhetorical listening” (see also Oleksiak 2020a). Queer listeners, Oleksiak (2020b) explains, embrace and invite “an unending stream of response and transformation. Response and transformation. An unending commitment to be transforming.” I understand interlistening through poetic inquiry as a queer praxis in that it does not compel researchers like me to get outside ourselves so that we may know an “other” once and for all; nor does it ask that we inhabit other

perspectives so as to better know ourselves. Rather it acknowledges multiple, mutable meaning(s) always in motion, ever-shifting subjectivities perpetually becoming, transforming.

Faris (2020) emphasizes a kinesthetic aspect to queer listening that reinforces the promise of poetic inquiry as a way of being. “Queer kinesthetic listening” (Faris, 2020) resists the epistemic pull of research; it is nondiscursive (or at least not only discursive), wholistic, fully embodied, intersubjective, and attentive to multiple voices, realities, truths. It is a habituated practice that happens over time rather than in isolated moments. Poetry is an ideal vehicle for enacting a queer kinesthetic praxis. Indeed, I’ve demonstrated throughout this book how poetic inquiry facilitates “a kinesthetic listening to oneself and others that entails remembering our bodies—and ideally, remembering our bodies differently” (Faris, 2020) in ways that resist dominant logics, such as those governing traditional empirical research, that privilege mind over body, in order to imagine new ways of being and becoming. In this way, interlistening enacted through poetic inquiry becomes a way of being, an ethic of attunement, a radical queer project like the one Waite (2017) describes in *Teaching Queer* that seeks to undo (again and again) certainty and stability as a way to expand what is thinkable, knowable, imaginable, and possible and to research otherwise.

Poetic inquiry offers a mechanism for interlistening in the context of writing research. Both are intentional and intuitive, multimodal and relational. Both “center on the body, the lived materiality of the now, and the eternal circulation of past, present, future, which mingle together in each moment,” interweaving various phenomena “from a relational, not a referential or representational, perspective” (Lipari, 2014, p. 160). As McKeon and Honein (2023) point out in their introduction to *Language, Land and Belonging: Poetic Inquiries*, sharing the results of a poetic inquiry is “not only about what is out there, but about revealing the process of how to engage with relationships, places, and ideas on a personal level, and how the mind, body, and spirit process experience” (p. 5). Poet-researchers must be vulnerable, willing to “sho[w] the reader the ... struggle, the method, the pain, and the joy that got them there during the research” (McKeon & Honein, 2023, p. 5). In this way, poetic inquiry “lures in the reader, disturbs the traditional experience of reader-receiver/reader-observer, and brings the reader in to engage with the text and experience” (McKeon & Honein, 2023, p. 5). As a mutual act of surrender, “poetic inquiry teaches us as readers [and researchers] to listen” (McKeon & Honein, 2023, p. 5). Poetic inquiry entices those involved in research—researchers, participants, readers—to embrace our shared activity *as* interlistening.

The foundation, the heartbeat, of an ethic of attunement, interlistening through poetic inquiry offers a way to surrender to “interconnection and generosity, impermanence and humility, iteration and patience, and invention and courage” (Lipari, 2014, p. 6). It is not about knowing once and for all; rather “it resists certainty, closure, categorization, and the imperatives of narrative flow ... and our insatiable appetite for the familiar” (Lipari, 2014, pp. 102-103). It is a

way of *living into* “such that listening constitutes the very being of [o]ur being” (Lipari, 2014, p.102)—one possible “new (and ‘messy’) metho[d]” (Law, 2004, p. 2; Rickly, 2012, p. 262) for imagining, being, pursuing an “otherwise” (Tachine & Nicolazzo, 2022b). The notion of interlistening and the ethic of attunement it enacts capture what poetic inquiry has meant for me and the promise I see for what poetic inquiry could mean for writing researchers.

Practicing Attunement through Poetic Inquiry: Challenges and Opportunities

To lean into an ethic of attunement, to use poetic inquiry as a means of interlistening, a researcher might begin by experimenting with one or more of the approaches I’ve described in this book, perhaps using the driving questions I’ve highlighted for each approach as a springboard. In my own journey, I’ve discovered inspiration and guidance as I learned to flex and hone creative habits of mind. Janesick’s (2016) “*Stretching*” *Exercises for Qualitative Researchers* offers prompts and examples, often rooted in embodied movement and meditation, to help researchers tap into our intuitive and creative capacities. I composed the “I am From” poem featured in the introduction using one of Janesick’s prompts and I played with her methodological haiku activity as well to grapple with the process of artists-based qualitative research. I relied on Tania Runyan’s accessible books *How to Write a Poem* (2015) and *How to Write a Form Poem* (2021) for explanations and examples of form poems along with prompts for practice. In addition to engaging with books about technique and aesthetic inner workings of poetry (Gibson & Falley, 2019; Hirshfield, 1997), I looked for opportunities to enroll in online and in-person workshops and reading groups focused on craft and to lead and participate in arts-based research workshops related to conferences and professional development opportunities in the field.

The final chapter in Faulkner’s (2020) slim but mighty volume *Poetic Inquiry: Craft, Method, and Practice* is called “Exercising the Poetry Muscle” and is a treasure trove of “suggestions, questions and challenges” (p. 153) for researchers looking to center creativity in the research process. Exercises focus on the dramatic monologue, ekphrastic poetry, and a range of poetic transcription approaches including found poems, investigative poems, the “surrender and catch” (p. 161) poem, literature-voiced poems, and dialogue poems. Exercises focused on poetic inquiry as data analysis engage with the triptych, the short poem, the long poem, form and function activities, and free form poetry. In her chapter, Faulkner offers scaffolds for creating textual and visual collage and adapting the surrealist game exquisite corpse to generate collaborative poetry. Her heuristics remind me to be patient with myself, to embrace creativity as a practice in every sense of the word, and to lean in to the joy and difficulty of poetic play. They are also easily adaptable for use in the classroom. I’ve found it fun and useful to incorporate poetic inquiry practices into my teaching as a way to share artistic ways of knowing with

students and explore the affordance of poetic praxis across domains of teaching and research. Lynda Barry's (2014, 2019) work with image has been a delicious compliment to my journey of methodological surrender through poetic inquiry in both my research and teaching.

Poetic inquiry is not only a radical research methodology but a writing methodology as well. Changing how we as researchers make meaning in and through qualitative research means also changing how we write. I appreciate poetic inquiry as a way to embrace Waite's (2019) call to "write queer(er)" (p. 42), to "enact queer subversions of the norms that dictate" how we "compose, report, organize, position, and narrate scholarship and research" (p. 42). Waite (2019) offers a "failing, impossible, contradictory instruction manual" (p. 42) for writing queer(er) that reminds me to surrender what I think I know about academic writing so I can remain open to the possibilities poetic inquiry affords. Those interested in poetic inquiry might find it valuable to explore Waite's invitational list of demands. Here are some of my favorites:

- Don't stay on "on topic." Drift gleefully off. Get lost.
- Imagine your writing outside the bounds of binary understanding: critical and creative, academic and personal, theoretical and practical ...
- Talk about your feelings; they are smart. Express and be curious about emotion, "foregrounding emotion as embodied and lived" and "vital for cultivating wonder" (Micciche, 2007, p. 46).
- Show up in your writing as a body, an embodied force in the text, all the while keeping your reader aware that even the body is a contradiction: both an idea constructed and a real material thing that impacts the world ...
- Write in queer voice(s). Contradict yourself. Queer writing "involves deliberately courting paradox" (Rhodes, 2015).
- Don't become an authority on your subject.
- Get disorganized, make a mess.
- Become a "scavenger": develop a "scavenger methodology that uses different methods to collect and produce information" (Halberstam, 2011, p. 13).
- Say something grammatically incomprehensible if and when the thing you are trying to say is something your language, produced also by social construction, does not want you to be able to say.
- Experiment. ...
- Don't summarize your argument at the end so we know where we've been and what you've done and accomplished. What you've written should not always be articulable in the tidiness of review. It should be an epic failure of a thing.
- Don't come to conclusions. Come to other things: inquiry, questions, failures, side roads, off-road. (pp. 43-48)

Poetic inquiry offers a playful, adaptable palette for those of us determined to try to compose queerly while recognizing the impossibility of doing so.

As Hanzalik (2021) points out regarding arts-based research practices in general, the possibilities of incorporating poetic inquiry into writing studies research “are endless, evolving, and exciting” and also challenging and intense, as “the process is self-reflexive, dialogic, and questioning, which can create uncertainty but can also ultimately produce a transformative experience” (p. 103). As more writing researchers discover and develop the affordances of poetic inquiry, scholarly, academic, and institutional policies and practices will need to adapt to accommodate and support engagement with artistic research processes and “texts.” The burgeoning of arts-based research and poetic inquiry in particular has implications for grant funding apparatuses, tenure and promotion, publication platforms and criteria, and graduate education and degree conferral.

With my own work, I’ve faced challenges explaining humanistic aspects of poetic inquiry to funding bodies in the social sciences, and explaining social science aspects of my project to funding bodies in the humanities. Hanzalik (2021) urges arts-based writing researchers to capitalize on the interdisciplinary nature of arts-forward methods and highlight for grant award committees the potential for projects to serve a wide range of disciplines, communities, and individuals within and beyond the university. In terms of tenure and promotion, academic researchers might take our cue from analogues to arts-based research such as practice-as-research, practice-based research or what Natalie Loveless (2019) calls “research-creation” (p.2), practices that have long faced skepticism rooted in academic capitalism, and consider how arts-forward methods might resist business as usual (Hanzalik, 2021; Nelson, 2013). How might writing researchers leverage our rhetorical prowess to persuasively articulate the ways poetic inquiry and artistic ways of knowing more broadly “are valuable and can be valued” (Hanzalik, 2021, p. 98)?

Because publications remain the currency of tenure and promotion systems, publication venues have a role to play in changing the visibility and valuation of arts-forward research. Several writing studies journals and presses are already accommodating, even encouraging, this work. Hanzalik (2021) mentions *Computers & Composition Online* and *Kairos* as promising venues, and I’d add the Sweetland Digital Collaborative. I am grateful to the editors at *Peitho* for welcoming my poetic approach and working with me to build poetic reflection into the apparatus of my article (Tarabochia, 2021) through endnotes and appendices. The open access, online journal *Writers: Craft & Context* of which I am a founding co-editor, is another venue that works to accommodate creative blends of words, images, and sounds and would welcome poetic inquiry projects. As venues evolve and proliferate, writing researchers might take inspiration from online literary arts magazines such as the *AutoEthnographer* (<https://theautoethnographer.com>).

Changes in the systems and structures that can encourage or shut down arts-forward scholarship are vital if writing researchers are serious about considering how these methods of knowing, being, and doing differently might contribute to ongoing efforts to cultivate an otherwise. As I’ve argued throughout this book,

poetic inquiry strategies can be valuable for qualitative researchers invested in becoming “misfits” (Restaino, 2019, p. 152), in doing research differently so that we might begin to “weave an otherwise” (Tachine & Nicolazzo, 2022a, p. 5). For me, the following questions were at the heart of my investment in such a project:

- How do I make visible the “human” in human subjects research?
- How can I more fully honor the nuance of participants’ lived experience?
- How do I stay accountable to those experiences traditional research tools are most likely to miss or flatten?
- How might I orient to my work not as an objective analyst, but as a “vulnerable observer” (Behar, 1996) immersed in the process?
- How do I acknowledge my entanglement with dominant ideologies and (re)orient to my work in the spirit of knowing, being, and doing differently?
- How can my research directly challenge and begin to transform structures and systems that privilege certain bodyminds (Price, 2015) over others?
- How can I honor and draw forth my work from the rich historical roots of theories of the flesh, forged by women of color, to theorize from physical realities and embodied experience?
- How can I center relationships (with scholars/scholarship, research participants, self, and readers) as both the foundation and goal for my research and writing?

Throughout this book, I hope I’ve shown, in concrete and generative ways, how poetic inquiry methods facilitate immersive, ongoing engagement with these questions by fostering an ethic of attunement, a way of being—as a researcher, writer, and human—rooted in ongoing practices of interlistening and methodological surrender. My sincerest wish is that writing studies researchers compelled by these questions and commitments will feel inspired to experiment with poetic inquiry practices in their own unique contexts and in so doing continue to establish, expand, imagine, and advocate for the value of artistic ways of making meaning.