

The following extract and poem is taken from:

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Conclusion: Twenty-Nine Ways Of Looking At Poetic Inquiry

In homage to Wallace Stevens' poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" (in Nelson, 2000, pp. 127-129), and in an attempt to summarize my findings, I offer the following:

Poetic inquiry is . . .

I

Poetic inquiry is a form of qualitative research in the social sciences that incorporates poetry in some way as a component of an investigation.

II

Poetic inquiry is found in the social science fields of anthropology, education, geography, nursing, psychology, social work, sociology, women's studies and more.

III

Poetic inquiry is rooted in the arts-based inquiry movement that has seen growing acceptance in both conferences and peer-reviewed publications over the past decade or so.

IV

Poetic inquiry is, like narrative inquiry with which it shares many characteristics, interested in drawing on the literary arts in the attempt to more authentically express human experiences.

V

Poetic inquiry is, in exemplary practices, indistinguishable from literary poetry.

VI

Poetic inquiry is, sometimes, a failed experiment that may function effectively for the purposes of the inquiry but does not sustain nor reward reader engagement as in a successful poem.

VII

Poetic inquiry is always aware of ethical practices in the use of human participants when engaged in poetic transcription and representation of the voices and stories of others.

VIII

Poetic inquiry is the attempt to work in fruitful interdisciplinary ways between the humanities [literature/aesthetic philosophy], fine arts [creative writing] and the social sciences.

IX

Poetic inquiry is a response to the crisis of representation experienced in postmodern critical perspectives on traditional approaches to ethnography and other social science research paradigms.

X

Poetic inquiry is, like all poetry, interested in creative language-based processes of constraint, synthesis, crystallization, image, and lyrical forms.

XI

Poetic inquiry is sometimes presented or published as a single poem or suite, context free.

XII

Poetic inquiry is sometimes presented as a prose-based essay that includes poetry woven throughout.

XIII

Poetic inquiry is sometimes presented and/or published with visual images or art or photography that interplay with each other.

XIV

Poetic inquiry is most often found in autobiographical, autoethnographical or selfstudy investigations.

XV

Poetic inquiry is also commonly seen as poetic transcription and representation of participant data.

XVI

Poetic inquiry is occasionally seen as a way to artistically present the work of theorists and/or practitioners using the technique of *found poetry*.

XVII

Poetic inquiry is sometimes a socio-political and critical act of resistance to dominant forms and an effective way to talk back to power.

XVIII

Poetic inquiry is sometimes a phenomenological and existential choice that extends beyond the use of poetic methods to a way of being in the world.

XIX

Poetic inquiry is a way of knowing though poetic language and devices; metaphor, lyric, rhythm, imagery, emotion, attention, wide-awakeness, opening to the world, self-revelation.

XX

Poetic inquiry is used by scholars to express various kinds of affective experiences such as being a girl, a student, a teacher, a social worker, a caregiver, a nurse, a cancer patient, a refugee, an immigrant, an anthropologist in an alien culture.

XXI

Poetic inquiry is called by a multiplicity of names in social science but is always interested in expressing human experience, whether that of Self or Other or both.

XXII

Poetic inquiry is practiced on the margins of qualitative research by a small number of poet/scholars, a number of whom are also literary poets.

XXIII

Poetic inquiry is very challenging to evaluate, assess and/or review as little established criteria exist.

XXIV

Poetic inquiry is often published without full peer-review, even in peer-reviewed journals; rather, it is selected by the journal's editor[s] or, in some cases, by a poetry editor.

XXV

Poetic inquiry is philosophically aligned with the work of poets through literary history who were and are committed to using poetry as a means to communicate socio-political and cultural concerns, as an act of witness.

XXVI

Poetic inquiry is philosophically aligned with the work of poets through literary history who were and are committed to using poetry as a means to communicate experiences of memory, identity, place, relationality, hope, fear and/or desire.

XXVII

Poetic inquiry is most often seen as free verse, although there are some examples that make use of particular poetic forms [haiku, tanka, pantoum, sestina etc.] or that employ some kind of rhyme.

XXVIII

Poetic inquiry is distinct from poetry therapy; that is, a field of art therapy interested in using poetry reading and writing as a therapeutic technique.

XXIX

Poetic inquiry is, along with all arts-based inquiry approaches, deeply concerned with aesthetic issues around quality, qualifications, preparedness, elitism and expertise.