
From within a teaching narrative:
Poetics past into presents of recurrent time

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One morning, seven years ago,
I walked along falling leaves.
A dried chrysanthemum cast cranberry threads
into a piece of broken slate.
Snow blankets lay on the side of the road.
It was on this day that I began to re-collect the past
into the poetics of recurrent time.

When I was six,
the teacher told us that we needed to diagram our sentences
and divide our words in two.
The lines splintered my thoughts.
Syllabic shards crunched under the weight of sneakered feet.
A footnote.
That year I penned my first poem—

Snow flake,
Snow flake,
Falling
down.
It is snowing
in the town…
From this moment,
poetry became a way of knowing,
the working through of life
living between the borderlands
of cracked codes and unspoken voices.

It followed me into corners,
alleyways,
and across the moments,
of remembered times.

It listened to storybooks,
reached into cupboards,
and reverberated in the revolution of many stringed sitars.

Each word,
each phrase,
each turn of a letter,
removed my pasts into my presence.

In the memory work of teaching praxis,
poetry narrates earlier times into later material of classroom life.
Lines once broken apart turn into daytime tracings awash in an ink blue sky.
Words formerly severed and cut meld into silhouettes casting future memorials.

Each minted thought,
every emotive entry that I tag
reaches into the past to emboss the present.
An oblong envelope of remembered poems.
An anthology of current practice.
Read on.

Rummaging behind burnished walls
of a double doored closet,
I unstack and unroll a whole scroll
of life’s learning.
A boxed set of mementos conjures
intermittent clatters of comments, notebooks,
and previous years.

Papered pink in mâche,
a blue marionette eyes
an easel arranged in between doorways.
India ink houses crowd together
under the refrain of a raga’s hum.
Framed thirty-seven years later,
seventy-two teaching identities jump
onto the surface as they trip into a smoldering city on a hot and rainy day.

An underpainting in watercolor lights.
In the academy of standard prose,
the cadence of poetic intonations breaks the sounds of chalk
grating on blackboard walls.
I pick up two felt-backed erasers and wipe away residue,
caked in the mantras of rubrics, daily quizzes, and edited years.

After lowering the lights on a pile of unmarked papers,
I slip out the side door and into the night.
Shadows line the street as I cross to the other side.
The lake reviews a parade of skaters passing under a cobbled arch.
Sheltering me from the crisp autumn air,
a bus brings me to the cluttered room of tumbled tables and chairs,
which I wrestle into place.

Wedged underneath dramatic blocks,
the printing press backs onto a stucco wall.
A potter’s wheel sits next to remnants of mantled clay.
I unlock the supply cupboard and reach for our words.
A painting, an easel, a box of books,
pencils, pens, a pot of glue, and paper without the tracings of lines.

Class begins.
Night shifts into day…
Poetics past into presents of recurrent time.
About the Author

Cynthia Morawski, a graduate of Teachers College Columbia University, is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, where she teaches integrated language/arts, special education, literacy, and children’s literature. Her research interests include arts-based literacy, bibliotherapy, teaching lives, and learning differences.