

Can Poetry Be a Method?

From research poetry to poetry pedagogy for a new integrated model of literary education

SIMONA BECCONE

University of Pisa

Abstract

This essay contributes to the ongoing discourse on teaching poetry in higher education, and more specifically on teaching English poetry at universities, by proposing an integrated approach to literary pedagogy that centres on the “poetical” as both a mindset and a pragmatic model of participatory, culturally organised, dialogic, and multimodal communication. To achieve this purpose, theoretical principles taken from the current art-based research communication known as “research poetry” (Cutts – Waters 2019; Fitzpatrick – Fitzpatrick 2020) and social constructivism principles such as “apprenticeship”, “participatory appropriation” and “guided participation” (Rogoff 1995; Mascolo 2009), will be incorporated with a set of cornerstones from poetic theory and pragmatics: poetry as ritualistic practice (Greene 1991), event (Culler 2015, 2016), multimodal discourse (Andrews 2018), aural experience (Heaney 2023), and nonmimetic, nonfictional reality statement (Hamburger 1993). This pedagogical model moves beyond the outdated student/teacher-centred dichotomy and can support university students’ development more effectively than prose-based models (Ryan 1986), as poetry is more integral to the acquisition of language and culture than any other form of communication. (Naylor – Wood 2012; Dymoke et al. 2013).

Keywords: research poetry; poetry in higher education; student/teacher-centred dichotomy; guided participation; poetry pragmatics.