

ARTICLE

# A Schoolroom Poetry for the 21st Century

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#### **Abstract**

Since 2013, Poetry in America has evolved as an educational initiative from large, open-enrollment online courses, to a TV series, and a suite of educational programs supporting learners from middle school to adulthood, dual enrollment high school students pursuing college credit, current classroom teachers, and teachers in training. Contextualizing the form and methods of Poetry in America courses in relation to the schoolroom poetry of the past, and critical debates in literary studies about poetry in public, the author suggests that a schoolroom poetry for the present can prepare students to interpret any complex text, while also nurturing creativity, and recentering classrooms, wherever or whatever they are, as essential to civic life.

Keywords: education; media; poetry; virtual learning

## I. Introduction

Poetry was everywhere in the 19th century. Even in a world where you might bump into a poem anytime you opened a newspaper, struck a match, borrowed a handkerchief to blow your nose, or shook out a table runner embroidered by your aunt, the poems that lived in classrooms had a special status in American life. School was where poetry was studied, memorized, and performed. And the centrality of poetry in American classrooms persisted well into the first half of the 20th century, in a curricular canon that largely by-passed the formal experimentation of Modernism, found common ground from New York City to Nebraska, and effectively

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Mike Chasar enumerates the pervasiveness of poetry by the end of the 19th century in an incredible catalog at the beginning of *Everyday Reading*: "Poetry appeared in books, daily newspapers, and magazines. It was preserved in scrapbooks and photograph and autograph albums, and it was included in classroom readers, comic books, song books, farmers' almanacs, church services, civic events, citizenship handbooks, nature field guides, propaganda, and in a wide variety of advertising media. It was on the radio, billboards, broadsides, drug store window and trolley card placards, Chautauqua circuits, picket lines, wax cylinder and other recording forms, magic lantern slides, and stereoview cards. And it decorated many ephemeral, commemorative, value-added and/or commercial goods, ranging from postcards to greeting cards, calling cards, playing cards, business cards, bookmarks, matchbooks, posters and wall hangings, stickers, calendars, event tickets, notepads, menus, fans, trivets, thermometers, milk bottles, pinup girly posters, bird-food and breath-mint tins, packages for drafting tools, candy boxes, souvenir plates, handkerchiefs, pillows, and table runners" (Chasar 2012, 5).

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carried 19th-century sensibilities about what poetic language was for, and particularly what it did for young people, into a very different social and political context.<sup>2</sup>

Primary among these 19th-century understandings of what poetry could teach was a felt understanding of how private experiences of thought and feeling, and contributions to public life through labor and community engagement, gave shape and support to one another. Not only did many of the poems schoolchildren studied – Longfellow's "The Village Blacksmith" is a representative example - model these beliefs, but poems also migrated widely beyond the classroom, signaling the solemnity of public occasions from tree plantings to the commemoration of new buildings through the elevated language of verse. Educators also believed poetry had great potential for individual development – that poems could inculcate virtues of hard work, generosity, or humility, which students, those poems stored in their memories, could draw on for the rest of their lives; or that poems could cultivate "aesthetic sensitivity," expanding a person's experience of language, art, and the natural world.<sup>3</sup> Even when its lessons were directed at the self, however, a schoolroom poetry, as a set of shared texts and reading practices that connected individual classrooms, and that was also understood to extend into the lives of students outside school, could never be "merely private; it was always," as Angela Sorby writes, "intersubjective, involving cultural transmissions or exchanges."4

The prominence of schoolroom poetry faded at the same time as poetry's star, as an object for scholarly study in the academy, was rising. Modernists polemically pitted themselves against the schoolroom poetry of their own early exposure; whatever they had received as a poetic education in Missouri, or Pennsylvania, could not hold a candle to the hordes of European literary tradition. (Here, of course, I am ventriloquizing Eliot, or Pound, or even H.D., or Robert Duncan. Modernism in broad strokes!) The schoolroom poetry of the past was content to keep it old, carrying a common meter, rhyme schemes, or recognizable subjects of family, labor, love, death, and the natural world deep into a century where the content and form of these subjects was being radically revisioned by changes in technology and social norms. But Modernists wanted a poetry more in keeping with their experience of modernity: complex, haunted by the past but not reflective of it, and, above all, requiring interpretation. Thus, the valorization of the "difficult" poem was born and has continued, wherever poetry is taught in tandem with criticism.<sup>5</sup> Which is to say, this shift was responsible not only for changing ideas of what a poem was or could be, but also for widening the distance between kinds of classrooms: lowly schoolrooms versus elevated ivory towers.

This shift wasn't neat, or overnight. New Critics Cleanth Brooks and John Crowe Ransome published a textbook, *Understanding Poetry*, for use in secondary classrooms, even as their critical arguments for poetry as a stony urn, immune to the personal impulses of an individual reader, or the complexities of a writer's biography or the historical moment, demanded that poems be treated as more sealed off from public life than previously. However, one telling feature of the new lyric studies, or writing about poetry in the academy over the past several decades in particular, is a looking around to find what has happened to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Chasar 2012, 5; Rubin 2007, 107–8, 120.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Rubin 2007, 4, 110-7.

<sup>4</sup> Sorby 2005, xiii.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> A passing nod to Charles Bernstein here, for his memorable summary of this kind of poem (Bernstein 2011, 3–6).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Brooks and Warren 1938.

the public face that poetry, in its schoolroom heyday, once more easily wore.<sup>7</sup> At the same time as critics have sought to reclaim poetry's public potential, poetry has been finding its way back into classrooms, with programs like Poetry Out Loud, National Youth Poets, other regional youth poet laureates, and Poets in Schools.

However, poetry, as it is taught in K-12 classrooms and the way it is taught in colleges and universities, remains largely divided. This leads me to the central question I want to pursue here: in an educational context where the boundaries defining a classroom are in active flux; where classrooms have the potential to be more public than ever before; where English departments and other fields within the humanities are under extreme institutional pressure to justify the work that they do, and attract students to their fields; and where American public life is as fractured as it has ever been since perhaps the Civil War – How can poetry help? What should a schoolroom poetry for this moment teach? And how should those lessons circulate?

In response, the remainder of this essay considers Poetry in America as a case study in public humanities. This educational initiative bridges secondary and higher education and uses educational video and online learning experiences to expand the scope of a traditional classroom. Beginning as a large, open enrollment online course at Harvard in 2013, its offerings have evolved to include a PBS TV series and a suite of programs supporting learners from middle school to adulthood, including dual enrollment high school students pursuing college credit, non-traditional college students, teachers in training, and educators pursuing graduate degrees. I draw on my own experience as part of a team of curriculum designers, content and learning specialists, and instructional staff involved with creating and administering these projects since 2017. And I asked the founder and director of Poetry in America, Elisa New, to talk with me broadly about poetry, online education, the model and methods of these courses as they have evolved over time, and about her own recent professional trajectory, from English researcher and professor to director of a TV series. That conversation is a primary source for what follows below.

## 2. Why video?

Teaching, like poetry, is a confluence of form, content, and context. How we teach has direct implications for what we teach. At the center of Poetry in America courses are highly edited videos.

The earliest of the footage for these was shot in 2013 when, according to Elisa New, Harvard was "kind of giving out video crews" as part of EdX, an open enrollment online education model that many other institutions – from Berkeley to MIT and Cambridge – were embarking on around the same time. At Harvard, New was one of the few humanists who jumped at this opportunity. Video appealed to her because she saw how the medium could enhance illustrative strategies she had already developed as a lecturer.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> For three very different examples to give a sense of how this has played out, see Virgina Jackson and Yopie Prins' *The Lyric Theory Reader*; Ben Lerner's writing-through Alan Grossman writing-through Caedmon's desire for the infinite mucked up the realities of existing in a particular time and place; and Eric Falci's navigation of poetry's "context-less" "context" (Falci 2020, 11–2; Jackson and Prins 2014; Lerner 2016, 8, 53–4).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> New 2024. All other direct quotations from Elisa New are from this conversation.

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"I was always interested in literature in a cultural context," she told me. "That meant that even when I was just standing in front of a classroom, I was often bringing in a suitcase." You can see those suitcases, and their contents, in some of those early videos, shot in lecture halls, churches, graveyards, and before public monuments around Cambridge and Boston. And you can watch as their contents – of "visual materials and whale songs and cooking implements from the 1840s"; tobacco or cornmeal; issues of *Godey's Lady's Book, The Crisis*, or *The Masses* – migrate from behind the podium to the screen. From the beginning, these videos, even of lectures, were highly illustrated. This principle – of showing works of literature within their material context – continues to shape Poetry in America educational videos today.

However, the primary appeal of the technology was its ability to bring this experience to a wider audience. Reflecting on her career before Poetry in America – which included three critical monographs, and appointments at two Ivy League Universities – New noted that the "teeny" audiences for that work – both criticism and teaching – made her question her "purpose." "I was not unclear that I was providing something of value to the students I taught," she said. However, she didn't see scholarship as a public contribution in the same way. The number of students she was able to reach through online courses offered a different way forward.

The first Poetry in America course launched through HarvardX covered early New England, featuring poets like Edward Taylor and Michael Wigglesworth – arguably, not the sexiest bunch. In the first week, as New recalled, over 7,000 people enrolled. For her, this was a revelation. However, she noted, "by no means did 7,000 people finish." In fact, around 200 did. Open enrollment and non-credit online courses have been criticized for such low completion rates. At the same time, however, "7,000 was a number that told me there was interest," New said. "I mean, I don't think I'd ever published anything in that area that had 700 readers, much less 7,000."

From that beginning, New has pursued other opportunities to scale her offerings. At the Harvard Extension School, the suite of Poetry in America courses grew to include five courses: two historical surveys, covering American poetry from 1600 through the early decades of the 19th century, and from the Civil War through Modernism; a deep dive into the poetry, time, and place of Whitman and Dickinson; and two topic courses, The City, which covers American poetry and experience in urban settings across the country, from the 19th century to the birth of hip hop; and a course on environmental poetry. These last two were originally designed for K-12 teachers.

In fact, in-service teachers have been a major demographic for all these courses, even those made with a broader student audience in mind. At Harvard Extension School, New advocated for scholarships for educators, who can take Poetry in America courses for less than a 10th of the price of the Extension School's other courses. Meanwhile, in collaboration with the National Education Equity Lab, the City course was redesigned with more scaffolded assignments and different levels of instructional support for high school students, dual-enrolled for college credit. This course was piloted at the Harvard Extension School in 2019, before moving to ASU in 2020, where a second dual enrollment course for high school students, an adaptation of the 1850–1945 survey, was added in 2021. The goal, from that early beginning, was to get American poetry into as many classrooms as possible – and to expand the bounds of a classroom, so these poems could find learners wherever they were. As other proponents of online education in the humanities have noted, video-based, remote courses have the potential to serve broad, and diverse, populations of students, including many for whom a traditional college classroom may

be difficult to access. In terms of who takes Poetry in America courses, in addition to high school students in Title 1 classrooms throughout the country, this has included working adults, in-service teachers, retirees and life-long learners, and other non-traditional college students.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, the videos for Poetry in America courses are distinctive for the breadth of perspectives they feature, and their use of documentary-style techniques to situate readers within the historical and cultural contexts of poems. This has meant, at times, trading the suitcase of cultural artifacts in the lecture hall for videos shot on location in the places where literature happened: from Hughes's Harlem to Sandburg's Chicago, or the San Francisco of the Beats. In some of the first videos made for education, we find Elisa New at Corn Hill on Cape Cod, where William Bradford and other settlers found buried baskets of Wampanoag corn. Or wandering around lower Manhattan with Whitman scholar Karen Karbiener, chatting about what the city looked like in the first half of the 19th century, or considering a printing press like the one the poet used for the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Or, at the Concord Monument, where Lawrence Buell brings the hymn meter of Emerson's "Concord Ode" vividly to life by singing it. Mostly, however, context is delivered through archival images: early maps of New England, or of Du Bois's public health studies of Philadelphia, for example; natural history drawings of the birds Dickinson approaches more indirectly in her poems; or original newspaper accounts of the Triangle Shirt Waist fire in conjunction with Robert Pinsky's allusion-thick narrative poem, "Shirt."

Almost all videos also feature guest interpreters, such as Michael Pollan chatting on a porch about corn, and Jacob Barlow's mock epic "The Hasty-Pudding." Or Alfre Woodard on a stage, discussing her own experiences of Black girlhood in relation to Gwendolyn Brooks's "A Song of the Front Yard." Many of these are poets, writers, and professors, but just as many more come from professional contexts outside the humanities. These have included politicians, public administrators, athletes, artists, dancers, musicians, scientists, architects, and health-care professionals, from Shaquille O'Neal to Herbie Hancock, Bill Clinton to Frank Gehry, just to give a tip to an iceberg of shiny names and faces. Alongside all this star power are many guest interpreters working out of the limelight, including various types of students and teachers: from elementary school through high school, law students, medical students, graduate students in Education, and in-service teachers. Some of these videos are shot and edited explicitly for educational projects, but many educational videos are also drawn from the ever-growing archive of footage created for TV.

The Poetry in America TV series launched in 2018, in partnership with WGBH in Boston. Now editing for its fifth season, the show has covered historical and contemporary poets, from Phillis Wheatley to Evie Shockley, Emma Lazarus to Richard Blanco, and many others between, and is now distributed through Arizona PBS. When I asked Elisa New why she wanted to make a TV show about poetry, she told me that she felt the medium could capture the feeling of reading with others, of unfolding meaning collaboratively, which is at the heart of any true seminar – carrying that experience from a classroom to a living room, or anywhere else anyone might watch.

"There's no NOVA for literature," she said. And what she wanted to do went beyond the dramatizations of a novel, or an author's life. "A biopic of a writer is not an experience of a work of art," New said.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Filreis, Safford, and Knittle 2022, 48, 52.

### 3. Course construction, curriculum, and student experience

Just as the Poetry in America episodes and course videos feature a cast of interpreters and experts beyond a single host or professor, so the creation and administration of Poetry in America courses is a collaborative effort – the work of a team of curriculum and instructional designers, content and learning and specialists, archivists, video editors, program managers, interns, and a teaching team that has included university instructors, TAs, and high school classroom teachers. <sup>10</sup> I began working as part of that team in 2017 as a co-instructor with Elisa New at the Harvard Extension School; since then, I have focused increasingly on curriculum design, beginning as the lead content specialist and advisor for the environmental poetry course for educators.

Over time, we've made major revisions to the curriculum to more fully include this ethos of a chorus of voices and contributors, and reflect the full range of what American poetry has been and can be. Across both the historical surveys and the topics courses, this has involved putting canonical and noncanonical poems side-by-side and raising the voices of women and authors of color. Reading Emily Dickinson alongside Alison Hawthorne Deming or Juliana Spahr, for example, or Khalil Gibran, Yone Noguchi, and Rabindranath Tagore in conversation with Eliot.

When I think of what a 21st-century schoolroom poetry could teach, it's the range of perspectives, formal traditions, geographies, and ideas – set within historical context – covered by these courses that I find most compelling. Schoolroom poetry of the 19th and first half of the 20th century was culturally constricted: too white, too male, and too inflected by Protestant habits of textual exegesis. At the same time, reading some of those old schoolroom poets now – reading Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Whitcomb Riley, or Paul Laurence Dunbar – conveys a different lesson than the one these poems would have transmitted a century ago. The lesson, broadly outlined, is about how the present is not the past, and yet, how imaginations of difference in region or race still circulate in public rhetoric. Whereupon, we can ask: What is the difference? What has changed, or stayed the same? How is language living, then and now? And how are we, as the medium through which language passes, a part of that history, its pains, and its potential for re-imagination? Even more directly: reading old poems is a quick way to infuse the complexities of both history and its syntaxes into English Language Arts, where contemporary literature can otherwise often dominate.

I've also contributed to many visions and revisions to how the courses actually function — the way they operate architecturally and narratively within a learning management system, and adjustments to assessment structures in order to most equitably support different populations of learners. The biggest changes have been adapting courses to serve high school students enrolled for college credit. These revisions have required us to compartmentalize the skills required for writing a college-level essay: textual analysis and historical context, argumentation, and organization, targeting these as skills-in-progress for readers and writers in development. And we've had to adapt the levels of instructional support as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> This quality of collaboration is a feature of almost all online courses and one whose de facto effect of "decentering the instructor" has both conceptual pros and labor cons. For more on the positive side, see Miller and Wilhelm 2022, 7 and Filreis 2020, 266. From an administrative standpoint, however, the compartmentalizing of different labor practices, many of which were once all conducted by professors, can be seen as an invitation for further austerity; instructors, TAs, and curriculum and instructional designers working on online courses generally do not have the same job security as tenure track faculty.

well. Expanding beyond the model of instructor and TA, these courses employ teaching teams of TAs and Zoom section leaders, hired through ASU, and running the equivalent of discussion sections, focused on actively engaging with material introduced in videos. Even more importantly, students enroll in the course as a cohort, with the support of their classroom teachers. These teachers don't have to grade student work; their only responsibility is to provide space and time for deepening understanding, allowing students to participate in the active discovery of reading collectively for themselves.

One of the most exciting things about the high school program is the potential for connecting students across the country in a learning climate where secondary education varies widely by region and state. Since launching in 2019, the high school dual-enrollment program has served more than 6,500 students from 230 schools across 29 states plus the District of Columbia. The program launched at Harvard, before moving to ASU in 2020. Of the students who have enrolled 98% come from the National Education Equity Lab's network of Title 1 schools. These students enroll at no cost to themselves or their families; 73% complete the course with a credit-eligible score (C or higher) and receive transferable course credits from ASU. There are benefits for teachers as well. Of the teachers working with groups of students for the National Education Equity Lab courses, 80% report professional growth as part of their experience facilitating classroom experience; 94% would recommend the course, and the experience, to other teachers.

In particular, teachers draw benefits for professional development from the additional context and reading practices that surround and scaffold Poetry in America videos; these are as essential to what learning actually means and looks like in these contexts as the videos and teams of instructional support. Videos are always introduced, contextualized, and are followed by forms of engagement – from quizzes to annotations, writing prompts, or activities that invite learners to pursue their own readings and questions. These forms of engagement can all happen asynchronously and are the primary means to support non-degree learners in another version of these courses, where those enrolled are largely adult students, although they have also included homeschoolers, and other younger learners as well. Meanwhile, in the versions of courses offered to high school students, there are additional suggested lesson plans or classroom activities for TAs or classroom teachers, supporting students in real time.

All of these activities are designed around a reading framework with five principles: Making Observations, Understanding Structure and Form, Situating Texts in History, Identifying Speaker and Audience, and Enjoying and Creating Language. Together, these flexible principles outline an experience of reading that bridges formalist and historicist approaches, and that connects critical reading with creative writing. These principles originally arose from New's many decades of experience in the classroom, and training as a critic, and were first codified and incorporated into courses beginning with Poetry of the City, for which poet and writer Adrienne Raphel and editor Emily Silk (then both graduate students at Harvard) were key collaborators and curriculum designers. Since then, this framework has provided the foundation of learning practices for all Poetry in America courses and learning experiences.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> The National Education Equity Lab connects students from Title I schools nationwide with opportunities to earn no-cost college credit while still in high school. For more, see https://edequitylab.org/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> I use the terminology of course and learning experience separately because, in addition to traditional semester-length courses, Poetry in America has also developed shorter learning sprints – from 1–2-day professional learning experiences for teachers to 3-week interdisciplinary curriculum add-ons for high school students.

These reading principles guiding activities within Poetry in America courses slice through a dichotomy between formalism and historicism. Making observations and understanding structure and form might belong to practices of close reading and analysis still affixed to New Criticism, but you don't have to go very far into thinking about genre before you're necessarily peering beyond the boundaries of the page to a social and historical context in which elegy for public figures (say, by Puritan writers), or dialect verse (for the local color writers of the late 19th and early 20th century) had a particular caché that doesn't translate into another time or place. Identifying a speaker might bring us back into formalism, and the Modernists and postmodernists remind us that a speaker is not an author make, but considering the audience once again orients us towards public life.

Another dichotomy that this framework begins to pull apart is the split between being a reader and being a writer. How, when you read something so well made, it might make you want to sit down and try to make something yourself. Of all these practices, this is the one that is most lively for younger students – high school students still learning who they are in the world are more motivated to look closely and consider the context of other texts, when there is some connection between those labors and their efforts to understand their own unfolding. Critical reading and writing can be reductive or extractive, but there are ways of responding to creative language that are themselves creative, or that substitute the insular trajectory of a solo voice arguing with what "they said," for one that adds another layer of harmonics to the chorus.<sup>13</sup>

## 4. What does poetry teach?

Of all these practices, New identifies making observations as the most essential. "I did notice over the years," she notes, "that students often didn't give themselves any time to make observations." Giving students the opportunity to experience that what they "are noticing is essential" is a "radical" reading practice – for all its old trappings. A schoolroom poetry of the 21st century must give students back a sense of time, along with an experience of agency, showing them how attention can live, and expand, within the container of a text. At the same time, reclaiming that sense of time in the present through practices of close, and slow, reading, can deepen students' awareness of the context, and their participation in the making of history, by situating texts in their own times and places. A schoolroom poetry for the present, in other words, can recover a sense of how private lives exist in public contexts.

Poetry "lends itself to public sharing," Elisa New says. "I discovered that early on."

In one of the out-takes for TV, Julia Alvarez, discussing Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," notes how some poems may "travel" better than others, echoing a statement that the founder of *Poetry* magazine, Harriet Monroe, made back in the heyday of Modernism, that "poetry travels more easily than any other art." In *Poetry Unbound*, Mike Chasar calls "this easy mobility," one of poetry's "most overlooked and understudied characteristics." <sup>14</sup>

 $<sup>^{13}</sup>$  Or paranoid. I invoke Eve Sedgwick's exploration of paranoid reading here, mainly for the cascade of criticism it elicited reflecting on critical reading practices in the academy; however, mostly I am concerned with how these reading practices are activated among younger students, where the idea that texts are there to be mined primarily for "evidence" is a product of common core standards and treatment of texts as repositories of information. For the OG account, see: Sedgwick 2003, 123–51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Chasar 2020, Monroe qtd., 3-4.

Notice how these expressions of poetry as something that circulates freely is in seeming opposition to some of the claims for poetry with a capital P, from the Romantic period through the New Critics: poetry as inward-looking, overheard, cordoned off from the world in a fixed, stony, case. Since the mid-20th century, when poetry's dominance in the classroom began to fade, poets and critics have spilled plenty of ink looking for ways to wrest poetry back into public life. See the Language poets. See Oren Izenberg. <sup>15</sup> See the new lyric studies.

I've seen how poetry teaches students both to slow down and notice what's before them — whether that's a formal artifact of language or a flower on a stem; and, at the same time, how those same poems can spark conversations about topics ranging from race to infrastructure, energy extraction to clouds, the future and the past. Poetry can be both, private and public, at once. Intimate and shared. It can stay tucked in a pocket, and go for a city walk. In education parlance, it has a low entry point and a high ceiling, wherein the doorway can be a meditation on a word, the strange cliff a line break introduces to a phrase, an old poet's idiosyncratic dash, and the high ceiling belongs to a dance hall, where everyone is whirling around with everyone else.

In the debate about whether the humanities teach content or skills, the answer poetry gives is: both. <sup>16</sup> Increasingly, Elisa New says, "it's understood that to be a successful citizen, you need to be able to read complex texts." Contrary to the current Common Core standards, which overvalue informational texts and extractive reading practices, cognitively navigating imaginative and highly formal texts – and poetry as a highly concentrated dose of both of these – is the best training any reader can have. Reading poetry prepares readers to make meaning of *any* complex text. And not only because thinking about a comma can elicit multiple interpretations of a line, but also because punctuation, syntax, grammar, line breaks and stanza construction, genre choices, or the adoption of personas, the collaging of language gleaned from somewhere else, all have corollaries in lived experience, and how it is structured and shared. As such, poetry – and all forms of language practice and humanistic inquiry – open outward.

Reintroducing poetry to schoolrooms gives poetry back its public face. The lessons it has to teach are more complex, and varied than any other time in American educational or political history. However, the important thing is, in a world where a schoolroom may be a city bus, or a back office during a lunch break, poetry can make space for both individuals, and the aspirations and difficulties, of American collective life, there.

Gillian Osborne is a writer and educator, trained as a poet and scholar of 19th-c. American and environmental literature at UC-Berkeley. She is author of a book combining criticism and personal essay (Green Green Green, 2021), a chapbook of poems and drawings, a number of chapters and articles on 19th-century poetry, and co-editor of a scholarly collection on ecopoetics. Since 2018, she has been a lead curriculum designer for Poetry in America, contributing to courses and other learning experiences on poetry, interdisciplinary humanities, and professional development for educators. She has held teaching appointments at the Harvard Extension School, Bard College, and UC-Santa Barbara, and joined the faculty at Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching & Learning Innovation in 2024, where she oversees curriculum creation for a new center focused on educational media.

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<sup>15</sup> Izenberg 2011.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Casuto 2024; Hayot 2021, unpaginated.

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