Call for a Special Issue of Organizational Aesthetics: Poetry for Organizing

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle. Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers that there is in it, after all, a place for the genuine. – Marianne Moore (1887-1972), Poetry.

Marianne Moore’s poem on Poetry sums up what poetry is for many of us, and the phrase “a place for the genuine” reveals the motivation for a special issue of Organizational Aesthetics (OA). In these times of fake news, fake scholarly publications, and economic, political and sociocultural divisiveness, a new way to see what is genuine is needed. The special poetry issue of OA will offer poems and short essays about poetry related to organizational life to give readers a fresh lens to make sense of how we organize collectively.

Professor emeritus Late Dr. James March of Stanford University, renowned for his impactful management books and articles, published several books of poetry, which far fewer people know about. In 2006, he offered “the proposition that poetry is a natural medium for expressing and contemplating doubt, paradox, and contradiction-features of life, well known to experienced managers, but normally banished, perhaps with reason, from the public language of management.” Coleman (2012) and Denning (2018) offer some ideas about why poetry is relevant for professionals. Poetry allows us to bypass the cognitive filters of our minds to know the world differently. This special issue is the space for poems that bridge our so-called ‘real’ work, with our human experience to consider who decides, how and why, what is permitted to be called ‘real’ or work.

Many world leaders have confessed to turning to poetry for solace. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, a published poet, talking of his life-long interest in poetry said: "I had always been extremely interested in poetry and I used to regret that I just had an engineering and nuclear physics background." Former U.S. President Barack Obama, speaking during a National Poetry Month workshop and reading at the White House on April 17th, 2015, said:

Poetry matters. Poetry, like all art, gives shape and texture and depth of meaning to our lives. It helps us know the world. It helps us understand ourselves. It helps us understand others, their struggles, their joys, the ways that they see the world. It helps us connect ... I think it’s fair to say that if we didn’t have poetry, that this would be a pretty barren world. In fact, it’s not clear that we would survive without poetry.

Social movements have used poems as revolutionary anthems to organize collective action. Business organizations sell products and services using advertising ditties or slogans to convey their messages, relying on poetic tools. Poetry requires readers to engage with each reading of the poem in order to make sense of it, thus bridging the personal and the universal, in each new context. As newer and increasingly accessible technologies liberate
many voices, poetry is one way to connect. Poetry is just there, especially when we are not thinking about it, as we experience the world. Most of us recall song-lyrics from different phases of our lives. Workers use songs for easing their work, be it as sing-alongs to hard manual labor or background music for creative and intellectual pursuits. It is time to examine these pervasive influences explicitly.

For this special poetry issue of OA, we ask for submissions of poems and short essays that inform us, transform us, inspire us, and awaken us to new ways of seeing the world, solving its problems, and organizing in ways that serve us all. We invite poems and short essays in the following suggested — but not comprehensive — areas:

- What is organizing, and causes we need to organize for
- What is subtle in organizations and not adequately described in prose
- What in organizations is better captured in-between the words and lines
- Organizational experiences through lyrics, chants, and songs
- Use of words in organizations for communication or miscommunication
- Spoken words in various aspects of organizational reality (walk the talk, slogans, strategic mission/vision buzzwords, e.g., customer-first, be the best, etc.)
- Poetry in research – data collection & analysis and communication of results
- Poetry as an arts-based intervention in organizations
- Ephemeralty in organizations such as the same words meaning different things to different people or in different contexts
- Implications for organizational studies from the field of poetry

Poems related to any aspect of organizational and managerial experiences, on topics of how we organize as individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, communities, and societies are appropriate for submission. In addition to organizing, we will also consider poems on causes we organize for, such as any of the topics reflected in business schools’ curricula. For example, poems about the role of organizations in society, management, markets, leadership, followership, strategy, ethics, marketing, systems, structure, money, organizing, and related issues about managers, policy makers, professors, students, and even academic life, are all welcome. Poetry maybe a particularly powerful lens for managerial experiences of dealing with eternal dilemmas, ethical issues, balancing individual/personal and collective/professional demands, the trials and tribulations of belonging, relationships at work, the nature of work, creativity and voice, and systemic issues and influences.

Poems in other languages will be considered with translations, provided there is explicit permission from the original copyright holder or evidence that it is not required. The special issue encourages voices of those who have felt marginalized or see things differently from the dominant narratives. We expect submissions that help make fresh sense of the dynamics of organizing, by revealing the subtle rhythms, themes, metaphors, and aesthetics, not accessible by dominant research methodologies. If you have used poems at work, in the classroom, or training workshops, we want to learn about your experiences, in concise essays (under 1000 words). Essays offering a perspective on the use of poetry in organizational life, say, how and why poetry is relevant, how poems are used, or what a specific poem contributes to the practice of management are also appropriate. Essays about a specific poem, a poet, or poetry tradition might be another way to enrich the reader’s understanding of organizing. The purpose behind this poetry issue is to have a collection that offers insights to the readers and to develop a broader basis for this under-explored research field.

- We will accept and review submissions on a rolling basis until 31st July 2020.
- Submit electronically at http://www.organizationalaesthetics.org
- All submissions should conform to the OA style guide: [https://digitalcommons.wpi.edu/oa/policies.html#formatting](https://digitalcommons.wpi.edu/oa/policies.html#formatting)

**Special Issue Editors:**

Lead Editor: Jyoti Bachani [jb19@stmarys-ca.edu](mailto:jb19@stmarys-ca.edu), Saint Mary’s College of California  
Associate Editors: Raina Leon, [rjl6@stmarys-ca.edu](mailto:rjl6@stmarys-ca.edu), Saint Mary’s College of California  
Jenny Knight, [jk92@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:jk92@brighton.ac.uk), University of Brighton  
Mona Dash, [dashmona@outlook.com](mailto:dashmona@outlook.com), London, United Kingdom

**Jyoti Bachani** PhD, is an associate professor of strategy and innovation at Saint Mary’s College of California. She is a Fulbright scholar with internationally recognized expertise in case-writing. She has been reading and translating Hindi poetry into English for twenty years and in the past four years has brought poetry and improv to the Academy of Management conference. In April 2017, she was a featured poet for U.K. Poetry Society’s Poetry@3 at Saint Giles in London.

**Raina León** PhD, member of the Carolina African American Writers Collective, has been published in numerous journals as a writer of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and scholarly work. She is the author of three collections of poetry, *Canticle of Idols*, *Boogeyman Dawn*, and *sombra: (dis)locate* (2016) and the chapbook, *profeta without refuge* (2016). She has received fellowships and residencies with Macondo, Cave Canem, CantoMundo, Montana Artists Refuge, the Macdowell Colony, Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, Vermont Studio Center, the Tyrone Guthrie Center in Annamaghkerrig, Ireland and Ragdale. She also is a founding editor of *The Acentos Review*, an online quarterly, international journal devoted to the promotion and publication of Latinx arts and the founding curator of Cleave: Bay Area Womxn Writers. She is an associate professor of education at Saint Mary’s College of California. She was poet-in-residence at the Museum of the African Diaspora in Fall 2018 and will be the curator for the MoAD summer 2019 Community Voices reading series. She is currently at work on a collection of essays and poetry on revolutionary mothering.

**Jenny Knight** PhD, is a senior lecturer in organisational behaviour and human resource management at the University of Brighton, and a published poet. Jenny has written poetry all her life and has more recently produced academically referenced poems focusing on organizational life. She has performed these poems at international conferences. She has worked in and provided consultancy for in large organisations nationally and internationally in areas of leadership development, culture change, performance management, and creating strategic plans. Jenny has a background of writing, directing and performing in the theatre.

**Mona Dash** was awarded the ‘Poet of excellence’ in 2016, at the House of Lords’ London, UK, and in 2018, one of her short stories won the Asian Writer Short Story Competition. With a Masters in Creative Writing and a degree in Telecoms Engineering and Management, she has published two collections of poetry, a novel and several pieces in anthologies and international journals. Mona has read her work in prestigious venues such as Lauderdale House, Nehru Centre, the House of Lords, The Library, Yurt Café in London; and at Durham, Rochdale and Wolverhampton Literature festivals. She is a member of The Whole Kahani, a British South Asian Writers group that has published anthologies 'Love across a broken map' (Dahlia Publications, UK) and May we borrow your country (Linen Press, UK). She works as a sales manager in a leading global technology organization.
References


https://www.forbes.com/sites/stephaniedenning/2018/04/06/does-poetry-have-a-place-in-business-one-unsung-success-secret/#1a76f4e8558a

Journal of Management Inquiry; Thousand Oaks Vol. 15, Iss. 1,: 70-72.


President Obama’s quote taken from video clip at: 
www.c-span.org/video/?c4541900/president-obama-national-poetry-month

President Carter’s quote taken from this New York Times article, Jimmy Carter it turns out is a poet too: 

Prof. James March