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Critical Intersections through Poetry in a TESOL & World Language Graduate Education Program

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Authors

Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, Sharon M. Nuruddin, Kuo Zhang, Yixuan Wang, Amanda Brady Deaton, Xinyi Meng, Ashley Brown-Lemley, and Ming Sun

| **STUDIO** |

**Critical Intersections through Poetry
in a TESOL & World Language Graduate Education Program**

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It's difficult to get the news from poems,
yet men [sic] die miserably every day from lack of what is found there.

~William Carlos Williams

The famous American poet, William Carlos Williams, was also a medical doctor. Working with patients, Williams turned to poetry as a way to navigate and bear witness to human suffering and possibility. Neither medical doctors nor educators will get the “news” from poetry nor exact methods for applied practice, but the sentiment here bears repeating: Poetry provides an important resource for an examined, aesthetic life, one that is particularly important to those working in educative and/or caretaking professions. As a professor of TESOL and World Language Education, I have made it a part of my practice to offer two poetry courses for educators: “Poetry for Creative Language Educators” (15-week semester) and “Poetry for Interdisciplinary Understanding” (Summer, 3.5-week course). The goal for graduate students pursuing degrees in education is to nourish poetry writing skills as tools for reflection, connection, surprise, and joy in teaching practices. Both courses merge approaches in teacher preparation with “workshop” approaches in poetry training, where new writing drafts are shared among peers for attention to *what* is being said, as well as *how* it is rendered to take advantage of the beauty and power of carefully crafted language. We apply this understanding to curriculum, examining what material is being taught, how, and to what end. As someone with both a Ph.D. in educational linguistics, as well as an M.F.A. in poetry, with publications in and across both fields, my aim is to encourage pre- and in-service teachers’ skills as poet-educators, those able to engage in creative and playful approaches to curriculum and instruction in languages, literatures, and creative writing that take into account the challenges and opportunities presented by inequality and a social justice curriculum (Cahnmann-Taylor 2019; Cahnmann-Taylor & Sanders-Bustle, 2019).

Teachers and teacher educators are endlessly confronting the fallout from inequalities in our systems and often the first to be blamed, unfairly, for how inequitable social systems impact teaching and learning outcomes. An examined educator's life, one which helps them thrive rather than “die miserably,” as Williams poetically described above, can include a practice that involves very personal reflections that access universal, systemic concerns. This studio submission represents a collaboration with graduate student poets in

these courses, each of whom shares one poem drafted in the course alongside a prose reflection that responds to this question:

How did the process of writing this poem and discussing drafts with peers and professor in “poetry workshop” impact your understandings of how “race, class, gender, sexuality, exceptionalities, power, well-being, and other subjectivities play out in educational settings as a means of advancing social justice for all people?”

In what follows, alumni from one or both of these courses, all of whom are pursuing graduate degrees Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages [TESOL] & World Language Education, share their poem and critical reflection, noting the impact of the political climate in which the creative work was produced, as well as how it contributes to reflexive, critical teacher education scholarship. Co-poets are identified by name, program degree, years of teaching, country of origin, age, and how they currently describe their racial or ethnic identity. In closing, the course instructor shares a poem and implications for creative and critical teacher education. —*Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor*

Sharon M. Nuruddin

Degree Program: Ph.D. in TESOL & World Language Education
Teaching Experience: Over 20 years teaching Spanish and English at all levels (pre-K to adult)
Country of Origin: United States of America
Race/Ethnicity: African American

Pelo malo

Back turned, I heard my student call me *pelo malo*.
Whisper-quiet, almost silent, but I did not hear it wrong.
She thinks I’m monolingual, perhaps I didn’t follow.

I carry on for the others, in anger I won’t wallow.
Not deadlocked, but dreaded locks to keep my spirit strong.
Back turned, I heard my student call me *pelo malo*.

Dry-mouthed I turn to her and force myself to swallow.
Our brown eyes meet, her lips upturn. I smile, but not for long.
She thinks I’m monolingual, perhaps I didn’t follow.

Though our ancestors rest together in watery hollows,
and to the same sea we just might belong.
Back turned, I heard my student call me *pelo malo*.

Our people in cages, our people for ages neck-noosed in the gallows
But straight-haired sister could not speak our black-girl bond.
She thinks I'm monolingual, perhaps I didn't follow

English as her second language, *español primero*
Thinks that in my nappy blackness I barely know one.
Back turned, I heard my student call me *pele malo*.
She thinks I'm monolingual, perhaps I didn't follow.

Reflection:

Our poetry cohort became a family of sorts, sharing intimately personal connections with nature as we navigated the slippery slope of writing our world through the conventions of craft. In the beginning of the course, we were introduced to formal, inherited and international poetry structures such as the sonnet, pantoum, ghazal, and villanelle. This poem is written in the French form called a villanelle, a poem in three-line stanzas where the first and third lines repeat throughout the poem and are both repeated in the final, 6th stanza.

The poem is a meditation on a brief encounter with a Latinx student that had stayed with me for almost twenty years. It represents the racism that exists within and between minoritized communities. Recently, social media has exposed oppressive violence at the hands of white supremacists for all to see, but rarely do we see its trickle-down effects in our communities. This poem exemplifies how racism sticks, how it becomes an inherited evil manifested in microaggressions such as coded comments that favor and promote white norms of physical appearance. It speaks to a larger issue of the ways in which power structures are often maintained through self-sabotage, in this case within African diaspora communities.

Poetic discourse reaches us in ways different from traditional academic writing and, as an educator who focuses on awareness and respect of culture in the world language classroom, this poem broaches a subject worthy of discussion in courses that prepare world language teachers, as well as *all* teachers. Boisseau et al. (2012) state that “[w]riting—trying to dig up one’s deepest feelings, perceptions, and ideas—will always be an intimate, vulnerable activity” (p. 2). It is within this vulnerability that poetry advances social justice. Through poetry workshop, we found voice as educators and teacher educators to speak through our languages and cultures while opening our minds and ears to one another's lived experiences of struggle, pain, persistence, and truth telling. Our collective works remind us how we are historically interconnected, and the responsibility we all have to support each other as an act of resistance.

Kuo Zhang

Degree Program: Ph.D. in TESOL & World Language Education
Teaching Experience: Two years teaching Chinese and four years teaching ESOL endorsement courses
Country of Origin: China
Race/Ethnicity: Asian

**Shumei Told Me What Happened
during Her Son's 15-Month Checkup,
But My American Friends Didn't Believe it**

When the nurse pushed the dose
into my son's thigh and said
"You are all set for today,"
I realized something must be wrong.

"But we're here for the 15-month checkup!
What's the shot? Is it called this?"

I shivered to show her
"Pneumococcal"
in my cellphone, a name
too complicated to pronounce.

"Oh yes!"
"But he already got it last Tuesday!"

The nurse was shocked.
She checked her computer,
rushed to report.

The doctor came in.
"We're so sorry!
The blonde girl who did records
made a mistake. We won't let her
work here anymore!
And your boy will be fine.
He may get a bigger bump.
Don't worry."

I still felt angry,
wanted to say
something more.

But I nodded,
thanked him,
and just let it go.

Reflection:

This poetry course and other courses in arts-based research encourage us to engage in qualitative inquiry through an artist's lens. My dissertation about international student-mothers in U.S. institutions uses poetry as a method for analysis and representation of my interviews and ethnographic fieldwork. When one study participant, Shumei, told me her story during our interview about how she interacted with people in medical settings as a non-native English speaker and an international student first-time mother, I felt very shocked, sympathetic, and angry. I immediately wrote this poem, originally titled "Shumei's Story during Her Son's 15-Month Checkup," and shared it in our poetry workshop. In addition to helping me improve the diction and structure of the poem, surprisingly, my American professor and classmates, due to questions of liability, did not believe that an American doctor would admit to the faulty actions of a staff person, questioning Shumei's memory or the presentation of these lines:

The blonde girl who did records
made a mistake. We won't let her
work here anymore!

Workshop comments made me reflect deeper on the intercultural and interlinguistic aspects of this issue. If Shumei told the "truth" in her interview, I wondered if the doctor had spoken differently to her than he would have to an American mom. Does the doctor have more authoritative discursive power because he doesn't share the same cultural backgrounds and beliefs with his patient? On the other hand, in the age of "fake news," it seems meaningless to argue about what actually happened that day. Shumei's narrative should not be taken as a "truthful" account of her actual communicative practices, but as a restructuring process of reflections and interpretations on her own stories, through which we can see how she negotiated her new social identity of a mother in a foreign language and culture. My writing a poem about Shumei's retelling and framing it as retold to a U.S. audience furthers reflection on how language is always simultaneously about what is being said, to whom, by whom, for what purpose and to what ends. After the poetry workshop, I changed the title of this poem in order to show the relationship between truth, fiction, and context.

Amanda Brady Deaton

Degree Program: Ph.D. in Language and Literacy Education and Secondary English
Teaching Experience: Twelve years teaching middle and high school English
Country of Origin: United States of America
Race/Ethnicity: Caucasian

Argle Bargle

I have known the complete uselessness
of nude leggings, hiding
thighs,
argle-bargle
of creases
and dimples,

All the worthlessness of
24-carat gold pills,
and anal bleach,
Furry toilet seats,
a million dollar bridge
to nowhere,
Pet clothes
pet rocks
pet insurance.
My Bosu ball
and collagen supplement
keep me youthful and
broken.

And I have seen
all these things
with an empty
bank account,
Touchscreens on refrigerators
containing diet water,
With a \$200 per month
card payment
while I
Forget to fill my cabinets
with food.

Reflection:

I took Dr. Cahnmann-Taylor's poetry for educators course in the Spring of 2019, after a particularly stressful year in which I went through a (needed) divorce, survived a hospital stay after experiencing suicidal thoughts, started pursuing a Ph.D., went from "co-parent" to "single parent," and spent countless hours in therapy. Writing poetry in this course became more therapeutic than anything else I had experienced, helping me to unpack long-lasting trauma from both my childhood and early adulthood. I feel as healthy now as I ever have, and this is partly because my identity shifted, through the efforts of this course, solidly to a writer.

As a white female hailing from a small southern town, I have often felt my ideas were at odds with those around me, and helpless to make a change, even as a classroom teacher. In sharing poetry with my students, as in the poetry workshops modeled in Dr. Cahnmann-Taylor's course, I have been able to share poetry writing with my language arts students in a way that honors feelings of frustration and honesty to afford community-building. I have written and shared poetry on many topics, from being told as a child that I was not allowed to love a Black person or a woman, to violence I experienced in early childhood, to my estranged relationship with my father, to being a woman in a culture that too often privileges male status over female. After several workshop sessions, secondary students began sharing their own deep, insightful, and moving work, and my high school students begged to continue workshops. We became a family through the sessions, and my classroom became a safe place.

Yixuan Wang

Degree Program: Ph.D. in TESOL & World Language Education
Teaching Experience: One year teaching ESOL in China and two years' teaching Chinese in the U.S.
Country of Origin: China
Race/Ethnicity: Asian

Translation's Loss

Translation is opening
a carbon-leaked soda.

A hyper husky choked
by her leash, fetching phantom balls
and gibberish.

Translators know how
a returning General gropes
amputated limbs;

how a three-star
Michelin chef cooks
with no salt.

The loss is flesh and blood
gone too, after poachers
cut ivory off;

saggy skin
after the stomach's
recent miscarriage.

Reflection:

The prompt for this poem was using metaphor to express difficulties or scenarios when translating from one language to another. During the prewriting stage, I realized that writing difficulties I experienced in translating Chinese to English, or vice versa, was a big challenge. However, choosing the best metaphors to convey the struggles that I had was the most difficult part. I wanted to have metaphors that people from all paths of life and language could understand, especially pre-service and in-service teachers who will encounter students with translingual or transnational experiences in our future classrooms (Canagarajah, 2013; García, 2009). As an English learner, I experience frustration when I fail to translate successfully between English and Chinese. Whenever the translation fails, the cross-cultural conversation fails as well. As a result, interlocutors from both sides struggle to understand one another and break down walls constructed by our racial, gender, and class backgrounds.

In our workshop, peers gave me mostly positive feedback, although some peers disagreed with some of the metaphors I chose, for example, “flesh and blood gone too.” I think it is understandable because I brought in a Chinese concept of a good translation which would be described as full of flesh and blood just like an alive creature in both languages. For monolingual or multilingual peers who liked this metaphor, it is also apparent that this metaphor is somewhat accurate in both Chinese and English, because they understood the image and idea quickly without knowing this cultural origin. Finally, I still chose to keep this metaphor in my final draft to keep this vivid metaphor, which is well-known in Chinese-speaking world. Thus, this line is not only a metaphor but also a translated metaphor from Chinese as well. Peers who can speak or tried to learn another language identified with frustration when we failed to translate between two languages. This shared experience among multilingual peers helped me realize that as language teachers, we need to understand students' stress and frustration in class. Another important lesson is that some students who struggle with English in the class might be masters in their native languages. As teachers who have authority and power in the classrooms, we must recognize and appreciate students' academic ability and skills they already developed in their native languages, and help them achieve in an English-dominant U.S. educational system. For teachers who have bilingual or translingual backgrounds like me, it is also our responsibility to help monolingual educators understand the difficulties and challenges that ESL students face on a daily basis.

Ashley Brown-Lemley

Degree Program: M.Ed. in TESOL & World Language Education
Teaching Experience: Fourteen years teaching middle and high school Spanish in public school and private tutoring; one year teaching community-based ESOL; one year teaching ESOL in China, and two years teaching Chinese in the U.S.
Country of Origin: United States of America
Race/Ethnicity: Caucasian

November 9, 2016

A student says: *They say I'll get sent back to Africa.*
Wanting to ask which racist half-wit said that shit?,
I rein it in: *Sweetheart, you can't be sent back*
where you've never been.

Another student says: *Mis tíos are packing for México;*
it's better to leave than be taken.
De verdad no lo conocen.
It's only a place they were born in.

In the wake of the 58th quadrennial,
the homework noted,
the buses loaded;
I sit at my desk and weep.

As I witness the panic in their eyes
the color of you stinks on my skin.
How will they know I didn't want this either?

Reflection:

I've enrolled twice in Dr. Cahnmann-Taylor's summer poetry class, which is available for repeat credit. During the summer of 2018, I found that writing poetry allowed me to revisit some stifled emotions that resulted from my mother's death from cancer years earlier. My summer of 2019 experience writing "November 9, 2016" was not much different. Having had the emotional release poetry offered the previous summer, I was ready to unleash my frustrations surrounding the legitimate harm our current political and social climate does to our nation's young people, especially as it relates to the legacy we are creating for interactions between people of color and whites. After all, we should move forward in acceptance and unity, not back towards racial division and conflict.

I am a Spanish teacher in an underperforming, majority African-American, low socioeconomic status school. With the election of Donald Trump to the presidency came an uptick in the racially charged language and behaviors I witnessed not only in the news media, but also from white friends, acquaintances, and relatives. It is as though white relations in my hometown felt emboldened to say inaccurate, racially motivated slurs. In

this context, the poem materialized as an emotional rant. Writing it gave me the chance to say all the things I want to say, but had felt unable to say for fear of social and even professional reprisal for myself and my husband.

An earlier draft of this poem included experiences of racial inequality and profiling from my teenage years; the workshop guided me to focus on the impact of racial unrest on my middle school students. Two of my classmates were also Spanish-speaking teachers who helped me with the Spanish language in the second stanza of the poem. I felt that it was important to get this part right, because I wanted the language to represent my students' perspectives and voices as accurately as possible. Monolingual readers will be unable to read parts of this stanza, which should heighten their discomfort and, with luck, focus attention on the final line, reminding the reader that for the potential deportees in this poem, America is the only home they know.

Xinyi Meng

Degree Program: M.Ed. in TESOL & World Language Education
Teaching Experience: Six months teaching English to high school students in China as a substitute teacher
Country of Origin: China
Race/Ethnicity: Asian

Just call me Melanie¹

Xinyi runs into a crowd. Introduces herself.
They expect something exotic
and simple. It's Xinyi. (Don't deny me.)
Cinyi? See? (Who's denying?)

You're right that X looks too stiff.
Should be soft as sheen, except
Xin (馨) smells differently.
It's a fragrance that wakes you in the morning.

She? You're right it's a feminine name.
Should be easily tamed, except
her heart is a wild yolk that refuses
the yoke of constant battering.

Last name? Not Ming, but Meng like monk.
A family tree stems from Mencius, except
her grandpa is a broken branch and she's
now overseas with an English name.

¹ Meng, X. (2019). *Just call me Melanie*. Also available at <https://www.avelvetgiant.com/xinyi-meng>. Used with permission.

Reflection:

Within the prompt of composing a poem about our names, scenarios of how my name is pronounced began flooding my mind. The different ways people pronounce my name have conveyed attitudes, judgments based on my appearance, and the stereotypes inevitably formed under the world's limelight. How to make the conversation new? How to convey a part of me that's more than the people I belong to racially, a class I'm subjected to socially, a gender I'm born into genetically? How should I present myself in a way that represents my personal beliefs, and how should my performance of self (Goffman, 1956) be received? Why had I previously been accustomed to accept any way in which people pronounced my name? Are corrections necessary, or futile?

As I started to consider the implications of how my name was perceived and pronounced, my identities in the eye of the public gradually took shape. The more I think about names, the stronger the interplay I find between self and others. The process of writing this poem is a reconsideration of my cultural heritage, my voice as a female student, and the image I portray beyond my "Asian" appearance. It also sheds light for me on the implications of increasing intercultural communication happening in an ever more global community. During the poetry workshop, the feedback I received on an earlier draft was mostly positive, confirming that to write about personal moments opens up a possibility for growth in understanding identity and progress in more universal cross-cultural communications. Building up a conversation essentially requires a two-way street where preconceptions are either confirmed or challenged. In order to achieve justice for ourselves and the community of people with whom we are associated, more conversations are needed regarding the heritages we carry through history and the vitality we contribute individually.

Ming Sun

Degree Program: M.Ed. in TESOL & World Language Education
Teaching Experience: Six months teaching Chinese
Country of Origin: China
Race/Ethnicity: Asian

For International Students

from [Jubilate Agno](#) by Christopher Smart

For you crossed the sea with 2 overweight luggage;
For realizing even YouTube ads know your race;
For feeling you shouldn't speak your mother tongue;
For getting angry but failing to argue in English;
For hearing "we only hire Americans";
For depositing triple security when not having the SSN;
For changing the tire, then worrying about the next-month-rent;

For longing to hear your native songs in restaurants;
For furnishing your apartment from dumpsters;
For wanting organic food, but your wallet? Empty;
For saving \$50 in 3 months for a new dress;
For not relating to family newborns;
For hating yourself when parents sell their house for tuition;
For struggling to find the best time to skype;
For lying “I am doing great”;
For receiving lots of A but can’t find a job.

Reflection:

Dr. Cahnmann-Taylor shared [Christopher Smart's poem “from Jubilate Agno”](#) (n.d.) with us after class to introduce the poetic device of anaphora in which beginning lines repeat, causing an incantatory effect. When I read this poem, I suddenly wanted to write a poem in this form for myself and for all the moments I have been through. I first shared my first draft with another international student, who said she felt sad about our common experience: holding many expectations to come to the U.S. to study and experiencing these vulnerable and hopeless moments. The next day, I shared this poem in the class workshop. Despite the fact that there were numerous international students enrolled in the 15-week poetry course I'd taken before, in my second course during the summer term I was the only Asian and international student enrolled. A classmate started to correct my grammar, telling me in English that the word “luggage” is uncountable, so I cannot put the number “2” before the word “luggage.” I was very angry because I knew luggage is uncountable; I had chosen this diction intentionally. I was asking myself, would this classmate say the same thing, if a native-English speaker had written this line? Dr. Cahnmann-Taylor confirmed my word choice when she said she liked the way I used “2 luggage” to convey the non-native speaker's voice; this feedback made me feel more confident about my writing. In some cases, the instructor and/or one's native-English speaking peers might be considered to be “judges” in the classroom. A good language instructor listens to the voices from both sides without holding biases, requiring language that is appropriate to the context.

Melisa “Misha” Cahnmann-Taylor

Program: Faculty in TESOL & World Language Education
Teaching Experience: Over 20 years teaching in higher education, as well as primary and secondary education
Country of Origin: United States of America
Race/Ethnicity: Jewish-American

Museum Says 75% of All American Comedians Were Jews in 1975

Oy-va-voy, the way Yiddish expressed unsayables edged with joy:
think lace just past the nipple.

Oy-va-voy.

Such luck, after *Kristalnacht*. Some untranslatable
sounds found equivalence in Shanghai,

the only place in 1939 that didn't require a visa.

They were "*hulihutu*," Mandarin for "confused," but
found the same syllable sass.

When allowed to enter the U.S., they found punchlines:
did you know *vista* in Latvian means "chicken?"

What a beautiful chicken! One exclaimed to Lake Michigan;
another pointed to a father's German-
town, P.A. bicycle

called it: *Pop-cycle*.
Almost maniacal

their card tricks with syntax,
alphabet jugglers. Did you know

in Icelandic, speaking "rock language" is to echo?
So a Jew said it again:

Oy va voy, gargling stones,

while an audience tinkled at a *Yid* sprinkling wrinkles
with powdered sugar to look old.

A kluger farshteyt fun eyn vort tsvey
(A wise man hears one word and understands two)

How native-like their children sounded,
becoming, like so many unwanted do,
whizzes
of double speak, microphone spit,

bringing whole theatres
to tears.

Reflection:

Most students in our graduate TESOL & World Language program will become teachers of language and/or language teacher educators. My courses ask them to consider adopting a poet's identity to language and language instruction, discerning inherited forms and formal language, as well as learning to creatively play in the spaces of translanguaging and translanguage (Canagarajah, 2013; García, 2009). In many assignments I encourage students to draw upon their many linguistic and cultural resources, inviting readers who may or may not be "fluent" in those resources. During the summer of 2019, I realized I had often kept my own languages and cultures of inheritance silent and decided to integrate new knowledge I'd recently learned at a museum in Tel Aviv about the roles Jewish people had played in the development of American comedy. In sharing this first draft with my students, it became clear that these international and Southeastern U.S. students had rarely, if ever, had encounters with someone of Jewish identity, and one student shared a negative stereotype her mother had communicated about Jewish people and their aggressive forms of communication. While hurtful, it was also an honest communication about the inheritances of bias, one that I think many minorities redress through humor and art. In discussing this poem in workshop, I realized none of these students were familiar with language considered to be slurs toward Jewish people or of formative, anti-Semitic events in the past that I felt were interconnected to issues of language bias, as well as gender and racial discrimination and citizenship status, that their poems were addressing. After all, in the words of the great poet Audre Lorde, "there is no hierarchy of oppression" (1983). I felt renewed in my passion to seek the right language to articulate the intersections of language play with resistance and response to oppressive circumstance. I do not see this poem as finished, as it is still too new a piece of work—serving as process, reflection, and a catalyst to action in teacher education. I am committed to the forms of intersection that poetry can provide to vulnerably share layers of ourselves and to invite others to participate and share in new layering. My students gift me with understandings of what it means to be an international student, a white or Black woman in the South, a person with a difficult name, a person working in high-stakes environments in newly acquired proficiencies during important, life-changing events such as motherhood, divorce, and other life transitions that accompany educators' professional lives. The bravery and vulnerability shared in the space of the poetry workshop gives us courage to take the full possibility of ourselves into classrooms to ignite new levels of growth and reflection.

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Authors

Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, Ph.D. Educational Linguistics & M.F.A. in poetry, is Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia. Author of *Imperfect Tense* (poems), and three scholarly books in education, she's directed three NEA "Big Read" Grants, and been honored with the Beckman award for "Professors Who Inspire," and a 9-month Fulbright in Oaxaca, Mexico. As a poetry editor for *Anthropology & Humanism*, she has judged the ethnographic poetry competition since 2005. Her poems and essays have appeared in *Georgia Review*, *American Poetry Review*, *Women's Quarterly Review*, *Cream City Review*, *Barrow Street*, and many other literary and scholarly homes, including her blog <http://teachersactup.com>.

Sharon M. Nuruddin, is a Ph.D. Candidate in TESOL and World Language Education at the University of Georgia. Her arts-based dissertation focuses on African American parent perspectives of a southeastern, suburban, elementary Spanish-English dual language immersion program (DLI). She employs auto/ethnographical methods to recount her second language journey and her family's experiences with DLI as she analyzes interviews of fellow DLI parents. Sharon is a *motherscholar* (Matias, 2010), as she is

informed by the educational experiences of her four children, three of whom are enrolled in the program under study. She was the poetry, fiction, and visual arts editor for the *Journal of Language & Literacy Education* from Fall 2017-Spring 2018. This year she was awarded the prestigious Phelps-Stokes dissertation fellowship.

Kuo Zhang, M.Ed. TESOL & World Language Education, is pursuing a Ph.D. in TESOL & World Language Education at the University of Georgia. She has a book of poetry in both Chinese and English, *Broadleaves* (Shenyang Press). Her poem "One Child Policy" was awarded second place in the 2012 Society for Humanistic Anthropology [SHA] Poetry Competition held by the American Anthropology Association. She served as poetry & arts editor for the *Journal of Language & Literacy Education* in 2016-2017 and as also one of the judges for the 2015 & 2016 SHA Poetry Competition. In 2018, she was the presentation winner of the 4'33" Arts Research Competition at the University of Georgia. Her dissertation will be a poetic ethnographic study examining the lived experiences of 11 international graduate student first-time mothers in the U.S.

Amanda Brady Deaton, M.Ed. English Education, is pursuing a Ph.D. in Language and Literacy Education with a focus on secondary English at the University of Georgia. She has been a middle and high school classroom teacher for 12 years, ten of which have been spent in high school; currently, she teaches at Stephens County High School in Toccoa, Georgia. She is interested in researching best practices for writing workshops in high school English classrooms, as well as discussing controversial yet relevant topics in rural, conservative communities. She is a lifetime resident of Northeast Georgia, and her two children also live in the same type of community in which she hopes to serve.

Yixuan Wang, M.Ed. TESOL and World Language Education, is pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Georgia in the Department of Language and Literacy with a focus in TESOL and World Language Education. She is currently the academic book review editor for the *Journal of Language & Literacy Education (JoLLE)*. Her native language is Chinese, and now she mainly writes poems in English as her second language. She has a poem entitled "Harassment" published in *Write Bitch Write*. Her research interests include art-based approaches in language education, poetic inquiry, Chinese-English bilingual education, translanguaging, teaching Chinese to young heritage learners, and multilingual pre-service teachers in graduate-level TESOL programs.

Ashley Brown-Lemley, B.A., is working towards her Master's degree in Language and Literacy Education, TESOL, and World Languages. She is in her 14th year of teaching Spanish as a foreign language. She took her first poetry writing course in the summer of 2018 and has since continued writing in response to her life experiences and the educational context of the southeastern United States of America. Born in South Carolina and raised on the rugged rural terrain of the Appalachian mountains, she finds the intersections of her Appalachian and Atlantan identities, often at odds with one another, drive her writing. Brown-Lemley appeared in the *Seat in the Shade* summer poetry series in July 2018 and July 2019.

Xinyi Meng, B.A. in English Education, is currently pursuing a Master's in Education degree in TESOL and World Language Education at the University of Georgia. With a native language in Mandarin, she is in the early stages of approaching poetry writing in English as a language of witness to reflect and reexamine cultural exchange and cultural heritage. Her poems appear in *Yes Poetry*, *Write, Bitch, Write* and *A Velvet Giant*. She's also teaching Chinese at a heritage language school. Her teaching theory is informed by interdisciplinary and multimodal teaching with a focus on arts-based pedagogy. The examples of art mediums she loves to employ in her language teaching include poetry, music, and visual arts.

Ming Sun, B.A. is now pursuing the M.Ed. degree in TESOL and World Language Education at the University of Georgia. She was born in China and her native language is Chinese (Mandarin), but now she is writing poems in English. Her published poems include "The Color of Dreams" (*Write, Bitch, Write*), "My Father was an Epicure" (*Gravitas, Volume 18, Issue 3*), "The Best Way to Enjoy Fish" and "The Trash" (*Journal of Language and Literacy Education*). She loves traveling and enjoying food. She wants to introduce her Chinese world to all readers. Because she enjoys teaching Mandarin, she is now a full-time Chinese teacher at New Life Academy of Excellence, Duluth, GA.