

Poetry as Research and as Therapy Author(s): Brian E Wakeman

Source: *Transformation*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (January 2015), pp. 50-68

Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/90010960>

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Poetry as Research and as Therapy

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Transformation
2015, Vol. 32(1) 50–68
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0265378814537767
trn.sagepub.com


Abstract

The central questions addressed in this article are: 1) *Can writing poetry be both a process, and a product of research?* and 2) *How can writing poetry be therapeutic to the writer and reader?* The author has developed his own theories of *poetry as research* and *poetry as therapy* by action research into his writing. He argues that in thinking about the process of writing verse, he has come to see that some poetry is a form of research, and way of knowing. He has observed and recorded ways in which writing has been therapeutic for both the writer and for the reader or listener. The article develops and supports the notion of poetry as research by referring to a growing literature on *poetic enquiry*. The author then analyses and illustrates how poetry can be therapeutic to the writer and to readers. In a similar way, the article draws on a different literature on *poetry as therapy* to support his argument.

Keywords

Poetic inquiry, poetry as research, poetry as therapy

Introduction

I want to start this article¹ with a humorous verse:

We will give careful attention
To our central research question.
We have taken sufficient time
To think about our paradigm.
Some have even dared to dabble
In queer qualitative babble,
No initial hypothesis
That some supervisors will miss.
Will research using poetry
Cause academic anxiety
Or House Tutor apoplexy
At sloppy subjectivity?
Researching into poetry
Calls on Literary Theory.
But writing a thesis in rhyme:

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A methodological crime!
 What of 'Poetic Inquiry',
 A newer epistemology,
 Writing: a product and process,
 Rigorous researching none the less?
 But writing verse as a therapy
 (Therapeutic Psychology),
 'Whatever next!' positivists say,
 'Can't you write in a traditional way?'

Continuing in this light-hearted manner, I quote from my presentation:

where universities have a climate of rigorous scientific research, if you were a careful participant observer, you might find students guiltily glancing both ways in the library before choosing a volume on qualitative research. Tucked away in a corner there may even be a furtive reader engrossed in reading a book with brown paper covers camouflaging a title of '50 Shades of Action Research'.

Poetry as Research,² but surely this is stretching the reader's credulity? The title of this article has given rise to a pained expression from a researcher raised in a positivist approach to inquiry where reliability, validity and generalizability reign.³ The very notions of arts-based research⁴ or poetic inquiry⁵ may appear foreign to the world of rigorous academic research. Poetry with its language and structure may seem out place, alien to the writing of the academy. Indeed, one questioner at the seminar enquired: 'What would a PhD thesis look like using poetic inquiry?'

This article is situated unapologetically in the qualitative paradigm and has affinity with ethnography, narrative enquiry and action research.

So, I turn to address the two central questions of this article:

1. Firstly, can writing poetry be both a process, and a product of research?
2. Secondly, how can the writing and reading of poetry be therapeutic?

Poetry as a Process and a Product of Research

Can poetry be both a process and product of research? I want to discuss briefly the importance of *prepositions* in relation to research and poetry.

Research ABOUT Poetry

Most readers might recognize research *about* poetry, or *into* poetry. You may have studied Literature, or the poetry of your culture at school, and maybe as part of your first degree. Poetry, or poetics, has its own field of research.⁶ Literary theory,⁷ Semantics,⁸ Hermeneutics,⁹ Exegesis,¹⁰ History,¹¹ and Biography¹² are all well-established disciplines involved in research *about* or *into* poetry, all having extensive literatures.¹³

Poetry Contained IN Research

Secondly, we may have come across poetry *in* research, often as epigraphs,¹⁴ subtitles to chapters, or more daringly, short quotes¹⁵ of poetry (epigrammatic phrases, wisdom, or imagery of poets). Some readers may think poetry is too subjective to appear in real research. For others, poetry can express human experience, or sum-up key ideas in an impacting way. The lines from a nation's poets can give insights into the culture. So far, most readers may still be with me.

Lisa Hayes Percer says, 'I am beginning to think that the practice of writing poetry engenders a means by which to make sense of the world that cannot be articulated through traditional research practice or venues'.¹⁶ Can *poetry IN research* capture and communicate nuances of understanding? As Percer says, 'Elliott Eisener has written on the potential of artistic form to capture and express meanings of great significance to researchers and educators that may otherwise be overlooked through less aesthetic forms' (Eisener, 1981, 1998).¹⁷

Research Written IN Poetry

Thirdly, and more controversially, there is *research written-up in poetry*, or in poetic language. 'Why on earth would anyone wish to write academic research in poetry?' is a question that may spring to mind. It is answered eloquently by Furman et al. (2006),¹⁸ who say that poetic writing 'is geared toward creating knowledge that might affect its audience intellectually and emotionally'.

Unconvinced readers might refer to Monica Prendergast's analysis of the widespread extent of the usage of poetry in research papers in her introduction to: *The Phenomena of Poetry in Research*.¹⁹

Hence, research written in poetry is not as fringe or 'loony' as some readers might have instinctively thought. Poetry has its own way of compressing ideas, of engaging the emotions, of portraying truth and insight. Poetry has the so-called Heineken Effect (from the beer advertisement on British television): 'reaching and refreshing parts that other beers do not reach'.²⁰ As the reader enters imaginatively into the case or experience portrayed in the poem, they can acquire vicarious²¹ professional experience or human understanding to add to their repertoire of competences.²² Poetry provides a space of compressed ideas, and as the reader stops and reflects, the meanings can explode in the mind, as Keats said, like a grape against 'the palate fine'.²³

Poetry as Research

Then there is *writing poetry as research*. At first consideration, we might raise eyebrows, 'tut' (or the cultural equivalents), about the notion of writing poetry as a process and product of research. 'How can something as subjective as poetry be serious research?' 'Can't we write in the traditional language of academia?'

As I was thinking, reviewing and analysing the quality of my writing and its impact on readers, I began to feel my way towards seeing that I was going through a process that reflected or was parallel to 'research'.

There were the questions and hunches in my mind, focussed enquiries, the study and hard work of researching and reading for preparation for writing. There was a reflective process: reviewing experience, attempts at making sense, and the bringing of the Christian faith to illuminate experience. I chose topics or issues, analysed the data of my visual impressions, memories, or thought processes. I narrated events of significance. I brought philosophical or theological ideas to bear on experience. The writing of poems involved interpretation and theorizing in the process of writing. I hoped that readers might enter imaginatively into the poem, and take insights, generalizing naturalistically to their own situations. I wanted to disseminate and publish poems to peers and a wider audience.

Thus, I began to perceive that I went through a parallel process to formal research, and had stumbled on a form of research and way of knowing. This all took place before I discovered the literature of a growing number of writers, researchers and scholars to whom I refer in this article, about the use of poetry in qualitative research.²⁴ It was two years before I encountered the approach to research called Poetic Inquiry,²⁵ or came across Bournemouth University's annual international symposiums on Poetic Inquiry.^{26 27}

The poet can address questions, narrate and analyse experiences with the care of auto-ethnography,²⁸ seek patterns or connections of ideas, and make interpretations of lived experience. We can go beyond description to analysis, to speculation and the recording of hunches and explanations that illuminate issues. In poems, writers can seek to resolve dilemmas or conflicts. They can suggest hypotheses, and signpost action-plans for the development or improvement of situations. The poet can write, theorizing about human situations. Verse can contain new knowledge, wisdom within a space, a form that bursts into colour in the mind of the reader on reflection. To use the analogy again, after the initial bitter taste of the grape (the unfamiliar concept of poetry as research), the palate is rewarded with rich sweetness on biting; the poem explodes when the reader reads, chews and meditates. The poet hopes readers will enter imaginatively into the human experience reflected in the poem, and gain new insights and meaning to relate to their own situations. There is much that is parallel with Clandinin's Narrative Inquiry.²⁹

Liza Percey tries to get at the heart of the poetic process by speaking to poets. She found in her research that poets would not explain what they do, because either they do not want to, or they cannot. She says that they are maintaining the integrity of their understanding of their craft. She states that poems are not intended for explanation because explanation involves a restatement that moves away from poetic language into a more traditional analytic sort.³⁰

When this author reflects about his writing, he can uncover the layers of research that writing has involved. Readers tell him how the poem has impacted the mind and emotions and thus they have come to know.³¹ Readers may recognize truth or wisdom, or come to see that the poem has relevance to their situation.³² There is vicarious understanding or knowing for a receptive reader.

In a chapter of a current book,³³ the author has described the Anatomy of Poetry, something of the architecture of poems, and the circumstances that motivated writing. Some of the author's poems are instrumental communicating ideas, making Christian proclamation, but others just glory in the goodness of Creation. Various genres of poetry are illustrated in the book. He also develops the ideas of poetry as a way of research and of knowing.

I hope the reader has followed the argument so far about the prepositions of ABOUT, ON, IN, and AS in terms of poetry and research. Finally, in this first half of the article, I include two short cases, illustrating poetry as a process and product of research.

The Image of God

(Hebrew: תְּזֵלֶם אֱלֹהִים; tzelem elohim; Latin as Imago Dei)

'Eikon'

'Eidolon'

Image

Likeness, Character,

Form, Appearance

Visual or mental

Representation

In painting,

Or on a coin;

A semblance.

In God's image we were created.

The exact meaning is much debated.
Not so much in shape or form,

But in spiritual being seems more the norm.
A sentient, intelligent creative being
Capable of personal
Moral relationships,
Need for social and
Family fellowship.
God's representative
On this Earth;
Having dominion,
But protecting its worth.
The Creation and
Cultural mandates
To do His will
As Law dictates.

But the image
Was marred
Deformed, distorted
Through rebellion
Not being conformed.
Relationships were
Disjointed,
Work corrupted,
Death came on us all
As a result of this Fall.
But through Redemption
Comes Restoration.
Where Israel fell short, Messiah came
Bearing God's image, The Second Adam,
A better covenant, and offering, a nobler name.
We now bear His image, of the heavenly man,
Being conformed to this image, is His plan
Transformed into His likeness
Now by the Spirit's power,
Doing God's will
In this present 'hour'
On Earth, as it is
In Heaven.
Then in the twinkling
Of an eye at
The Resurrection,
New bodies for Creation's restoration.

In this poem, I am trying to express my thinking over two years or so about the *Image of God*. I am drawing on the researching, reading, questioning and reflecting on theological ideas of personhood (rather than psychological theories), then I distil, and compress in writing. I attempt to express ideas in a new form: the first stanza as a crown on a figure, and the second as a cross. I did not start out with this form, but it grew out of my interaction with the content and my imagination. These shapes are theological symbols of Adam as the crown of Creation,

of Jesus as the New Image of God, and the Image of God being restored in Christians through the Cross.

I find that poetry is not only creative in the sense of expressing ideas, painting word pictures with rich language, imagery, rhythm, poetic techniques in structures and forms. It is creative for me in its 'process' and discipline. It is a form of research and knowing. I explore this theme further in my book. Writing helps me to explore my experiences and feelings, and make sense of events. There is the data of my experience, reading and reflecting. There is sorting and finding patterns, and interpretation. As I am writing, I am clarifying and expressing my understanding. This reflective process helps me articulate feelings, thoughts, values and beliefs. It allows ideas to bubble-up from deeper memory or consciousness. It draws upon experience, portrays, links thoughts, addresses questions, helps me develop understanding, expresses arguments, creates insights, theorises, and highlights truth as I see it.

Bedfordshire Libraries have an annual poetry competition. The set theme for entries in 2012 was *Stars*. This was the author's submission, that was one the winning entries.

Stars: Culture of Celebrity

Do we live in a 'culture of celebrity',
Rather than one of 'personal integrity'?
We have exemplars, people of renown:
Entrepreneurs, medics, academic gown,
Nobel winners, scientific exploration,
And respected leaders of our nation.
But there is transient news in the media,
Entry in the 'B-list' encyclopaedia;
'Big Brother', features in 'Hello' magazine,
The latest winner on the TV screen;
Narcissistic need for notoriety,
Tabloid story in our society.

Why do we give this fawning attention:
To 'stars' and idols this adulation?
Being in public view, the competition,
Our 'Friends' on Facebook show our position.
There is a craving to be a somebody,
(Have a meteoric trajectory)
A longing for a 'cool' identity,
Desire for status, popularity.
Have we allowed the reservoirs to dry,
Drained older virtues without a 'why'?
Have we forgotten ideas of 'service',
Or finding oneself through self-sacrifice?
The dedication, of our GB Team
Have reminded of the Olympic dream.

The author has spent several years reflecting about education in a pluralistic society in England, and has been interested in relating the Christian Faith to life.³⁴ In this poem, he is looking at the culture of celebrity. He draws on his thinking, his reading and reflection, attendance at conferences, watching the news, the listening to television programmes and comment. This is the raw data of the research, that is analysed, selected and portrayed in the first stanza. It is summarized by the line, 'Narcissistic need for notoriety'.

The poem acknowledges the positive exemplars in society, but deplores the fawning attention to *stars*, and the longing for cool identity, and desire for status. Here the researcher is interpreting the data of experience.

Then in last six lines, we have the question and implied hypothesis that society has allowed the reservoirs of Judaeo-Christian values and virtues to drain away. There is a signpost to resolutions of this issue: the restoring of the Christian virtues of service (which in the view of the author, is exemplified in Queen Elizabeth II's life). Allied to this is the teaching of Jesus about finding oneself through self-sacrifice.

The final two lines suggest elements of the Olympic creed need to be retained after the 2012 Games. They reflect the author's reading about the Olympics, and his experience of watching the drama of the Olympic Flame being carried in procession through the Dorset resort of Corfe, UK. The whole village seemed to be united in pageantry. He noted the dedication, (for the 'faster, higher, stronger' of Olympic achievement). The Games brought together tribes and nations, temporarily ceasing hostilities, uniting people through the channelling of competition and aggression in sport. Hundreds of voluntary helpers gave their time to be stewards. Of course, there were spin-offs from the Games: rivalries, cheating, and ironically the feeding of further admiration of *stars*.

The Olympic Creed suggests that

The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well.³⁵

Could all this have been said in academic language, and well-referenced social analysis? Yes, of course, but perhaps not in the compact, breathless rhythmic way of the first stanza, and the more reflective and allusive way of the second verse. Words and phrases bubble up from somewhere deep in the mind.

What of the validity and reliability of the research? As Connelly and Clandinin³⁶ say of narrative inquiry, 'In general it may be said that reliability and validity have assumed less importance as such matters as apparentness and verisimilitude'. The *integrity*, *invitational quality*, *authenticity* and *plausibility* are criteria by which the research may be judged. The validity will be the extent to which readers identify, or are addressed by the poem. The value of the poem and of this article as a whole is firstly the extent to which it conveys the author's understandings, and secondly, the impact on the reader's emotions and thoughts: how far readers are able to enter into the ideas and evaluate their worth for their experience.

Poetry as Therapy

Now I want to spend a short time considering poetry as therapy.³⁷ As we know, 'therapy' is defined as *treatment intended to relieve or heal a disorder*.³⁸ The dictionary tells me it comes from the Greek *therapeia* meaning *healing*, or *therapeuin* meaning *minister to others*. To illustrate this general and common usage of *therapeutic* (rather than a technical psychological perspective), I call to mind a holiday in Switzerland. As I walked down a slipway on Lake Geneva, my companion said, 'Isn't this therapeutic?' He loved the sound of water, the reflections, the swans, and the 'sense of infinity', as he called it. The lakeside walk in winter sunshine was relaxing, healing and restoring for this busy professional.³⁹

These definitions impressed themselves on my mind. In what sense then, can poetry be therapeutic, *healing* to the writer, and *ministry* to others? I have been meditating about this for two years as I have been compiling a book entitled 'Knowing Through Poetic Reflection'.⁴⁰

In the first chapter, I have outlined the role of poetry in a mission activity: *Art Continuers at West Street Baptist Church*⁴¹ in Dunstable, UK (that I narrated and illustrated in the presentation, quoting examples of how the work has been 'steps up to faith'). The author would be interested in hearing other accounts of *Art as Mission*. Then I have explored poetry and humour as a way of coping with ill health in Chapter 2.⁴²

The next chapter looks at the nature of prophecy and how we may speak of the author's poems as being prophetic. We were reminded at the OCMS discussion of the importance of Hebrew poetry in the prophets' writings. Chapter 4 explores the idea of poetry as wisdom. A comment after the presentation indicated appreciation of my comments about both the Bible and secular knowledge being sources of wisdom. Both these chapters enquire into how the author's poems have been a *ministry* to others. The next chapter argues the case for poetry as a form of theological reflection. Chapter 6 looks at the forms and poetics of his verse, followed by a chapter on poetry as a way of knowing that may be of interest to some of the seminar participants. Chapter 8 enquires into how churches may develop esteem for and wider use of poetry, and then finally there is a discussion of the methodology of the enquiry in the book.

There is a sense in which I have been reflecting about my practice as a writer with a view to improving the quality of writing and its impact on the reader. In the enquiry, I explore my understanding of ideas such as Christian Art, how poetry can be research, and how writing has been therapeutic. Hence the connection between 'Poetry as Research and Therapy'.

So let me review how writing can be therapeutic⁴³ in both senses of *healing to the writer*, and *ministry to the reader or listener*. There is an important distinction between the therapeutic effects of writing and reading poetry, and Poetry Therapy as professional practice. There is a whole literature on poetry as therapy.⁴⁴ Web sites⁴⁵ and organizations⁴⁶ are dedicated to this use of poetry, which I only came across more recently in my reflection and research of sources.

I want to discuss the key understandings that emerged from my thinking before consulting the literature about the therapeutic effects of writing and reading poetry.

Reminiscences of Experience

Writing poetry captures experiences or thinking, compressing and compacting ideas in language, rhythm and form. This capturing can be therapeutic as a more permanent reminder of experience and ideas instead of the fade and loss in memory in all the activity and the busyness of life. Re-reading poems brings experiences flooding back (as in *Spirit of The Swan*), reminding of moments of beauty, of pleasure and pain, recalling significant events, refreshing the soul. The poem can freeze experience and make it available for later thought, meditation, and for some readers, thanksgiving and praise. As I was reminded by one seminar participant, poems can be an outpouring of praise and worship shown in some of the Psalms. A further comment showed interest in the poetry-prose continuum, the essence of poetry, and how experiences can be 'captured'.

Making Sense of Experience

I was asked how writing helped me in coping with ill-health. The reflection involved in writing can help make sense of experience, deepen understanding of what happened, and give

space for examining ideas, or issues. Writing can help us understand what has been happening, or aid the process of coming to terms with events. It is as if the writer stands aside to view events differently, or looks down on oneself from above at what we are experiencing or how we are reacting. It can take time to accept, to assimilate, and to integrate and to store new experiences. We need to fit the new in with the older frameworks and understandings. Writing can help this process. Through writing poetry, the author has clarified beliefs, and reinforced learning from experience. He has found writing helps him come to terms with treatment for cancer, with the fears, guilt and pain.⁴⁷ We can ask, 'What happened?', 'How did I feel, or react?', 'What have I learned?', 'How does this integrate with what I already know?', and 'What might I do better next time?' The Christian can ask 'How does God fit into all this?' or 'How is God speaking to me?'

Opening our Minds to Fresh or Alternative Ideas

Writing can prompt us to look at things through other people's eyes, or through different frames of thought. Preparation for writing verse can involve researching what other writers have said about similar experiences, questions or issues. The writer can bring insights from other peoples' perspective or from literature to illuminate or challenge experience or thinking. We can bring new possibilities and fresh vision from other writers.⁴⁸

We were reminded at the seminar that poetry can be a trigger for further creative processes in listeners or readers.

A Spiritual Practice

Writing poetry can be a spiritual practice. I can express my faith, and take time to 'renew my mind'.⁴⁹ Some poems articulate deepest feelings,⁵⁰ express doubt or sorrow,⁵¹ question,⁵² or express prayer.⁵³ We can rewrite Scripture in verse⁵⁴ to reinforce its impact. We can journal, reviewing and evaluating our spiritual lives, (for example in the 'putting off' sinful ways, and 'putting on' virtues).⁵⁵ The process of writing can be a form of meditation about God, for expressing worship, or articulating deep desires or needs in prayer. As was mentioned at the seminar, it is striking how much of the Bible is written in poetic forms or language. Another contributor explained how poetry can be contemplative, and used in meditation.

Expressing Feelings about Pain and Doubt

Writing about puzzling or painful experiences can be therapeutic in healing emotional wounds. I need to beware of being self-absorbed, and of negative thinking, but find that poems expressing pain or doubt in the pattern of Jeremiah or Job can be cathartic, relieving and cleansing. Some poems express the pain or doubt at the beginning then seek a solution towards the end. *Finding and expressing a way through* circumstances can be healing and lift the spirit. When the author writes, (s)he integrates experiences into what is already known, seeks resolutions, so painful situations can be filed away safely, or 'put to bed' as some describe it. Instead of feeling a victim of circumstances, or being overwhelmed emotionally, writing about them can help take control of situations (or bring them to God in prayer).

Writing Ventilates, and Can Off-load Strong Emotions

The discipline of selecting data from experience, choosing language, and writing within a short space or structure can release tension and be cathartic.⁵⁶ (Although of course we need to be aware that re-visiting and stirring-up hurts can reinforce negative feelings and mind-sets.) Poems can release forgiveness and help overcome anger, resentment and negative feelings.

Perspective Renewal and Christian Cognitive Therapy

Writing can help us get things into perspective, and come to terms with difficulties. We can speak wisdom to ourselves as well as ministering to others (confronting, encouraging, strengthening, or comforting).⁵⁷ While it is true that poetry can be a means of wallowing in self-pity, reinforcing disordered cognition, or distorted views of the future or the world round us, it can also challenge thoughts and feelings. Writing can generate alternative viewpoints, breaking through negative patterns. Like the Psalmist, we can bring faith to bear on situations, reorganizing thinking, introducing novel and visualizing positive possibilities or interpretations. Writing can be a kind of Christian self-cognitive therapy,⁵⁸ questioning and challenging negative or distorted acts of knowing, despairing reactions, rather than reinforcing them. Seeking hope, looking for light at the end of the tunnel, and bringing faith and a renewed mind are important ingredients of poetry as therapy.

The Nature and Goals of Therapeutic Writing

As with all therapies, there is an underlying understanding of wholeness, and health.⁵⁹ For this author the goal of therapy is 'Shalom'⁶⁰ and Salvation derived from Christian scripture.⁶¹ Sometimes it is hard to bring to situations faith instead of cynicism, peace instead of anxiety, and Christian joy instead of depression. The author has found thanksgiving and praise⁶² to be a therapeutic attitude to bring to life in periods of doubt and depression. Poems can be structured so that problems are narrated and difficulties expressed in earlier stanzas, but in the final verse, the writer brings faith and positive thinking⁶³ to bear on the situation, and can end in praise to God.

A question raised at the presentation suggested to me that I need to think more about the psychological in addition to the theological model of personhood that underlies my ideas about the 'therapeutic'.

Therapy as Ministry to Others

Therapy in the second sense of *ministry to others* (spiritual and practical service) is one of the author's motivations for writing. Much of what has been said about the therapeutic value to the writer, may also apply to others reading poetry. The Kingdom manifesto of Jesus of bringing good news to the poor, freedom for prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, and release for the oppressed, is the mission of Christian disciples following in his footsteps.⁶⁴ As the author writes poems, he hopes and prays that some words may bring conviction, peace, comfort, and hope. It is a great encouragement when I receive comments of appreciation from readers. There has been sufficient positive feedback to encourage further writing.⁶⁵ Critical or negative comments make me pause, review and evaluate my writing.

Poetry as Wisdom and Prophecy

Some correspondents have commented that poems have 'spoken to them' in their situation of depression, hospital treatment, and discouragement. Verse can have a prophetic word of consolation and

encouragement to individuals. The author hopes that some people may find wisdom, and healing in their reading. This is his prayer. He has written more fully on these aspects of poetry in his book.⁶⁶

The Impact or Effect of Poetry

The impact and effects on people of the reading of poetry is difficult to record. I have conducted simple surveys on SurveyMonkey,⁶⁷ and used unfinished sentence prompts to collect responses. Members of the Art Continuers team of helpers pass on to me appreciative or evaluative comments from group members. Comments on poetry websites have noted appreciation of help received, and postings on CRIAN⁶⁸ have expressed thanks for the encouragement of poems. There has been a variety of comments ranging from simple responses such as ‘likes’, or ‘this was thought-provoking’, to much fuller descriptions of how words have brought encouragement, faith, and comfort, and clearer understanding.

There is something a little self-indulgent about researching the therapeutic effects of one’s own writing. However, the writer of poetry needs to test the worth of their work ‘with sober judgement’ in accordance with the measure of faith given, as St. Paul says.⁶⁹ Writing for the therapeutic benefit of others is an act of faith, and it is particularly encouraging to receive feedback from readers.

Poetry as Therapy in the Literature

Having spent time clarifying my own ideas and theories, I turned to the scholarship of other writers. Google Scholar⁷⁰ has over 80 pages of references that this author scanned on *poetry as therapy*. The 56,000 entries illustrate the extent to which poetry as therapy is established in scholarship and professional practice. It is not just a fringe or esoteric topic. Here is a sample of references from different professions.

Clare Lonrigg writing in *Psychologies Magazine*⁷¹ summarizes some of the aspects of the *healing power of poetry* by itself and through the therapist, confirming some of this writer’s thoughts. She quotes William Sieghart:

They find in poetry a complicity for the emotions that they feel but don’t necessarily have the language to express. When they find their emotions reflected back at them, they feel understood. It’s the charm of a poem or the lyrics of a song, giving you the sense that someone else feels like this, and you know you’re not alone.⁷²

This idea of ‘complicity’, and ‘being addressed personally’ by a poem, mirror this author’s experience.⁷³

Lonrigg refers to the slowing down of experiences in therapy to examine what happened. This is the effect of some poems that reflect back to us our condition. Guided visualisation⁷⁴ is used by therapists through the images in poems for relaxation, and for reaching places within ourselves that are difficult to access. She talks about poetry ‘offering a departure to rational thinking, and works by building connections, metaphors and associations. It can create possibilities, and show us there are different and new ways of being in the world’ (p. 90).

Finally, Lonrigg quotes a sentence of Sieghart:

These poems work because they address the reader directly... so that you can take control of the situation—so that you can have your thumb on top of life rather than have life have its thumb on top of you. (p. 91)

Perie (1999), writing from a psychiatric perspective in the *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, describes the history of poetry therapy and its healing powers, and his references illustrate the breadth of the field.⁷⁵ Clark (2004), writing in the Royal College of Psychiatry journal *Advances in Psychiatric*

*Treatment on 'Working With Grieving Parents',*⁷⁶ discusses poetry as a means of expressing and coming to terms with grief.

Sergeant (1979) writes about poetry as a treatment technique from the point of view of social work.⁷⁷ Morrice (2011) discusses the relationship between the processes of psychotherapy, with writing and reading of poetry.⁷⁸ There is an earlier collection of 20 papers on treating emotional disorders through poetry therapy.⁷⁹ Ann Robinson from the nursing profession writes a personal reflection and exploration of the potential of poetry in palliative care. She argues that poetry can help enable the expression of individuals' deepest unspoken concerns and may provide a means of providing spiritual care.⁸⁰ Neil Astley,⁸¹ who has been editing and publishing poetry for 30 years, writes,

Poems about death also help others to gain inner strength by sharing in the writer's experience of facing death and bereavement at a time when they themselves are still being tossed on the unpredictable tides of grief... the poem can be another repository for grief... they can continue to engage with their feelings through poetry after they no longer feel able to talk about them. (p. 369)

Orlo Strunk has collected poems by writers in pastoral ministry in *Special Visions: Poems by and for Pastoral Caregivers*. These are selected from back issues of the *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* by healthcare chaplains, pastoral counsellors, pastoral educators, as well as their clients, patients, and parishioners.⁸² Jacob Firet⁸³ analyses pastoring into the components of *kerygma*, *didache*, and *paraklesis*. RF Hurding describes the *prophetic*, *shepherding*, *priestly*, and *physicianly* aspects of care.⁸⁴ I want to argue that poetry has been employed in all these aspects of pastoral care historically (e.g. through hymnology), and still has a place in ministry.

Finally, for this illustrative selection, there were 19,000 entries in Google Scholar on 'poetry therapists', with reviews of literature, and entries on societies,⁸⁵ journals about poetry therapy, activities of groups, and papers about the philosophy.⁸⁶

So, why did this author not start by doing a literature search and survey from a variety of disciplines right at the start of his enquiry? Here is the answer. The author is a practitioner doing research and reflecting about his ministry, and own practice as a writer, to understand the impact of poetry on readers, with a view to improve his work. He has developed his own theories:

- about poetry *as a means of research*, and
- poetry *as a form of therapy*.

These theories have developed out the data of experience, and the analysis of reflection.

Then he wondered, 'What else has been discovered, who else has written about these issues?' He found a range of scholarly literature that has illuminated and in some ways confirmed his practical theories. This article illustrates the reflective practitioner in action.⁸⁷ The reader is invited to evaluate how far the writer's account is persuasive, and relevant to his or her own situation.

Finally, I include some comments about *the Holy Spirit* and the therapeutic power of poetry. In our conversations, we can leave out the activity of the Holy Spirit. I draw on the work of the Spirit in the notion of common grace about the benefits of poetry. Lying underneath what has been said about poetry therapy is the belief expressed by Isaiah:

I am the Lord your God
Who teaches you what is best for you,
Who directs in the way you should go,

and of the farmer:

His God instructs him
 And teaches him the right way...
 All this also comes from the Lord Almighty,
 Wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom^{88,89}

In a similar way to the farmer, Scholars of poetry as therapy can discover wisdom, God's principles (in the modal aspects of creation).⁹⁰ Therapists can discover (think God's thoughts after Him) the healing nature of writing and reading verse. Nurses, psychiatrists, social workers and psychotherapists can draw on God's common grace in discovering how poetry can have healing effects. They may not acknowledge God as the source or ground of knowledge and wisdom.

However, what can be left out of the academic discourse is *God's special grace*, the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is a mystery about the Holy Spirit, 'the wind blowing where it pleases'.⁹¹ Preachers can speak their normal words, but when the Spirit comes in power, the impact and effect can be multiplied, turbo-powered beyond normal expectation. Readers may have read narratives in Church history,⁹² or in mission studies illustrating this, or experienced this *super-charge of the Spirit* personally.⁹³

The therapeutic power of writing, reading or listening to poetry can be subject to the same phenomena. When the Holy Spirit inspires poetry, and when the reader is touched by the Spirit, the impact can be greater than the normal value of the verse. As an author, I have noted a cold or unresponsive reception to a poem from some readers, but warm enthusiasm from others: 'That poem really spoke to me', or 'Those words were just what I needed in these circumstances'. This is why the writer prays for the Holy Spirit to use the weakness of the words.

Christian ministers and pastors, who may not be qualified counsellors or psychotherapists, see the healing and liberating⁹⁴ effect of ministry (pastoral care and preaching, exposition, conviction, words of encouragement, consolation or admonition). The Holy Spirit uses loving actions, and the spoken and written word as good news for the poor, release for the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.

I found myself identifying with, and applying the ideas to writing that J Scott McElroy says about Art in *Finding Divine Inspiration. Working With the Holy Spirit in Your Creativity*.⁹⁵ He says,

Collaboration with the Holy Spirit gives our work a depth and authenticity that resonates in the heart and minds of those who experience it. And it opens avenues in the artists to experience more inspiration and joy in our work. Collaborating with God brings us in to the fullness of who were created to be. (p. 19)

Our partnership manifests itself in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is an idea He seems to give or a check in our spirit to wait, or to use or not to use a certain element... Often it is just a nudge to move forward in faith after I've prayed and invited Him into my work. (p. 22)

Conclusion

In this article, the author has argued cases for seeing poetry as *a process and product of research* and *a means of therapy*. He is aware of the danger of overstating the case. Not all poems are therapeutic for the writer or the reader. Some are poorly constructed and do not work poetically. Some do not appeal, or resonate with a reader, but for others, they are therapeutic.⁹⁶ Writing can also reinforce resentment, express negative thoughts and feelings, and lead to wallowing in hurts or doubts. Poetry can be toxic to relationships or to personal virtue. However, the author has made a strong case for the therapeutic effects of writing for the *authors* of some forms of verse, and for the

possibility of encouragement and emotional healing for *readers*, or *hearers*. Further, in the hands of skilled professionals, poetry therapy can help resolve emotional and relational problems, and be life enhancing.

A serious case has been established, supported by a body of literature, for seeing the writing of some poetry as *a process and product of research*. We can exaggerate the case for seeing a research process in the composition of poems. Poems illustrate a variable degree of the nature and intensity of researching in producing the product. Some poems 'bubble-up' from the depths of our mind or experience. Sometimes the author wakes up with couplets, or images on his mind. Words can come cascading, or there may be hard work as the writer selects and interprets experience, then constructs the language and form of the poem. For some poems, there has been a period of study, and deep reflection before writing. The writer may have been living with these unwritten thoughts. For others there appears to be less research, other than choosing of ideas and language. Poems draw intuitively on experience, deep consciousness, or previous thinking.

The author hopes readers will have found a strong case for seeing *poetry as research and therapy* supported by a body of literature.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1. This article was presented at Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, UK on 14 May 2013. The author is grateful for the positive reception given by the audience, for questions posed and comments made in discussion that day. He has revised the paper in the light of this feedback.
2. See Hanauer DI (2010) *Poetry as Research: Exploring secondary language poetry writing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Co. There is a taste of the book at <http://benjamins.com/#catalog/books/lal.9/> preview (accessed 26 February 2013).

I came across Hanauer's first and fifth chapters *Crossing Disciplinary Boundaries*, and *Philosophical and Methodological Guidelines* after writing this article. He explores the territory of Poetry as Research very helpfully with full references to the literature on Poetry as Research.

3. See e.g. 'qualitative research' at <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=63> (accessed 14 October 2012)
4. For fuller treatment of Arts-based research, see Shaun McNiff's ground-breaking paper on *Arts-Based Research* at http://www.moz.ac.at/files/pdf/fofoe/ff_abr.pdf (accessed 26 December 2012).

See also Biggs M and Karlsson H (Eds) (2010) *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. London: Routledge.

'A major collection of new writings on research in the creative and performing arts by leading authorities from around the world. It provides theoretical and practical approaches to identifying, structuring and resolving some of the key issues in the debate about the nature of research in the arts which have surfaced during the establishment of this subject over the last decade' (see <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415581691/> accessed 26 December 2012).

See also: BERA SIG *Arts Based Education Research* which 'aims to understand education through arts-based concepts, techniques and practice. Practitioners use a variety of arts-based methodologies to undertake their research and / or to communicate their understanding through such diverse genres as autobiography, narrative, poetry, visual arts, drama, dance, music and performance. There is a relatively new but rapidly growing body of both literature and shared practitioner knowledge which directly addresses concepts of art as research, the nature of knowing aesthetically and learning aesthetically, the processes of making, and the use of art as a platform for recording and analysing data'; <http://www.bera.ac.uk/signs/info/arts-based-educational-research> (accessed 26 December 2012)

5. See Prendergast M (2009) *Poetic Inquiry is ... 29 Ways of Looking at Poetry as Qualitative Research* Educational Insights 13(3): 1–4. Available at: <http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v13n03/intro/prendergast.html> (accessed 26 December 2012).
See also Prendergast M, Leggo C and Sameshima P (Eds) (2009) *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. From the back cover of the book:
‘features many of the foremost scholars working worldwide in aesthetic ways through poetry. The contributors (from five countries) are all committed to the use of poetry as a way to collect data, analyse findings and represent understandings in multidisciplinary social science qualitative research investigations. The creativity and high aesthetic quality of the contributions found in the collection speak for themselves; they are truly, as the title indicates, “vibrant voices”. This ground breaking collection will mark new territories in qualitative research and interpretive inquiry practices at an international level. Poetic Inquiry will contribute to many on-going and energetic debates in arts-based research regarding issues of evaluation, aesthetics, ethics, activism, self-study, and practice-based research, while also spelling out some innovative ways of opening up these debates in creative and productive ways. Instructors and students will find the book a clear and comprehensive introduction to poetic inquiry as a research method’.
6. See e.g. *The Journal of Poetics* at <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/poetics/> (accessed 20 December 2012)
7. See e.g. Bertens H (2008) *Literary Theory: The basics*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group.
8. See ‘semantics’ on Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semantics> (accessed 14 June 2014).
9. See the article and references to hermeneutics, at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeneutics> (accessed 27 December 2012).
10. See ‘exegesis’ in relation to The Bible, but the article has wider relevance to other texts: <http://www.theopedia.com/Exegesis> (accessed 27 December 2012).
11. See e.g. resources available from: <http://www.history.ac.uk/> (accessed 27 December 2012)
12. See examples of the biographies of poets, at: <http://www.poets.org/page.php/prmID/58> (accessed 27 December 2012)
13. See e.g. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/essays> and <http://oyc.yale.edu/english/engl-300> (both accessed 15 December 2012)
14. A resonant quotation placed at the beginning of a book, or a chapter; p. 466. See e.g. Astley N (2002) *Staying Alive*. Tarsset: Bloodaxe Books, Ltd.
15. Advice on quoting poetry, see: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/03/> (accessed 15 December 2012).
16. Percer HL (2002) *Going Beyond the Demonstrable Range in Educational Scholarship: Exploring the Intersections of Poetry and Research*. Available at: <http://www.nova.edu/sss/QR/QR7-2/hayespercer.html> (accessed 19 December 2012)
17. Percer (2002). See also Eisner EW (1981). On the differences between scientific and artistic approaches to qualitative research. *Review of Research in Visual Arts Education* 7(1): 1–8;
Eisner EW (1998) Does experience in the arts boost academic achievement. *Arts Education Policy Review* 100(1): 32–40. Doi: 10.1080/10632919809599448.
18. ‘Less concerned with statistical generalizability, such authors instead are interested in “metaphoric generalizability,” the degree to which qualitative data penetrate the essence of human experience and reveals themselves fully to an engaged audience (Denzin, 1997; Oiler, 1983). The goal of such generating and presenting of this type of data is to inspire an empathic, emotional reaction, so the consumer of research can develop a deep, personal understanding of the “subject” of the data. Such understandings might help develop one of the most essential attributes of practice in various professional disciplines: practice wisdom. Practice wisdom has been viewed as the transaction between scientific information and that of the phenomenological experience that is derived from interactions with clients (Klein & Bloom, 1995). The culmination of such ways of knowing are synthesized through the process of critical thinking and assist the social worker in making decisions in the field. The research endeavor is not viewed merely as an activity aimed at finding “facts” but, instead, is geared toward creating knowledge that might affect its audience intellectually and emotionally’. Furman R, Lietz C, and Langer CL (2006) *The Research*

- Poem in *International Social Work: Innovations in Qualitative Methodology*. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5(3): Article 3. Available at: http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_3/HTML/furman.html (accessed 25 September 2012).
19. Prendergast et al. (2009).
 20. See e.g. <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=2170003>, and <http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/counselloradvice9665.html> (both accessed 10 February 2013).
 21. See <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/vicarious> (accessed 10 February 2013).
 22. For a fuller analysis, see Levy P (2009) *Method Meets Art. Arts based research practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
 23. John Keats. *Ode on Melancholy*. Available at: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173743> (accessed 26 December 2012)
 24. <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/609/1319> (accessed 1 October 2012). See also http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_3/HTML/furman.html (accessed 1 October 2012)
 25. See <http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/cqr/programme-symposium-on-poetic-inquiry.html> (accessed 1 October 2012). See also Butler-Kisber L (2010) *Qualitative inquiry: Thematic, narrative, and arts-informed perspectives*. London: SAGE.
 26. See <http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/cqr/international-symposium-on-poetic-inquiry.html> (accessed 1 October 2012).
 27. There were questions and comments after the author's presentation, about a more creative research methodology, e.g. using photographs in ethnography, and the use of video evidence and analysis. Perhaps there is room for a further paper on creative methodologies and arts-based research.
 28. See the informative and scholarly paper of Ellis C, Adams TE, Bochner AP (2011) Autoethnography: An Overview. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12(1): Article 10. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095> (accessed 1 October 2012).
 29. See <http://www.mofet.macam.ac.il/amitim/iun/CollaborativeResearch/Documents/NarrativeInquiry.pdf> (accessed 1 October 2012). See also Clandinin DJ (2007) *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
 30. See Percer (2002: 3–4). There were questions and comments after the presentation of this paper that indicated interest in the language of research and alternative ways of 'knowing'.
 31. See the discussion on types of knowing, and 'what is poetic knowing?' at <http://philosophytalk.org/shows/poetry-way-knowing> (accessed 27 December 2012)
- 'There is also a third possibility, and that is that poetry gives us phenomenal knowledge, or knowledge about what it's like to have a particular kind of experience. In a famous paper ("What Is It Like to Be a Bat?"), philosopher Thomas Nagel argues that the subjective experience of something, like being a bat that can perceive its environment through echolocation, cannot be reduced to objective facts, like a scientific description of echolocation. Perhaps poetry gives us this third kind of knowledge. Perhaps through its creative use of language, poetry provides a unique window into subjective experience'.
32. See Holmes V and Gregory D (1998) Poetry as knowing: Writing poetry: a way of knowing nursing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 28(6): 1191–1194. PubMed: 9888362. Available at: <http://www.mendeley.com/research/writing-poetry-way-knowing-nursing-1/> or www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov (both accessed 27 December 2012).
 33. Wakeman BE (2013). *Knowing Through Poetic Reflection*. Brighton: PenPress.
 34. See e.g. Wakeman BE (1984) *Personal, Social and Moral Education*. Tring: Lion;
 Wakeman BE (1978) Classroom Controversies: Christian Perspectives. *Religious Studies Today* 11(3): 4–13; Wakeman BE (1986) Religious Education and Personal and Social Development. In: B Greenwood (Ed) *Perspectives on Religious Education and Personal and Social Education*. Isleworth: CEM, pp. 21–23; Mackley J (Ed) (n.d) *Looking Inwards, Looking Outwards*. Derby: CEM; Wakeman BE (2002) *Personal Responsibilities*. Dunstable: Folens Publishers.
 35. See <http://www.janecky.com/olympics/creed.html> (accessed 20 January 2013)
 36. Connelly FM and Clandinin DJ (1997) Narrative Inquiry. In: JP Keeves (Ed) *Educational Research-Methodology, and Measurement*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Elsevier Science, p. 85.

37. There are over a hundred different types or forms of therapy listed in Wikipedia. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_therapies (accessed 26 February 2013)
38. OED; Pearsall J (Ed) (2002) *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford, UK: OUP.
39. Spirit of The Swan
 What grace! What elegance!
 Gliding with imperial stance,
 Paddles nonchalant, brave
 Against the incoming wave.
 At some inner call or light
 Instinctive exilic sight
 Stirring this tranquillity
 Routines of familiarity;
 Taking flight, brilliant white,
 Powerful rhythmic beat
 Extraordinary aerodynamic feat.
 The flapping echoing,
 Splayed feet skiing,
 Huge wings skimming,
 Worth the effort and pain
 To lift and to gain
 A new perspective and dimension.
 Head stretched out in anticipation
 To circle and to soar,
 Then land on a distant shore.
40. Wakeman (2013).
41. See <http://www.weststreet.org.uk/> (accessed 28 February 2013). Now named Christ Church at Dunstable.
42. See also the article on Mark O'Brien, a poet confined to an iron lung by Chana Block (2013) *My Sessions with Mark. Poetry Foundation*. Available at: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/article/245502> (accessed 14 March 2013).
43. There are of course many kinds of therapy with a range of underpinning psychological theories in medicine, in psychotherapy and psychiatry, and in alternative medical and healing approaches. See e.g. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Therapy> and for the range of psychological therapies <http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/counselling.html> (both accessed 28 January 2013).
44. See Mazza N (2003) *Poetry Therapy: Theory and Practice*. New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge. See also the publications listed at <http://www.poetrytherapy.org/articles/pt.htm> (accessed 24 September 2012) and see Google Scholar for a range of sources, at: http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?q=poetry+therapy&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar&sa=X&ei=ra1gUNzfLOy10QWd44H4DQ&sqi=2&ved=0CCQqQMwAA (accessed 24 September 2012).
45. See list for web search, at: <http://uk.search.yahoo.com/search?p=poetry+as+therapy&fr=mcsaoff> (accessed June 2013).
46. See <http://www.poetrytherapy.org/> (accessed 24 September 2012).
47. See Barelllo S, Graffigna G, Lamiani G, et al. (2013) How Patients Experience and Give Meaning to Their Cancer-related Fatigue? A Qualitative Research in the Italian Context. *International Journal of Social Science Studies* 1(2). ISSN 2324-8033 E-ISSN 2324-8041. Available at: <http://redfame.com/journal/index.php/ijsss/article/view/44/90> (accessed 4 May 2013).
48. A consultant psychiatrist having read a draft copy of this paper recommended Neil Astley's anthology *Staying Alive*, in which he says: 'In these unreal times poetry could be a great source of nourishment to many more people who are trying to make sense of a new age of information and double-speak, technology and terrorism, of war and World poverty . . . contemporary poems can offer fresh slants, new views and broader perspectives' (2002: 24).
49. Romans 12: 1–7.
50. Job 30: 1–2.

51. Job 3: 1–26.
52. Jeremiah 12: 1–4.
53. Psalm 109: 21–30.
54. I have used the *Journibles 17:18 Series* for this purpose (Reformation Heritage Books, 2009, Full Quiver LLC). Available at: <http://www.the1718series.com/> (accessed 24 September 2012).
55. See Colossians, Chapter 3.
56. See ‘catharsis’ <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/catharsis> (accessed 25 September 2012).
57. See 1 Corinthians 14: 1–4.
58. See Google Scholar, at: http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?q=Christian+cognitive++therapy&btnG=&hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&as_vis=1 (accessed 24 September 2012). My wife Hazel attended the Pain Management Clinic at University College Hospital London for chronic pain. The treatment employs self-cognitive therapy for pain management. She integrated her Christian faith with the COPE programme.
See also http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ion/nationalhospital/NHNN_BROCHURE_FINAL_MAY_2011.pdf (accessed 24 September 2012).
59. See Kenneth Boyd’s discussion *Disease, illness, sickness, health, healing and wholeness: exploring some elusive concepts*, available at: <http://mh.bmj.com/content/26/1/9.full> (accessed 28 January 2013)
60. Wholeness, peace, human flourishing.
61. I like re-reading Paul’s letters for the goals of ministry. See e.g. Colossians 1: 9–14; 2: 6–7; 3: 12–17.
62. See <http://www.godvine.com/bible/category/Praise> and <http://www.cfidsselfhelp.org/library/the-healing-power-gratitude> (both accessed 27 December 2012). See also the verses Philippians 4: 4–6.
63. See how the Psalmist narrates problems and seeks to bring faith to circumstances, Psalm 22; and in Psalm 13, after pouring out his complaint verses 1–4, he says in verses 5–6:
‘But I trust in your unfailing love,
My heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
For he has been good to me’.
64. Luke 4: 18–19; 28: 16–20.
65. The author has received e-mails, blogs, responses on poetry web sites, and personal comments of appreciation.
66. Wakeman (2013).
67. The author constructed his survey using the free tool on-line at <http://www.surveymonkey.com>
68. See <http://transformingresearch.ning.com/> (accessed 25 September 2012).
69. See Paul’s words: Romans 12: 3–10.
70. See http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?hl=en&q=poetry+as+therapy&btnG=&as_sdt=1%2C5&as_sdt=1 (accessed 27 December 2012).
71. Lonrigg C (2013) *Psychologies Magazine*. February: 88–91.
72. Sieghart W (2012) *Winning Words: Inspiring Poems for Everyday Life*. London: Faber & Faber, p. 88.
73. See Astley (2002: 19): ‘. . . the kind of poems which speak to us with the same unnerving power . . . Many people turn to poetry only at unreal times, whether for consolation in grief or affirmation in love.’
74. Guided visualization is used in pain management at COPE, University College Hospital London. See <http://www.uclh.nhs.uk/ourservices/servicea-z/neuro/pmc/pages/home.aspx>
See also web resources that this author uses with caution, e.g. <http://www.poeticmind.co.uk/online-seminars/the-seven-falls-free-guided-meditation-transcript-and-video/>
See also <http://www.key-hypnosis.com/Self-Help/Visualization-Techniques/LV6-Guided-Visualisation-Exercises.php> – use these techniques with care. Romans 12: 2; 2 Cor. 10: 5. See <http://www.innerhealthstudio.com/guided-imagery-scripts.html>
See also Lonrigg C (2013) *Psychologies Magazine*. February: 88–91.
75. See http://www.spcsb.org/pdfs/resources/a-poetry_as_therapy.pdf (accessed 28 December 2012)
76. Clark A (2004) *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 10: 164–170. doi: 10.1192/apt.10.3.164. Available at: <http://apt.rcpsych.org/content/10/3/164.full?sid=4966fc87-4619-4d54-9673-fa424201201b> (accessed 10 March 2004).
77. Sargent L (1979) Poetry in therapy. *Social Work* 24(2): 156–159. Available at <http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/1980-26140-001> (accessed 28 December 2012).

- Regarding the congruence between poetry therapy and the strengths perspective of social work, see also Furman R, Downey EP, Jackson RL, and Bender K (2002) Poetry Therapy as a Tool for Strengths-Based Practice. *Advances in Social Work* 3(2): 146–157. Available at: <http://journals.iupui.edu/index.php/advancesinsocialwork/article/viewArticle/36> (accessed 28 December 2012).
78. Morrice JKW (1983) Poetry as therapy. *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 56(4): 367–370. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.2044-8341.1983.tb01569.x/abstract> (accessed 28 December 2012).
 79. Leedy JJ (Ed) (1969) *Poetry Therapy; The Use of Poetry in the Treatment of Emotional Disorders*. Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Co. Available at: http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED030231&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED030231 (accessed 28 December 2012).
 80. Robinson A (2004) A personal exploration of the power of poetry in palliative care, loss and bereavement. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing* 10(1): 32–39. Available at: <http://www.internurse.com/cgi-bin/go.pl/library/abstract.html?uid=12017> (accessed 28 December 2012).
 81. Astley (2002).
 82. Strunk O (2007) Special Visions: Poems by and for Pastoral Caregivers. *Journal of Pastoral Care Publications*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse. See also Barnes MC (2009) *The Pastor as Minor Poet: Texts and Subtexts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
 83. Firet J (1986) *Dynamics in Pastoring*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
 84. See Hurding RF (1995) *Pastoral Care, Counselling and Psychotherapy*. In: Atkinson DJ (Ed) *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*. Leicester: Intervarsity Press, pp. 78–87.
 85. See <http://www.poetrytherapy.org/pdf/IntegrativeMedicinePacket.pdf> (accessed 10 March 2013).
 86. See e.g. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0197455605001103> and <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03069880120073003> (accessed 28 December 2012).
 87. See the helpful article at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reflective_practice (accessed 28 December 2012).
 88. See Isaiah 28: 24–29; 32: 1–2; 48: 17; 54: 16.
 89. *For the Lord gives wisdom;*
 From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 2: 6.
 90. For fuller explanation, see <http://www.dooy.salford.ac.uk/aspects.to1005.html> (accessed 20 January 2013).
 91. John 3: 8; 1 Corinthians 12: 11.
 92. See e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_revival and <http://www.eupublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/swc.2012.0022> (accessed 11 March 2013).
 93. See e.g. Woolmer J (1999) *Healing and Deliverance*. London: Monarch.
 94. See the John Piper interviews at: <http://pjcockrell.wordpress.com/2013/01/18/piper-on-tongues-and-prophecy/#comment-14286> (accessed January 2013).
 95. Scott McElroy J (2008) *Finding Divine Inspiration. Working With the Holy Spirit in Your Creativity*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers. See: http://www.amazon.com/Finding-Divine-Inspiration-Working-Creativity/dp/0768427029#reader_0768427029 (accessed 20 January 2013).
 96. ‘truly engaging with the matter of a poem can offer a reader a means by which to process emotion’. Hillman B (2006/2010) *Cracks in the Oracle Bone. Teaching Certain Contemporary Poets. Stronarch Memorial Lecture*, available at: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/essay/239762> (accessed 14 March 2013).

Author biography

Brian E Wakeman spent 40 years as a teacher of Religious Education and 30 years as a leader in secondary schools in Birmingham, Reading and Luton, UK. He was responsible for strategic planning, curriculum development and staff training, and he was a deputy and acting head teacher. One of his chief interests has been relating faith to professional practice. For three decades, he has been interested in action research, and was the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Special Interest Group Coordinator for *Practitioner Research* for three years. He has been an educational advisor and consultant, and more recently in semi-retirement, a tutor for Religious Studies, and a Support Tutor for teacher trainees at Chiltern Training Group (CTG), in Luton, UK. He has been a research mentor and supervisor for OCMS. The more he reads about poetry, the more he realizes how much more there is to learn about *the ministry of writing poetry*.