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EDITORIAL

NAMING AND EXPANDING THE BORDERS OF PRACTICE IN POETIC INQUIRY

MONICA PRENDERGAST & KATHLEEN T. GALVIN

Welcome to this special issue of *Creative Approaches to Research*, dedicated to the exploration of poetry in social science research. We are delighted to be able to present the work of so many poetic inquirers, across disciplines, who are finding new ways to make use of the resonant power of words by weaving poetry into their research investigations. Their aims span new ways to help readers resonate and connect with findings; new ways of revealing deep understandings of human experience; new ways of being in dialogue with research findings and new ways of working with people in vulnerable situations to name ‘what it is like’.

The rise of arts-based research in the past two decades or so was in part a creative response to Denzin & Lincoln’s (2011) call for a turn in qualitative research in order to avoid the “crisis of representation” (p. 3), in which the voices of participants were too often appropriated, overpowered, fragmented, rendered over-summative or even silenced. Researchers’ own complex experiences, and the emotional toll that certain kinds of research topics can engender, were also excised from reports, to the detriment of reflective and adequately ‘in-depth’ qualitative research. Now we are well into the 21st century, those of us who value an ‘aesthetic move’ and practice arts-based research in general, or poetic inquiry in particular, are heartened by the impressive number of peer-reviewed contributions, books,

handbooks and conferences devoted to aesthetically-informed studies in the social sciences.

In our own area of poetic inquiry, there is established and ongoing biennial *International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry* [ISPI]. A number of contributions in this issue are based on presentations given at the 3rd ISPI, held at Bournemouth University in October of 2011, co-hosted by Kathleen Galvin and Les Todres. The 4th ISPI will be held at McGill University in Montreal next October, co-hosted by Lynn Butler-Kisber, John Guiney-Yallop and Mary Stewart. There are two collected volumes on poetic inquiry to date—*Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences* (Prendergast, Leggo & Sameshima, 2009) and *The Art of Poetic Inquiry* (Thomas, Cole & Stewart, 2012)—both of which contain ISPI presentations and additional contributions. A third collection is currently underway, set to appear in 2014. This special issue is the third devoted to poetic inquiry, following one in *Educational Insights* (www.educationalinsights.ca) and a second in *Learning Landscapes* (www.learninglandscapes.ca). And all this is on top of numerous journal and book chapter contributions by poetic inquirers worldwide, signaling a robustness and a growing recognition of the ways that aesthetic approaches to research serve to enrich and enliven what we do as researchers across the social sciences.

This issue is divided into three sections, according to the three foremost ways seen in the literature for poetry to appear in education, health and caring sciences, anthropology, sociology, social work and related fields (see Prendergast, 2009). The first of these three is *Vox Theoria*, or the theoretical voice, which has a methodological interest in making space for poetry in qualitative inquiry. Our first section features an essay from Frances Rapport and Graham Harthill that makes a strong case for the use of poetry in health research, particularly in the context of topics involving trauma, grief and recovery. This is a thread that weaves itself throughout a number of other contributions herein. Regina Heß' essay draws on work by Les Todres and Kathleen Galvin (Todres & Galvin, 2008) using phenomenology to draw out more embodied forms of interpretation in health studies. As in many poetic inquiries, there is an overlay of voices, working harmoniously, as Heß provides examples of participant-voiced poems to illuminate her piece. Sean Wiebe takes a somewhat playful position in rendering the fairy tale "The Princess and the Pea" in multiple characters' poeticized voices, as the layers of mattresses under which the pea of poetry lies. In this way, Wiebe explores the power of poetry to elicit empathy; another thread that weaves throughout the issue. Megan Calver's essay offers a visual art response layered with a poetic one, all in dialogue with Galvin and Todres' evocative narratives on caregivers of Alzheimer's patients. This work presents fresh ideas to researchers interested in bringing their work more (art)fully into the public sphere, beyond academia. It is also a fine illustration of "ekphrastic inquiry" (Prendergast, 2004), based on the

Ancient Greek practice of *ekphrasis*, the artistic and dialogical response (usually via poetry) to another artwork.

The second section of the issue is devoted to *Vox Autobiographical Autoethnography*, in which authors tell personal and/or professional stories with poetry as the means. In the first two essays here, Yvonne Sliap and Sarah Mackenzie reveal their traumas in the death of a child and the struggle with alcoholism, respectively. Both essays use poetry as a powerful way to access deep emotion, and courageously reveal how personal trauma affects the lives of a trauma counselor and teacher educator, again respectively. Thus, although bravely confessional in tone, these essays also invite new ways for scholars to take off the false mask of academic distance and expertise to reveal, poetically, the human being beneath. Sheila Stewart's essay on her relationship with her mother and the topic of inherited shame is revelatory in these ways as well. Her poems allow us a focused view of the complex ways that mothers and daughters relate, particularly through the lens of a strict Protestant religious upbringing. Johanna Spiers and Jonathan Smith's essay takes a different pathway into poetic inquiry at the level of the personal, in their careful phenomenological interpretation of poet Jon Seaman's poems on his lived experience as a dialysis patient dealing with kidney disease.

The third and final section of this issue presents a group of essays that draw on participant data to render poetic transcriptions as part of the authors' chosen topics. Interestingly, because all three of these essays are in health research they offer yet more 'evidence' that the use of poetry and arts-based representation honors participants' lived experiences of disease and suffering by both ethical and aesthetic means. Joan Humphries' use of the poetic form of the motet, drawing on the work of Sally Gadow, allows for an effective interweaving of the voices of researcher and participants. Mary Breheny's essay presents poetic representations of her participants, 143 seniors in New Zealand, and reflects on her findings with an *ars poetica* reference to T.S.Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (see Faulkner, 2007). This bringing together of the artworld of poetry with the social science world of poetic inquiry is a welcome move in the crafting of richly textured pieces that can do justice to what research participants have shared. Finally, Michelle Anglehart and her colleagues find their way to the use of poetic transcription as an instinctual and ekphrastic process to portray their women participants' experiences with cancer-related fatigue. After inviting a visual artist to represent their participants' stories in a painting, the research team felt, quite rightly, that a poetic rendering of the data would resonate meaningfully with the visual artwork, and for the participants themselves.

All in all, we have a treasure chest's worth of poetic inquiry in this issue that we have been honored to bring together and to share. Once again we are made mindful of the way poetry works: to point to 'more than words can say', to express the inexpressible, to make grief somewhat easier to bear, to help us see what we

are looking for as crystals, as prisms, as rainbows, as understandings that ‘shine through’.

— Monica Prendergast & Kathleen Galvin,
Guest Editors
October 2012

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SECTION I: VOX THEORIA

CROSSING DISCIPLINES WITH ETHNOGRAPHIC POETIC REPRESENTATION

FRANCES RAPPORT & GRAHAM HARTILL

*“...So terrible a lack of the imagination, in the end it is its own tragic handicap,
and those who go to the grave unilluminated by the light of ideas are the sufferers...”*

— Stephen Fry, 2004

This article is the result of an ongoing dialogue between a qualitative health researcher working in a College of Medicine (FR) and a poet and creative writer using health stories and working in a prison (GH). It highlights some aspects of that dialogue, indicating the potential for two people from differing backgrounds to come together to consider the use of poetic inquiry in health research.

The article examines the application of the arts-based method ‘ethnographic poetic representation’ to a story of survivorship. A piece of poetics is presented as an exemplar of the method’s use, derived from a study of Holocaust survivor testimonial that examined the relationship between the extraordinary event of the Holocaust, personal trauma and pathways to good health and wellbeing. The article discusses the act of writing and the characteristics of ethnographic poetic representation, examined both according to empathic and aesthetic elements as well as in terms of the opportunities it affords for bearing witness to an event of this kind.

The exemplar underpins discussions of the method's use, whilst at the same time defending literary experimentation techniques for their ability to grapple with complex social data. Working with both theoretical perspectives and the poetic exemplar produced, the article puts forward a case for valuing the method in this context as well as extending that support to other difficult and emotive narratives that can be re-presented through the application of similarly powerful and creative tools.

GENESIS OF THE HOLOCAUST STUDY

How does one attempt to study personal testimonial gathered from an extraordinary event such as the Holocaust? Is it possible to examine the event's impact on an individual's perception of the trauma they suffered and their health and wellbeing needs? Can ethnographic poetic representation, delivered from research conversations with a survivor, be presented back to that survivor in a way that is meaningful to them, and acceptable and accessible to wider audiences? These were some of the questions that FR asked herself when she undertook a study of the relationship between the trauma of Holocaust survivor experience and perceptions of health and wellbeing following that trauma. Whilst the study culminated in a number of academic publications and other outputs, it began unexpectedly, with a conversation between FR and her mother in a restaurant on the outskirts of town, one Saturday afternoon in early 2006. The conversation, represented below in the first-person, focussed on the life and health story of one Holocaust survivor, Anka, who had been interned in Terezin, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Mauthausen concentration camps for three and a half years during the war. Towards the end of her ordeal, Anka had given birth to a baby girl, Eva, on an open, typhoid-infested, coal wagon descending the hill to Mauthausen, a concentration camp in Austria:

"The story and the way it was told with great affection and sincerity, about the woman who had not so long ago become my mother's friend was captivating, and as more details were offered up I became oblivious to both my surroundings and fellow diners. My reverie was suddenly broken, however, when one of the diners, clearly having listened in on our conversation, strode across the restaurant and in a state of extreme agitation remonstrated against us for conversing about the Holocaust.

Arms swinging, red-faced and angry he exploded:

"What do you know about the Holocaust? You are putting me off my meal."

He continued:

"You have no right to talk like that in public" and with one hand holding tightly on to a long blue cross wound around his neck and the other pointing accusingly at us he continued to harangue us with a diatribe of abuse.

"What do you know about the Holocaust? You know nothing of the Holocaust."

“How could you?”

With these words and still holding tightly on to the cross, he marched out of the door and proceeded to goose-step up and down outside the restaurant window, throwing a Nazi salute and muttering: “Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler” under his breath.

The few other diners looked on in amazement and the Portuguese waitress’s fumbled apology tailed off into an embarrassed silence.

We left the restaurant. We’d had enough. A meal unfinished, a story half told and abuse ringing loudly in our ears.

Later that day I reflected on the spoiled meal and on the persona of the man who had conducted this assault. I also considered my own responsibility as I thought about his words:

“What do you know about the Holocaust?” “You have no right to talk like that in public”.

As I did so I recognised the enormity of a proposal that was forming in my mind; to take forward this taunt and through my own research, lay down this woman’s testimony and perhaps others like her –to set these voices in stone. Indeed, to give these words the continuity and permanency they deserved, to tell Anka’s story, in order to reach the end of a fleeting, interrupted and upended story.

Since that day FR has met with Anka and all the other remaining Holocaust survivors who took up residency in south-east Wales immediately following the war on many occasions. FR spent extensive periods of time listening to their stories –stories of lives long-lived. They gave up harrowing details of the experience of internment, being moved between camps in Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia (they all spent time in Auschwitz), and the effects of this on their health and well being.

The women’s testimonies were of survival and demise, and taping and transcribing them was a difficult and emotive task. Sense-making developed iteratively, beginning with the rudimentary stages of a *Summative Analysis* (see Rapport, 2010), whilst ethnographic poetic representations, (see next section), provided important context and prepared the materials for a wider readership (Rapport, 2008; Rapport & Sparkes 2009). The ethnographic poetic representations derived from a painstaking process of reading and re-reading transcripts, understanding, distilling, explicating and eventually re-presenting their content according to *research scenarios* inherent within them (Rapport, 2008). These were sections of text, the essential elements of Anka’s story that were carefully revealed and retained, for without them the text would have lost its substance, structure and, ultimately, its full meaning. These sections of text depend on the authenticity of the spoken word. The process of their preparation was followed according to FRs pre-defined criteria for this kind of material whereby words are not altered nor sentence sequence changed, with sentences following on from one another

according to the direction of the raw material, with no changes to grammatical irregularity or word-sense (Rapport & Hartill, 2010). An exemplar (or pattern) for a piece of ethnographic poetic representation is presented below.

Like a victory I fooled them

So vivid in my mind,
As you sitting in front of me.
I will start talking.
It's very easy.

We arrived through that famous gate.
Birkenau.
Auschwitz.
But Birkenau was the thing.

We arrived through that gate,
And before we got there,
We already saw the chimneys –
The fires.

We saw the spouting chimneys,
And the smoke and the fire.
“Raus, Raus!”
And soldiers up and down.

“Leave all your luggage.”
“Come out, come out.”
And the smell, which you had never smelled before,
And which you couldn't place.

And the chimneys.
And the smoke.
And the ashes.
And the prisoners in striped pyjamas.

Somebody must have told us:
“Young ones on this side.”
Millions milling around,
At least a thousand people.

They separated men and women.
And when we saw this bedlam,
You felt something eerie,
But you didn't know.

Dr Mengele with those gloves.
Gauntlets –
In my memory they're gauntlets.
Stood there, boots shining.

“Here” and “there” –he pointed.
Doing ‘this’ with the gloves.
The mother had a five year-old child,
She went the other side.

Nobody was afraid because –
Because you didn't know.
Five in a row.
Proceed to the man with the gloves.

So we passed and I passed,
I was with a group of girls.
We went this way.
Never gave it a thought.

I had still my wedding rings,
Amethyst set in silver.
I still had those with me,
The most precious things I possessed.

When I saw what's going on,
That we had to leave our clothes,
And the mud,
And the shouting,

And the starting to run naked,
And our hair being cut off.
I took my two rings,
And threw them in the mud.

No Germans will have them.
In the mud –
In Auschwitz.
The most precious things I had.

Outside or under cover,
I don't remember.
We were shaven –afraid of something,
But we didn't know what.

We went through those showers,
And were given some horrible rags.
And then some shoes; old shoes,
I happened to get clogs.

If they were too small,
We were wise enough not to ask.
In fifths, they led us to the barracks,
Big but flimsy, with a door at one end.

The bunks were three-tiered,
Lie down like sardines.
And, “when will I see my parents?”
“You fool, they are in the chimney by now.”

They thought we were mad.
We thought they were mad.
But we soon found out,
That they weren't mad.

You saw all the horror and it all fell into place.
And the smell and the fire and the smoke and the shouting,
And the dogs and the mud.
Our first day in Auschwitz.

We were never sent to work.
Top bunk.
Awful windows.
Without glass.

Much colder at the top because the wind was blowing through.
I was there ten days,
So very lucky,
It lasted only ten days.

Roll calls twice a day,
And they counted one, two, three,
And if somebody died,
They had to keep the body.

Ten days later and we were sent walking.
We didn't have luggage and they shaved our heads.
We were given a piece of bread and sent into cattle wagons.
We were leaving Auschwitz and we didn't stop.

All elated.
The train headed west.
October in Poland.
Like a victory I fooled them.

Source: FR based on transcripts from research conversations with Anka

THE AGE OF POETICS IN HEALTH RESEARCH

Ethnographic poetic representation; also known as 'poetics', 'poetic rendition', 'ethnographic poetry' and 'ethnographic transcription', has yet to come of age in Health Services Research (Tedlock, 1999; Sparkes & Douglas, 2007; Rosenbaum et al., 2009; Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor 2010). This, despite its recognition in other disciplines as a tool for understanding and expressing the human condition (Rapport & Hartill 2010); co-constructing the world by the storyteller and listener (Richardson, 2000) and co-participating in the act of knowing by the reader (Gunn, 1982; Richardson, 2002).

Whilst a few ethnographic poetic representations have been produced and published based on health materials (Sparkes et al., 2003), pieces are more redolent within Education and Anthropology (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 2002; Prendergast et al., 2009; Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). Indeed, Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor (2010) have recently referred to a ground-swell of interest in "ethnographic poetry" in Anthropology (p. 3) where the method that found favour in the mid-1980s seems to have reached its zenith. Placing this research method in Anthropology is particularly apposite, in view of Anthropology's concentration on ethnography in all its forms, including data presentation, and presentational

style. Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor (2010) comment that this poetic ‘turn’ has never been: “more open to both literary theory and literary forms” (p. 3):

Much of this more experimental writing remains prose, or largely prose, but seeks explicitly to write poetically with an ear cocked toward language, the medium as an aspect of truth telling...within the context of this we see ethnographic poetry emerging... drawing attention to cultural borderlands between poetry and prose, as well as between scholarship and art. (p. 4)

Within Health Services Research an arts-based methodological hinterland continues to exist. Discussed in detail in 2004 and 2005 by FR and colleagues (Rapport F., 2004, Rapport F. et al., 2005), this is a place where alternative methodologies sit outside the mainstream of traditional bio-scientific and medical epistemologies. Never fully embraced, researchers can only dabble with unconventional methodological approaches, and there is an ongoing wariness impeding cohesive, interdisciplinary dialogue between novel activity and traditional methods. New methodologies still sit uncomfortably alongside their ‘conservative’ partners –seen as the *enfant terrible* of the academic landscape. Indeed, it has proved more difficult than might have been envisaged in 2004 to break down the carefully constructed disciplinary differences in approach. Despite attempts to “introduce interdisciplinary collaboration across paradigms” (Rapport F. et al., 2005, p. 38), arts-based research causes discomfort for those who continue to consider positivistic paradigms as the gold-standard for best practice.

Nevertheless, there are stalwarts working at the *Edgelands* (Rapport F. et al., 2005) who refuse to meet the scientific expectations of objectivity derived from the generalizability, validity and reliability of data. Instead they search for the most appropriate response to research questions. They aim to achieve a sense of data’s trustworthiness (Jones, 2006; 2007) and are keen to move away from paradigmatic stances that link affirmation with number crunching: “I detest every one. No one in particular: just one in general. I prefer not to count on one. For me, number is a horror story” (Doel, 2001, p. 555). They concern themselves with the disclosure of the individual (Rapport N., 2008), journeying towards: “possible, multiple truths”, rather than searching for: “a moment of truth” (Rapport F. et al., 2005, p. 38), and they retain a non-conformist pride in preparing for the unexpected to happen (Rapport N., 2008).

Broadening the scope of qualitative methodology and through its wider acceptance creating the space necessary for new theoretical paradigms to burgeon, could lead to a greater appreciation of the possibilities of ethnographic poetic representation. Remaining at the *Edgelands* will provide only a glimpse of such possibilities. Encouraging greater uptake of new ideas, through the credibility afforded from academic publication, will help to ensure that outputs are accepted in all their forms –in all their biographical, contextual, social, mantic (emotive)

and semantic (linguistic) complexity (see for example: Rapport & Sparkes, 2009; Sparkes, 2012).

MANAGING THE RESEARCH CONVERSATION

‘Like a Victory I Fooled Them’ is an exemplar of this method’s iterative process as well as an attempt to ‘manage’ research conversations that took place between Anka and FR that began with a single transcript and ended with a greatly honed piece of poetics. Research conversations do not adhere to semi-structured interview schedules and are free of the pre-ordained prescription of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Research conversations are open-ended, often lengthy, and consequently non-directive approaches to data capture that enable storytellers to present their life stories, including autobiographical detail, and health and illness tales, in highly personalised, individual ways. The sum total of several research conversations, in the case of the Holocaust study, led to pages of transcription leaching across FR’s desk. This was accompanied by personal artefacts: letters, official documents, photographs and postcards, voluntarily offered up by Anka. Considered in their totality, they produced as FR has previously described:

...a sense of lethargy and heaviness, their emotive content and graphic imagery weighed heavy and seemed to discredit any of the more traditional analytic approaches that might normally be appropriated. (Rapport & Hartill, 2010, pp. 24–25)

How best to analyse their content when the usual complement of analytic techniques –thematic analysis (Ezzy, 2002), content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002), framework analysis (Robson, 2002) seemed strangely inappropriate? To apply thematic analysis, for example, and by so doing to reduce the ebb and flow of words to clipped lists of thematised events, behaviours, actions and interactions seemed disrespectful. Thematic analysis with its systematic simplification was out of kilter with the flowing resonance of the raw material. Similarly, applying a computerised analysis programme to the material, such as ‘Ethnograph’ (<http://www.qualisresearch.com>), to count the frequency of words and reveal ‘nested categories’ would alter the sense of the conversations and detract from the storyteller’s voice.

Eisner (1997, 2004) has advised us to: “think within the medium we choose to use” (p. 8), and FR recognised the value of letting the stories speak for themselves, sensitively working with the detail to allow texts to reveal their own transformations. At this point in the process the authors discussed the task from individual disciplinary perspectives. They traced the roots, histories and practices of different literary and research applications and they discussed the value of ethnographic poetic representation. Mediated by these conversations, possibilities inherent in the method came to light according to two people’s unique and shared views.

FULLY ENGAGING

“I’m a poet. I had a discourse, an encounter with these people but I never had a list of questions.”

— Werner Herzog, 2012

Ethnographic writing has moved on from the strongly authorial position outlined by Roth in 1989, and now casts doubt on the authored narrative in favour of new frames of working (Dicks et al., 2006). It has been noted that by moving away from a position where we ‘take charge’ of the ethnographic subject, we can more fully engage or “totally translate” the other (Rothenberg, 1999).

Ethnographic writing that takes account of this new mood of contingency has a number of benefits. Firstly, it has the potential to evoke open-ended connections between things, thus emphasising the power of possibility (Kendall & Murray, 2005). Secondly, it can touch us: “where we live in our bodies”, as both cognitive and sensual beings (Sparkes, 2012). Thirdly, it allows the reader to arrive at their own understanding of a piece of poetics, or to receive multiple interpretations of a piece, without excessive researcher influence (Rapport & Sparkes, 2009). Fourthly, and as a result of the points above, it allows us to arrive at a more complex, nuanced and thoughtful conclusion than might otherwise be the case (Poindexter, 2002; Richardson, 2002).

Unlike the approach to developing a poem, however, ethnographic poetic representation is always looking for the poetry implicit in speech. Consequently, poetics from testimony demands constant awareness of the raw materials and the speaker’s voice, in order to uphold the integrity of the dialogue and search for a speaker’s true vocal timbre and rhythm. Ethnographic poetic representation can be, as with this article’s exemplar, produced according to strict boundaries of researcher engagement (as already mentioned, no words were added and no grammatical changes took place) to echo the way the speaker tells the story.

In this case the process began with a dialogue, and ended with a quite different dialogue, a dialogue between the two authors about what had been created and what effect this had had on the raw material, the storyteller and the creator. In between there were other dialogues such as the ongoing dialogue between FR and Anka that reflected on the impact of the poetic expression during iterations of its creation. These were of a very different nature to those between FR and GH. They were more hesitant and cautious and continued long after the study had reached fruition. Dialogue was contained by Anka’s reaction to the created pieces, and Anka’s response, in turn, influenced the direction taken by the pieces. FR recognised that imposed boundaries had immense value in the context of the extended dialogue, allowing Anka to see herself through the lens of each piece, and affirming their content through that lens. She described this as reassuring: “put-

ting the past in a different light”; bringing it: “out into the open”. Nutkiewitz (2003) has remarked that this kind of reflection is therapeutic for both researcher and storyteller, highlighting the possibilities for staying close to the original text whilst remaining constant to the method.

Frank (2005) noted that: “we don’t have memories, we have stories that we tell ourselves about the past” (paraphrased from Swansea University Master Class “Telling Stories to Analyse Stories”, Frank, 2007). It is these stories that we turn into ethnographic poetic representations, carefully and lovingly crafted to enable the reader to reflect on what the storyteller has herself reflected upon. Denzin (2003) discussed the need to address text succinctly and with due care, particularly as regards our use of emotional content and phrasing. Brady (2005) alluded to the possibilities that are inherent in this activity, when the writer discloses the universal through the particular, to move the discourse forward to: “what defines us all –what we share as humans” (Brady, 2005, p. 998). Jackson (in Rapport N., 2003, p. xi) suggested that poetic expression in research is a reference to the particular: “without any thought of, or reference to, the general”, though (quoting Goethe): “whoever grasps the particular in all its vitality also grasps the general, without being aware of it, or only becoming aware of it at a late stage” (p. xi). Brady (2005) urged us to render as exact a statement of lived experience as we can: “as clearly and accurately as possible through our sense of ‘Being-in-Place’ guided by histories that appear to contextualise the material best” (p. 998).

Ethnographic poetic representation, then, strongly supports our sense of ‘Being-in-Place’ and embodied understanding (Sparkes, 2012). It allows the writer to clear: “an imaginative-narrative space which is their own” (Rapport N., 2003, p. 14, quoting Bloom, 1975, p. 5) offering different ways of knowing. It leads to powerful outcomes, interpretive freedom and an economic communication of findings, whilst enabling various aspects in a single distillate.

Properties of ethnographic poetic representation also include: the facility to move away from the stilted, scientific and clinical towards an experiential truth that cannot be accessed in other ways, and the capacity to: “construct our life-worlds, [...] from other worlds, from the worlds of others” (Rapport N., 2003, p. 14). Nigel Rapport has remarked that: “it is of individual interpretations that the life-worlds of individuals significantly comprise” (Rapport N., 2003, pp. 14–15). Speech derives an implicit poetry, called forth from within the researcher, but of equal resonance for speaker and listener alike.

Ethnographic poetic representation is dramatic, quite different from other methods, non-conformist and containing qualities that enable us to crack open academic restrictions. This multiplicity of properties works in defence of literary experimentation. In summary, ethnographic poetic representation is powerful in re-presenting social data and in its management of language, it is strongly mediated through dialogue. It renders through expert representation a statement about

the authenticity of life and biography. Clearly it has its critics; those who espouse plain reportage and the realist tale for being capable of laying out a storyline factually, and without emotion. Critics are wary of poetics, seeing it as: too romantic, too interfering, and too confusing. However, whilst realist tales have their place, they cannot easily reveal the storyteller's character or the characteristics of the people, places or events being described, whilst the possibilities of poetics are manifold. There is also a power in the finished product which can tell a story in all its contextual glory. As Arthur Frank tells us, by *letting stories breathe* (2010), we are shaped, and at times brought to a greater empathic understanding.

THE PURSUIT OF WRITING

Writing, from a purely literary or academic perspective, can be a marginalizing, solitary and idiosyncratic experience. However, by bringing academics and creative writers together, through a common interest in narrative enquiry (as in the case of this study) the individual writer can be lifted out of a position of solitary idiosyncrasy towards a fuller and more rounded engagement with the human condition. Whilst writing is clearly conditioned by individuals and their personal contexts, opening up to a broader church, with shared skills, goals and outputs, presents a wealth of opportunity. The Holocaust exemplar, derived from a prolonged engagement with the practice, theory and philosophy of a common use of language helped in the search for a new aesthetic. Irrespective of the condition of the life of Anka during the time under review, this engendered in both authors an immense sense of liberation. Nevertheless, the authors realised the ongoing struggle to bridge cultural gaps between 'pure' and 'applied' writing, which C.P. Snow brought to audiences' attention in 1961 as a cultural divide between the sciences and the arts—a schism pointedly, yet paradoxically, exemplified by matters of individual and collective well-being. They were also aware that auto-ethnography and narrative enquiry, whilst at the forefront of social scientific debate, continue to be greatly undervalued by those working in medicine and the health services. Though attributed to the infamous mind-body split, this could be perceived as a somewhat false dichotomy, reducing a work's proportionality and diminishing its aesthetic potential. Working together enabled FR and GH to keep an open mind about knowledge acquisition, shaping the work according to appropriate literary traditions. Through the exemplar (and others like it), they attempted to affirm best practice and to offer up a piece to wider consumption, so that others might bear witness to humanity's tragedy. Within this work the authors hoped to create a space for others to share in the events portrayed in ways both expected and unexpected—viewing the events through the oddly-curved mirrors of time and place. Whilst synchronicities abound, new contexts were configured and defined and it became apparent to FR that engagement with Anka placed her clearly within

someone else's personal history. Engagement also led to the realisation, despite widespread knowledge of the subject matter, of a new way of knowing the human condition and an opportunity to bring new meaning to ordinary speech –when we do good work we can produce good writing.

The genesis of this work constituted and constructed the poetry of Anka's life –the meaning that *is* poetry. The process, whereby meaning was created for others indicated the power of language, and led to a deeper consideration of what it is and how it works; what it carries, how it speaks; and the end product, the exemplar –was language making itself *felt*. In that respect the process of creating ethnographic poetic representations from Anka's life and health stories was cathartic –an overlapping, unifying, engagement that *opened* up to the whole experience of life, with all its weaknesses and fractures. The process allowed complexity, ambiguity and multiple stories to happen and provided a theoretical and conceptual space for dialogical moments to occur (Black, 2008).

Because writing is often person-centred, in thrust and implication, it can elicit stories that people want to tell, and give due respect to their experiences and modes of expression. Entailing dialogics, it draws on the strength of relationships of trust, and brings forth truths that might otherwise remain hidden in solipsism. It is reflexive, paying attention to 'wider' truths, and relates the experience of the individual to the selves of another audience –society at large. By so doing it can dignify experience for the participant and the participant's loved ones –even of the most degrading or traumatic nature. And finally, it pays attention to the act of listening –listening to the voice of the storyteller and their language, listening for narrative style and metaphor, listening for the reactions of those around us, listening to others' views to take us forward. It uses these aspects, in a way, as an exchange of gifts, a re-presentation of memory, a life-moment which, perhaps counter to expectation, can be deeply cherished.

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POETIC EMBODIED INTERPRETATION OF RE-SEARCH FINDINGS

AN EVOCATIVE APPROACH TO SOCIAL SCIENCES METHODS

REGINA URSULA HEß

EMBODIED PHENOMENOLOGICAL DATA ANALYSIS IN PSYCHOLOGY

In an embodied approach to *re-search* and data analysis, the body is understood as the carrier of our experiences. Through the body we relate to others and the world, as we are intertwined and we are transformed by each other. The embodied phenomenological re-search method in psychology developed by Todres (2007) draws on such an embodied perspective. It is based on an existential-phenomenological tradition concerned with a nondual vision of existence, where being and knowing meet as a form of embodiment. *Embodied Enquiry* (Todres) focuses on the basic embodied connectedness with the world we live in. Drawing on Gendlin's (1997) concept of body, mind and language as interrelational, it emphasizes the implicit aspect of experiencing, the "more than words can say" and at the same time enhances the possibility of expressing this implicit aspect through language by embracing the relational process of the parts and the whole. The implicit also carries the mystery, the mysterious, the mystic, the spiritual, the not-knowing and wonder, thereby interlinking the spectrum between unconscious and conscious, the "borderland consciousness" (Heß, 2012). To tap into the interembodied implicit of experiences, *the more than words can say*, Todres and Galvin (2008)

suggested the expansion of text towards more creative forms of expression, such as poetry (Heidegger, 1973) to embrace all existential realms of human experience. This is articulated evocatively in one exemplar of poetic expression by Galvin and Todres (2009, p. 316–317):

“The body knows”
 How do words come?
 as appetite, fatigue, like the rhythms of the seasons
 awaiting an unfolding
 from the calling of the ‘more’
 the flesh of the world
 the interwoven body
 Here I am
 flickering sense
 wells in me
 just enough....
 The body knows
 delicate welling
 sensing of some gentle form
 and there it goes.
 Unformed yet felt...there is much more than this
much more than this
 fleetingly,
 vague stirrings echo words, each felt whisper,
 an opening to what is known
 The body knows
 More than this

Developing the assumptions of embodied poetic articulation of understanding further, Todres and Galvin articulated the concept of ‘embodied interpretation’ (Todres & Galvin, 2008; Galvin & Todres, 2009), which is outlined in the following section.

EMBODIED INTERPRETATION

Embodied interpretation (Todres & Galvin, 2008; Galvin & Todres, 2009) employs two stages of data analysis: The first stage addresses scientific concerns by applying standard descriptive phenomenological data analysis procedures of imaginative variation and psychological reduction to describe to research phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009). The second stage of embodied interpretation draws on interpretive body-based hermeneutical phenomenology (Gadamer 1960/2010; Gendlin, 1992; and Levinas, 1961/1969) with the focus on communicative issues, reaching

out to the reader by bringing the phenomenon to life as much as possible. This is done by moving back and forth between words that describe the phenomenon and words that communicate the qualities and embodied understanding of the phenomenon. This includes evocative and poetic forms of writing that can carry meaning forward towards “the more than words can say.” The goal of embodied interpretation is to transcend the limits of language through non-linear aesthetic expressions that touch us and elicit the implicit meanings (Gendlin, 1992) of life world experiences. It is obtained through a “back and forth” movement between the implicit, the felt sense, and language (Galvin & Todres, 2009), a process that can be called ‘embodied understanding’ (Galvin & Todres, 2007). Embodied understanding is relational (Finlay, 2011) and both unique and shared (Gadamer, 1960/2010). It is a non-linear experience, such as listening to music—where the experience is much more than the individual notes (Gendlin, 1997) and can be seen as transformational (Holloway, 2005). In the following section, I share some of my own process of embodied understanding of my doctoral re-search data.

MY EMBODIED PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

It took me months to immerse myself in the expanse of data of my doctoral research with the goal of embodying the naïve givens of the co-researchers’ (research participants) lifeworld as a whole. At one point, the general overall structure of the data suddenly emerged. It felt like “breaking the sound barrier.” Unexpectedly and abruptly a “door” opened and I was pulled to another level of consciousness. It felt like a shift in awareness, like entering a vast open empty space, beyond form. Visually expressed, it felt like the space above the clouds when one is in an airplane. Through this shift, I was taken into a deeper expanded understanding and view a general structure of interrelatedness linking the individual structures of the co-researchers’ accounts. This process is explicated in more detail in my doctoral thesis (Heß, forthcoming). I employed cycles of “embodied interpretation” of the general meaning structure of the re-search phenomenon in addition to standard phenomenological data analysis procedures. The next section briefly explicates the general meaning structure of the re-search phenomenon of my doctoral dissertation, followed by the presentation of two interwoven cycles of poetic expression of embodied interpretation of data analysis results.

Embodied Phenomenological Findings

In this article, only a summary of the most relevant re-search findings of the general meaning structure of the re-search phenomenon of my doctoral thesis can be shown as a basis for understanding the subsequent illustration of poetic embodied interpretation of these results.

Summary of the “Traditional Report” of the General Meaning Structure of the Re-search Phenomenon

My doctoral re-search project (Heß, forthcoming) investigated the impact of the “Capacitar Body-Mind-Spirit Practices Training” for transforming individual and community trauma with 14 women (called “co-researchers”) of diverse cultural and spiritual background from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, who were exposed to ongoing lethal violence and crime in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. The women’s embodied experiences of change as a result of the *Capacitar Training* were investigated with semi-structured multiple interviews, which were conducted multilingually (English / Spanish / Mayan).

The most significant results of the general meaning structure of the re-search phenomenon suggested that: (1) the majority of the co-researchers’ experiences of bodily change through body-mind-spirit practices initiated further integration of past negative (traumatic) and / or positive experiences in an embodied way, including interrelatedness to spirituality, culture and nature; (2) the initial bodily felt shift led to the co-researchers’ desire for more change; (3) the experiences of change were independent of the cultural or spiritual background of the co-researchers; (4) a desire to support others’ change emerged for the co-researchers based on their own experiences of improvement; and (5) ambiguity arose for a minority of co-researchers at the beginning of the training related to cultural and religious barriers, and self-esteem issues; and at the end of the Capacitar Training linked with the question of commitment of time to engage with the practices. The following section gives two exemplars of embodied interpretation of the general meaning structure of the re-search phenomenon outlined above.

Embodied Interpretation of the General Meaning Structure of the Re-Search Phenomenon

After the general meaning structure and the variations of the re-search phenomenon had been analyzed, I applied a further step of data analysis with the aim to evoke embodied ways of poetic interpretation, as presented with the following two interwoven cycles of the embodied interpretative transformation of the general phenomenological re-search results.

“Dynamic Movements of Healing”

The trajectory of the phenomenon “the embodied experience of change as a result of the Capacitar Training” has a pattern, which can be put in a metaphorical image of a *dynamic movement* or process initiated through a major “AHA” experience.

“insights out of the deep body”
gentle movements deep in my body
insight strikes me

understanding in a new way
 ease fills my vessel
 streaming into the ocean
 where did this come from?

Obstacles evolve, block, or slow down or pause the process of change, which could be called *dissonances within harmonies*. The dynamic movement has the quality to be *fuelled by certain intentions* of the co-researchers, such as expansion, growth, healing, and well-being. A process of change emerged with different intensities at different stages in time that seemed to be infinite. There appears a *desire for the more, a movement towards something*.

“desire for change”
 inner movements lighting fire within
 crackling my *angst*
 fear to change
 doorway opening
 i want to go through!
 letting go
 heaven and earth touching

The metaphor of a movement composition depicts the dynamic of the general structure of the phenomenon “embodied experience of change as a result of the Capacitar Training”. It is a composition within many compositions and has many layers like the parts of the whole. It is a *never-ending story*, which will never be accomplished—it is an *infinite journey that unfolds organically*. To me, it has something *sacred* to it, which we do not know and that reminds me of one phrase from the (*High*) *Song of Solomon* “...do not raise her, my love, until she is ready...” One of the co-researchers of this research referred to the aspect of timing using a metaphor: “We talked about leading the horse to the water but ... not being able to force that horse to drink water, is that everything has a time table. Everything has a moment and everyone is either ready for that healing and that growth or not ready”:

“innate capacity for healing”
 sacred seed deep in my body
 the umbilical cord to the world
 oneness breathing
 tapping into abundance
 unconditional love
 blessed be-ing.

Each co-researchers’ process of movement has its own individual rhythm towards a *more than words can say*, which is implicit and infinite, yet longing for

expression. To me, this implicit infinite process of longing for development and longing for expression is connoted beautifully in a poem from *Das Stundenbuch* [The book of hours] by the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1905/1972, p. 11):

Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen,
 die sich über die Dinge ziehn.
 Ich werde den letzten vielleicht nicht vollbringen
 aber versuchen will ich ihn.
 Ich kreise um Gott, um den uralten Turm,
 und ich kreise jahrtausendelang;
 und ich weiss noch nicht: bin ich ein Falke, ein Sturm oder ein
 großer Gesang.”

[I live my life in growing orbits,
 which move out over the things of the world.
 Perhaps I can never achieve the last,
 but that will be my attempt.
 I am circling around God, around the ancient tower,
 and I have been circling for a thousand years,
 and I still do not know if I am a falcon, or a storm,
 or a great song].

It is a process of *not-knowing and wonder* that carries the *desire and longing for change* and development forward, and is initiated by the first *major bodily felt AHA-experience of embodied change* of each co-researcher's process. I still feel very touched by the openness with which I was received in the research interviews of my doctoral dissertation and the sensitive sharings of the co-researchers. I felt confident that I could hold the space for whatever would emerge. I was in a state of not-knowing and at the same time was very curious and interested, somehow like a child who enters a new world and tries to understand.

CONCLUSION

Embodied poetic interpretation of re-search findings is an effort to articulate human experiences connected to the way they are lived (Anderson, 2001). Embodied expressions intertwine us with our senses, moods, qualities and multiple intersubjective and cultural contexts, and as such they are “aesthetic emotional presences” (Galvin & Todres, 2012, p. 15) interconnected with you and me as a “living body”. This interplay is not static, instead such a presence (Shotter, 2003) to human experience continuously moves meaning forward, as marvelously expressed in one of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Letters to a young poet, Letter 8, 12th August 1904* (Rilke, 1992, p.64):

For they are the moments when something new has entered us, something unknown; our feelings grow mute in shy embarrassment, everything in us withdraws, a silence arises, and the new experience, which no one knows, stands in the midst of it all and says nothing.

Based on a full sensing body, embodied interpretation offers forms of poetic writing in order to make the lived experience “present” in the writer and the reader, so that people can find themselves in the words, and through this, “experience homecoming” (Wainright & Rapport, 2007, p. 8). As such, embodied poetic interpretation of social sciences re-search data becomes a practice of body-based hermeneutics that can contribute to a transformation of qualitative re-search methods through the creation of “inclusive spaces of embodied dialogue.” A perspective on social sciences re-search results involving embodied understanding and poetic interpretation might provide an evocative and expansive yet rigorous approach to scientific discourse, meriting further exploration.

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THE POET AND THE PEA

POEMS STAGED IN MENIPPEAN DIALOGUE TO EXPLORE EMPATHY IN EDUCATION

SEAN WIEBE

In this article I consider the important relationship between aesthetics and empathy in human experience. Specifically I am interested in how being in the process of composition—such as being in the midst of composing a poem—can be like the process of composing a life. For both the poem and the person, there has been a widespread social tendency to place an inordinate amount of value on the finished product. Interpreting a poem and forming an opinion on another human being are activities which all too often address the poem or the person as a fixed, stable, and singular entity. Such a practice becomes additionally troubling in social contexts where knowledge is produced, distributed, and archived. In education, for example, a particular individual engaged in study is most often addressed *categorically* as—the student—and takes on the features of that category regardless of the uniqueness of his or her being. Knowledge of a particular student is subsumed by the greater production, distribution, and *archivization*¹ of knowledge of students generally. Perhaps lingering longer in the aesthetic processes of composition will provoke thought on a more empathetic address of the particularities of a human being, regardless of the social role being performed in the immediate context of the self-other encounter. The aesthetic process which I explore in this article is how composing polyphonic poetry in the form of Menippean dialogue can create a multiply-positioned self world. My supposition is that the notion of

a dialogical self positions the human being as more *a human becoming*, and that looking at the aesthetic process of *a poem always becoming a poem* will engage a more empathetic address between human beings.

Applied to educational contexts, I argue that understanding is less about knowing ourselves as a singular and stable self and more about the journey of not yet being a being. Understanding both students and teachers as human becomings (rather than human beings) importantly highlights how typical every-day pedagogical practices perpetuate the power structures of a classroom's social systems, and, as a result, too eagerly embrace a 'pretense' of learning that perpetuates unsustainable fantasy ideals that avoid the unique qualities which make *a human being human*. With this in mind, I periodically employ Lacanian theory to enrich our understanding of the fantasy ideals that create a denial of self and her/his receptiveness of and to others.

The background for my composition of polyphonic poetry is Anderson's (1835) *The Princess and Pea*. In the foreground, I've written into the text "a poet" who is positioned as the princess in relation to the other interlocutors. The resulting interplay of the original and the adaptation follows the features of Menippean dialogue in that the interlocutors converse in an unusual world where one of them has a crisis which needs resolution. Through the poetic dialogue the four subject positions that I explore parallel the typical subject positions in pedagogy. As this article draws near its conclusion, I consider some practical ways a dialogical understanding of subject positions in the self offer a different kind of interaction for teachers and students, one where the play of polyphonic poetry is part of the aesthetic and empathetic work of provoking understanding.

The Poet

At first it was a funny thought,
 sleeping atop a stack of mattresses
 knowing that in the morning a stiffness
 in the lumbar would signal that magic true poets of the league
 were presumed to have, knowing that it was one of Atwood's
 two headed poems causing the soreness
 and not an early career Crummy.

And then I started to recognize it
 how if I'd been invited over, that not knowing
 could be a blemish, a lack of earning one's social keep.
 What's an anapestic? A nod in my direction, eyebrows seem to be soliciting
 something
 in rhymed iambic pentameter?

I couldn't fall asleep without looking up the answer
 as if those sheep would refuse to dance to any other beat;
 the next time it would be at the tip of my tongue
 and I would throw back my hair just to ward off any question
 of the feats that could be performed this stormy night, or any other.

THEORIZING THE DIALOGICAL SELF TO EXPLAIN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING HUMAN

In recent work (Wiebe, 2012), I've considered ways of addressing the poems which become part an academic text. In the diegetic space that the research/poet creates for the poems, how presence is constructed in the relationship between the poems and the poet is part of the aesthetic work of provoking understanding. Leggo (2007) thoughtfully locates that relationship in the *positionality* within the self (multiple 'I' positions that each have a voice):

[I am] always seeking to know who I am, to gain a clear sense of identity and positionality in the midst of memory, desire, heart, and imagination, especially in relation to others... We are always engaged in a meaning-making process of becoming human. (p. 27)

The distinction between already being a "human being" and still being in the process of becoming a "human becoming" importantly highlights that we as human beings are *othered* to ourselves in relation to time, place, people, and so forth. Understanding is less about knowing ourselves as a singular and stable self and more about the journey of not yet being a being. I am a human becoming. This poetic and linguistic shift respects the complexity and mystery of the dialogical exchange of various selves within an individual body. Updating his earlier work with Kempen (Hermans & Kempen, 1993), Hermans (2002) describes the self as not only dialogical but also as socially constructed. His point being that within the body the dialogue of the selves is not equitable: "The dialogical self works as a society with oppositions, conflicts, negotiations, cooperation and coalitions between positions... Like a society, the self is based on two principles: intersubjective exchange and social domination" (p. 147). Herman's contribution crucially reminds us that the dialogical process is to understand the multiple and socially influenced selves that are always in relation. Applied to poetic inquiry, the poem(s) in a text can be understood as part of the dialogue within the self; as such, how the poet constructs his/her presence in relation to the poem(s) is a central feature of the artfulness of the inquiry.

In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin (1993) theorizes a better process of dialogue while also acknowledging that understanding another is fraught with ongoing difficulties. Beginning with the difficulty—even the impossibility—of dia-

logue, helps surface a general social eagerness to understand one another; within that eagerness assumptions about language are made too easily, enough so that a significant cause of misunderstanding is supposing that one has understood. All too often, then, the value of another's particularity is overlooked, leading to a kind of token understanding where the other's *whoness* is not recognized. It is this token approach to understanding which allows, for example, teachers to address a unique person in his/her class as simply a student. Such categorical positioning relies on and perpetuates the power structures of a community's social systems, and what follows, then, is a "pretense" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 53) of understanding where the processes of exchange are arbitrary. Continuing the teacher/student example above, where this *impoverished* understanding stands in for and pre-empts a better quality of understanding, one student can become equal to another so that it is possible to perform one's role without correlation to one's self. Consider the typical teacher-student question and answer session, where, after a student answer is put forward, the teacher invariably is the next one to respond, either in rephrasing, clarifying, or evaluating the student's contribution. In this *de facto* exchange the student's voice becomes subsumed in the authority of the teacher's. The *whoness* of the student—so central to dialogue—is overlooked and remains in the background. The result is frustration in the process: *The teacher doesn't get me; the teacher doesn't care; the teacher never listens.* And just as often: *Those students aren't motivated; they rarely do their homework, and when they do it's always rushed* (MacDonald et al., 2010, pp. 64–65). In this kind of categorical exchange both students and teachers are *othered*. As vital community practices unfold based on the plural—students/teachers—one's uniqueness simply disappears from view.

RELATING THE DIALOGICAL SELF TO MENIPPEAN DIALOGUE IN POETRY

Extending Bahktin's ideas to the dialogue between a poet and her/his poem(s), what comes to the fore is a need to understand the aesthetic processes by which *presence* can emerge, so what is unique can come back into view. It is exactly this question of presence which prompts Sullivan and McCarthy's (2005) critique of 'authority' in dialogical approaches to social science research. They are calling for a creative return to a hermeneutics which addresses the text as a living other, and are critical of the excess of order, explanation, set methods, and "transcribed talk" in current approaches to authorial presence in dialogue (p. 635). Rather than rely on authoritative knowledge, where the expert's voice in the dialogue leads the other (teacher/student, therapist/patient, researcher/participant), they advocate a *Menippean* form dialogue that subverts and parodies authority as participants struggle together "to reach an understanding of themselves and others" (p. 630). As a sub-form of the polyphonic novel, Mennippean dialogue conveys the narra-

tive through the different voices of the characters. There is no singular voice of the author, and no attempt to synthesize difference or disagreement.

Following Bakhtin (1984), Sullivan and McCarthy (2005) identify three important markers in Menippean dialogue that distinguish it from the polyphonic novel: One, the interlocutors meet in a fantastical or highly unusual place such as in a dream, or heaven, or hell (p. 631). Two, one of the interlocutors is in crisis, and the dialogue is a means testing possible scenario resolutions (p. 631). Three, the interlocutors are from different social contexts so that the dialogue is a kind of experiment in bringing together those unlikely to speak to one other (p. 633). Taking these three features together, an important possibility for Menippean dialogue in the social sciences is a different construction of *presence* in the text, one where the particularities of the interlocutors are not lost in the authority of the author. The point Sullivan and McCarthy are making is that the creative researcher “has the capacity to open up history and context through dialogue ... by giving them [the participants/characters] the freedom to reveal their expressive potential and to be surprised by what emerges from the exchange” (p. 633).

While one obvious critique of Menippean dialogue is that it happens outside any realistic context for the interlocutors, it is easy to see why Bakhtin (1984) presents this a strength: “The Menippean is fully liberated from those limitations of history.... and [is] not fettered by any demands for an external verisimilitude” (p. 114). What this freedom allows for is the bringing together of voices that are unlikely to speak to one other, opening up space for us to hear beyond the familiarity of our expectations. Sullivan and McCarthy (2005) add that these “dialogical encounters” enable a more sensory, embodied, and ethical expression of knowledge because the interlocutors are in critical situations (p. 632). They argue that the unusual circumstances created for the dialogue are not a “rejection of the contextual or historical conditions influencing experience” but an opportunity to understand others by reflexively “making sense of his or her history” through the “consciousness of the participants” during dialogue (p. 633). The Menippean approach to dialogue creates potential for difference via “disparate voices” (p. 633). This valuing the other’s difference is a critique of “the more traditional monologism associated with the authorial voice of research” by its commitment to whatever emerges in the dialogical exchange (p. 633). In Menippean dialogue the author resists the academic tendency to explain the other. The dialogical experiment needs to be experimental, open to the “sensuous and living engagement with a particular other” (p. 634). The authorial, omniscient voice does not overshadow the dialogue with its presence; the text thus offers possibilities for experiencing “strangeness and entering into an active participation with it... treating content as embodied in the lives, trials and feelings of our participants” (p. 644). Pointing to their own work where participants dialogue with each other, with texts, and with the researchers, Sullivan and McCarthy demonstrate the need

for transparency and variety in participants' experiences of emotions, ethics, and aesthetic processes (p. 635). They equate the process to making a painting where the participants feel the "texture of their strangeness through creating it anew in the research process" (p. 644).

The Prince

You think this is a story about mattresses.

How many would you have added if so much depended on her not being false?

Is that the cruelty you accuse me of? To defend what I've been entrusted with?

Am I not simply a statistician increasing the odds?

Or are there some cases where the test is the injustice and not the preparation or results?

Let me tell you what it is like to be me.

The trouble with fortune is it competes against you,

every flutter of an eye lash, each petal of a daisy pressed and perfumed is fair game.

What they say about gardens and kisses might not be true,

who can trust the possibility that these are only fictions?

Didn't Cassius' story begin with once upon time? Didn't all twelve ask, "Is it I, Lord?"

as if it is the very point of fiction to become a truth

we cannot help but be surprised by.

It does not take many years to come to despise surprises;

a steady supply of candles do not diminish the shadow of old age,

that one-time man descending down the stairs right in front of me,

each step a speech he punctuates with inheritance, with fortune comes the genes,

and so his silence tells my story, a cancer of inevitability.

Put 'truth' in front of any noun, and so begins a fool's errand:

no end to the story except to come home, become old.

We know this to be a Buddhist fact, the sound of one hand clapping

is the sound of her rapping on the door,

the nature of the world being suffering, why answer it at all?

Always the storm comes—it's what brings her:

I wanted to put in her in the royal coffin, securing it with 20 copper nails,

piling on twenty-four foundation stones.

Who can be satisfied with anything less

when the ending must be a surprise.

METHODS

When the self is understood dialogically (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) studying the socio-cultural positions of the subjectivities becomes a project of considering the continuous construction of identity within the primary relations of being (time, place, and others). As noted above, the value of Menippean dialogue is the fantastical arrangement of time, place, and others in the construction of the narrative world. The experimental advantage in this method for considering the self is that a dialogue of how these relations unfold in uncommon social situations can surface the tensions and differences which produce the knowledge assumptions of particular subject positions.

Hoogland (2011a) provides an impressive example of how this can be done in poetic inquiry. Hoogland considers her collection of poetry, *Woods Wolf Girl* (Hoogland, 2011b), the data of experience from which she draws insights regarding the socio-cultural positions of daughters, mothers, woodsman, and wolves. From her work I draw inspiration as my process of composing poetry is central to examining subjectivity, the primary difference in method being that I am foregrounding the dialogical nature of the self. For me, composing poetry as Menippean dialogue has been a means of participating in the difficulties of a particular subject position, and through producing presence in the text, I temporarily embody the socio-cultural values of that point of view. In this kind of experimental text, composing poetry becomes a cultural tool to make sense of the day-to-day lived experience of the inner world of what it is like to be a multiply-positioned self; the poetic inquirer is somewhat like the cultural psychologist whose primary addressee is the cultural being (Boesh, 2008). In the poems throughout this text, the voices of the poet communicate from the various I-positions, creating a decentered-dynamic-dialogical space for inquiring into the inner world of human beings. Applied to my own context, exploring the interior world of poets and princes creates important parallels for pedagogues and pupils.

The Queen

These days that lady who doth protest too much is me,
these days, or maybe it's been *always*?
 Even when I am most unlike myself I am still being me—that thwarts the
 story,
 maybe that *is* the story, so difficult to recognize, and admit,
 have I not always been the better prince?

Working with poetry as inquiry is a means of appreciating the depth and complexity of human knowing: This Menippean experiment foregrounds the dialogical self as a means of representing the aesthetic process of being human in a

world of other human beings: For whatever can be sensed, or felt, or thought, or dreamed, there is a poem. As dialogue, these poems relay an aesthetic sense of being in the world; they are concerned with day-to-day lived experiences, and how/why one comes to understand and value them, not only for personal meaning, but also in relation to others who share those same experiences as human beings. As human beings, our ongoing aesthetic ways of being and becoming are intimately intertwined with our feelings and performances of empathy. In dialogue the interlocutors try to express a way of feeling, not so much what s/he feels, but the experience of time felt like this, time felt in relation to another. The social world created in the poem is thus an empathetic interaction remembered through aesthetic nuances as the interlocutors ponder feelings and values related to their social positioning of one another. An empathetic education might similarly be engaging in aesthetic composition processes. The social value of this shift in emphasis is to avoid misunderstanding by presuming to understand. When knowledge is simply a cognitive exercise it is too easily produced, distributed, and archived. A better understanding begins in the aesthetic processes of receiving the other. Such a notion is not strictly Bakhtinian as influential theorists such as Freire and Rancière underscore this point: Both proponents of the transformation of culture, Freire (1971, 1985, 1994, 1997, 1998) and Rancière (1991, 1999, 2004, 2006, 2009) have significantly critiqued the excessive attention on reason in education. Not surprisingly, poets themselves underscore this point by resisting the logocentric interpretive act on a poem. Consider Collins' (1998), former U.S. poet laureate, wish for what students might do when they encounter a poem: "press an ear against its hive" or "walk inside the poem's room" (lines 4,7). His hope for a non-rational encounter with a poem is rebuffed by students' desires to "tie the poem to a chair with rope / and torture a confession out of it" (lines 13–14). How is it that students are so well versed in the interpretive act that, even when advised not to, they still give special status to interpreting a poem, wanting "to know it" by explaining its otherness from within their own perspective.

The King

In the routines and orders of a king,
 I do not care for how he performs his chivalry,
 pretending that I keep an approving eye on his performance,
 rising out of the garden in full bloom,
 not even as vigorous and hardy as our roses
 that thrive on the least bit of attention—
 what we can't afford is another empty hand, when next door
 three grandchildren have already received their first bruises—
 but let us focus on our purpose, this is what is proper in a prince.

His mother and I should still be enjoying him,
 in the garden endearing us with his bouquet,
 as he stoops to cut two dozen of our old collection,
 there is enough red blush to perfume the entire trip.

I have returned, he says, to report

there are no true princesses in all the world—

it's been a long time since I've thought he has become the man I made him.

Oh how the pleasure of the queen was concealed
 in soft cajoling and condolence to keep trying.

Stop searching for princesses, I told him, or would have,
 have always wanted to say *search for love instead.*

What would my father say to that?

The father who is never heard, a pretense more than presence—

here I am to haunt you—a halting voice hunched over your inheritance.

The good king is always the dead one,

carrying his head under his arm, so that he might act out

the gestures of speaking with some aplomb. List, list, he says,

and then disappears into the mist to be summoned as afterthought of
 memory—

no, no, no—I will not become the moral to the story,

the unseen arbiter, a metonymy of myself,

where the presence of my opinion is usurped by what I would have thought,
 already forgotten as a easily as a promise.

DISRUPTING THE PROJECTIONS OF A SOCIALLY IDEALIZED CATEGORY OF SELF

Above I have suggested that encountering the self and other in dialogue might be an aesthetic orientation for empathy in education. As I move toward the conclusion of this article, what follows is a discussion of how fantasy ideals are perpetuated in education and how these pre-empt the dialogical possibilities for empathy.

Lacan (1977) argues that the driver of our fantasy ideals is desire. Desire is the excess of what cannot be contained in a signifier/signified relationship: desire is what pulls us toward emotions like terror, awe, deviation, monstrosity, and so forth; even children's fairy tales reveal that within desire is that link between a lover's beauty and a banished inner ugliness. Understanding the desires of teachers and students is important as these connect to the fantasy of the projected self. In Menippean dialogue what becomes interesting is locating the projected selves in the dialogical positions—the student as prince, the student as queen, the student as king, the student as poet. This is not an exercise in categorizing, but in under-

standing the complexity of multiple selves within the projected singular-self ideal. What I'm proposing is that when the inner dialogue of desire is staged in poetry, what is too often overlooked—or too unconscious to describe—can be acknowledged. That which cannot be named is a missing signifier. Permanently missing, the unnamed dwells in a part of the unconscious Lacan (1997) describes as the imaginary (p. 65). Articulating the possibility of a missing signifier is to notice that there is more to the possible reality of a person than her/his role or category implies. Such articulation is empathetic because it notices what is hidden and understands how what is unseen is still central to the social construction of how one is to be valued. Practically speaking, this is an aesthetic process of nourishing empathy, for in the Menippean dialogue poets can create worlds of desire where desire is not hidden or disciplined in a social form; they can create distortions and disruptions to overly familiarized aesthetic norms; they can create metaphor with a view to *catachresis*, what Derrida (in Kearney, 2004) describes as “monstrous mutation” within the normative or privileged tradition (p. 154). Implicit in words themselves are disruptions to any secure signifying reference. Poets exploit this. To do so, argues Derrida, is “an openness towards the other” (p. 155).²

Disrupting the fantasy ideal of the student who always measures up, Mary Cornish (2002), in her poem “Numbers,” employs a particularly insightful empathetic critique to the more normative tendency to count and value only that which can be measured. For all those who have fallen below the cut line, received a zero or two, or become the more deviant part of a standard deviation, Cornish locates the missing signifier in counting: “Even subtraction is never loss / just addition somewhere else: / five sparrows take away two, / the two in someone else’s / garden now” (para. 4). In weaving loss with life, Cornish’s generosity in imagining another garden for the equation at hand is a textured empathy that helps us feel whole.

Writing dialogical poems which explore the subject positions of the self, students and teachers could create empathetic articulations of the missing signifiers in their school contexts. Such a task need not be any more expansive than relating inner experience through fairy tales. The relation to another exists in the tension that stretches between inexpressibility and representation within a dialogical self. Because self/other relations and relationships are fraught with evasions (those peremptory self-performances of understanding), a first step toward empathetic articulation is a puncture through the façade of the singular stable self with a view to disrupting the projections of a socially idealized category of self.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I've given theoretical consideration to ways poetic inquirers might employ dialogue to enrich our understanding of human experience. I've described

how a poetic inquiry of Menippean dialogue could offer the social sciences a different construction of presence in the text, one where the particularities of the various subject positions are not lost in the authority of the author but are more transparent and available to the encounter and performance of understanding. The resulting text would thus offer possibilities for experiencing strangeness within self and other. The experimental advantage in this method for considering the self is that a dialogue of how these relations unfold in uncommon social situations can surface the tensions and differences which produce the knowledge assumptions of particular subject positions. Bakhtin (1990, 1993) explains that dialogue is inherently concerned with the relationships between things, and argues that the similarities and dissimilarities of perspective in a self-other relationship are vital to the self's experience of being human. In other words, as the nature of experience is expressed through dialogue, so the self is becoming human through dialogue. Because expressions of self are inescapably aesthetic, central to my Menippean experiment with positionality within the self is the relationship between the fairly strange process of becoming a human and the more familiar aesthetic process of becoming a poem. For me, composing poetry as Menippean dialogue has been a means of participating in the difficulties of a particular subject position, and through producing presence in the text, I temporarily embody the socio-cultural values of that point of view. In this kind of experimental text, composing poetry becomes a cultural tool to make sense of the day-to-day lived experience of the inner world of what it is like to be a multiply-positioned self.

Poetically considering the multiple 'I' positions in the self is an aesthetic process that deconstructs singularity. In the poems above, because the self performs various roles, the *relationality* and *difference* within the self become more transparent, and this helps resist token understanding in dialogue. In Lacanian terms, what is resisted is signification where understanding is clear and closed off to interpretation as the signifier and signified have one-to-one correspondence. When there is no gap or space for misunderstanding, then the social expectation is that regardless of context every concept is capable of being understood as long as the interlocutors are being clear. The value of presenting understanding as aesthetic performance is that both the possibility and impossibility for understanding occur simultaneously.

As performed dialogue, the *Poet and the Pea* poems relay an aesthetic sense of being in the world; they are concerned with day-to-day lived experiences, and how/why one comes to understand and value them. As human beings, our ongoing aesthetic ways of being and becoming are intimately intertwined with our feelings and performances of empathy. In dialogue the interlocutors try to express a way of feeling, not so much what s/he feels, but the experience of time felt like this, time felt in relation to another. The social world created in the poem is thus

an empathetic interaction remembered through aesthetic nuances as the interlocutors ponder feelings and values related to their social positioning of one another.

In the self/other dialogue, by resisting the ideal versions of ourselves/others (and the final products of our poems (and others' poems), aesthetics thus becomes less a judgement of the product or outcome, and more a provocation of understanding during experience. Lacan (1977) helpfully explains how idealized cultural significations rely on an unconscious desire for coherence in one's life story and a felt experience of continuity in the self. Coherent and continuous "feelings" of the self he locates in the imaginary realm of the unconscious, noting there is nothing in the real to confirm our ideal other than our desire for it to be so. Applied to education—itself a project of creating a "better" self to be in the world—these projections are an avoidance of human limitation often performed as an aesthetic distaste for anything which falls short of the ideal. Weinsheimer (1985) argues that disrupting the projections of a socially idealized category of self happens best in dialogue. He writes that all "understanding is projection" (p. 166), explaining that it is cultural expectations (fantasy ideals) that precede and then shape understanding into the desired coherence or continuity. Weinsheimer recommends an approach to dialogue where we participate with the other in the performance of his or her self; if all understanding is projection, then reception of the other in dialogue reveals very little topical content for understanding, and much more about who we are being to one another and how we become ourselves in relation to one another. Thinking once again to the every-day teacher/student dialogical exchanges, this shift to the *who we might be listening to* would be a radical change to communication practices in education.

ENDNOTES

1. In *Derrida vis-a-vie Lacan: Interweaving Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis*, Hurst (2008) presents an extended discussion of the paradoxes of archivization in relation to the self.
2. In a forthcoming book chapter, I provide additional examples of how poets create catachresis in normative traditions. The brief examples I provide here from Cornish and Collins are amplified in that chapter.

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IN WINTER LOOK PATIENTLY AROUND THE EDGES OF POOLS

RE-WRITINGS BETWEEN ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

MEGAN CALVER

Can we know what life is like for something or someone else?

This question surfaces quiet or noisy within each of the various enquiries I make as an artist. It is one of a good handful of questions held in common with Kathleen Galvin and Les Todres, social scientists performing qualitative research together within the field of health and social care. Conversations between the three of us began in 2010. Our collaboration (*We want to be settlers of a pioneering kind*) brought a collection of writings and objects together for an exhibition (*Inter-*, Atrium Gallery, Bournemouth University UK, November—December 2011).

What first caught my attention was Les and Kathleen's methodology: their emphasis on the fact of embodiment—a fact that must surely play a determining part in what things we know and how we know them. What secured my attention were the research methods they have developed. One process of theirs in particular is near enough to my own to suggest a family resemblance, clinching a point of contact between our two disciplines. Ingesting their own faithfully reported findings, words are re-written from feelings in the body to form parallel, more evocative accounts. A full discussion of this methodology, 'embodied interpretation', detailing its epistemological framework, process and value, is available in

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several published documents (Todres & Galvin 2008, 2006; Galvin & Todres 2010, 2009a, 2009b). For my part, where Kathleen and Les re-write words, I often re-write materiality by employing my physical body to process existing objects in the hope of making meanings more available.

Can we feel what it must be like to care for a partner who has Alzheimer's disease?

This task is one to which Kathleen and Les have brought their process of 'embodied interpretation'. When I first read their words on the subject—pairs of parallel texts covering phenomena ranging from learning to live with memory loss to advocating on a loved one's behalf (Todres & Galvin, 2006)—I began to wonder if these descriptions might also be 're-written' as material things. I wondered what those things could be.

An experiment was proposed. Could I attempt a material variation of Les and Kathleen's research to set alongside their parallel texts for an audience? The answer came swift and generous, "we want to give it [the research] away... understanding is always local" (Les in conversation with Megan and Kathleen, June 2010).

From the start we were excited by the prospect of bringing the research to a new venue, an art gallery, with its potential for attracting a different audience including but also beyond the social sciences. Previous to this, the existing research had been disseminated through specialised channels accessed by those with a specific interest in the subject matter. What might our new audience gain by coming to the research through words and objects simultaneously? In accordance with previously established aims for the writing, we hoped for an increase in empathy. Our ambition is pertinent here in the UK where an aging population increases the likelihood of each one of us coming into contact with Alzheimer's disease at some point. Of equal excitement and importance was the opportunity to actively open up expanded possibilities for Kathleen and Les' research method to include work produced by a practitioner from a different discipline as a result of interdisciplinary conversation. The possibilities for the enrichment of my art practice via our collaboration were not lost on me either.

METHOD: A COLLECTION OF RE-WRITINGS

I began by reading and re-reading Les and Kathleen's work on caring for a partner with Alzheimer's disease, most particularly the descriptive text *Essential narrative structure: learning to live with her memory loss* paired with the more evocative *Embodied interpretation: the experience of learning patience in response to the dawning realization of her memory loss*. Although originally published as part of the aforementioned paper that remained my over-arching stimulus (Todres and Galvin, 2006), I focused on a marginally different version of this particular pair of texts

presented by the authors in a later paper (Todres & Galvin, 2008). The texts describe the slow transformation from ‘nauseous’ anger to fine-tuned patience experienced by a particular carer in the face of his partner’s memory loss and repetitions. In order to put my response to these particular texts in context, they are re-produced here:

Essential narrative structure: learning to live with her memory loss

This kind of learning essentially involved coming to terms with how his old expectations of her memory functioning no longer applied. This required the emotional learning of patience as well as a number of skills that would help her.

The emotional learning of patience

Through numerous experiences of her memory loss, he first learned that he could not control or stop its exacerbation. Initially, he found this extremely irritating and used the term ‘nauseous’ to express his visceral, angry, emotional reaction to what was, to him, the repetitiveness of her saying or doing something over and over again.

His initial angry response to her forgetfulness manifested itself in an attempt to control her into being less forgetful. This was part of his caring burden and at times he needed respite from it as his own health was suffering.

Coming to terms with her increasing memory loss involved a complex process of learning to be patient with her behaviour. This involved a number of observations and significant moments, including the realization that she would become worse and unsettled in response to his impatience. He became aware that his impatience produced a downward spiral in which she would become further unsettled and confused; he would then feel remorse and wanted to avoid this in future.

Another key moment was when he saw that she did not know how much her repetition was based on moment-to-moment memory loss. Once he recognized this, he actively engaged in a process of testing and probing for what she could and could not remember in particular circumstances. Previously he would have intervened, but later he learned to let the repetition take its course, if harmless. This helped him respond in a more patient and kindly way.

In summary, learning to respond to a loved one’s memory loss involves an extremely challenging process: a letting-go of previous expectations and the learning of a patient openness that does not take continuity for granted. (pp. 578–579)

Paired with:

Embodied interpretation: the experience of learning patience in response to the dawning realization of her memory loss

To see a loved one change in this way ... *No!* It is so natural to want to refuse that this is happening; that her memory can function as before. How deep is the urge to want to stop the exacerbation of memory loss in the loved one? It deserves at least an angry 'No', a great refusal, a denial in any way that is possible.

At times, it is also a sinking feeling, the 'nausea' of an awareness that relentlessly breaks through. We *need* psychological strategies to temper the awareness that the memory loss cannot be stopped: anger towards self, loved one, professional. But this is not enough to help, and helplessness, in this respect, dawns. It could be that a way of saying 'no' to the memory loss can affect the loved one in a negative way. She feels pressurized and upset. He feels remorse and such remorse also carries a dawning awareness that this way of trying to deny the memory loss does not work. It is ironic that the passionate 'no' to the memory loss is a care that can be experienced as a lack of care. As the intimate carer is able to '*let in*', and accept to some degree, that the change is happening, care begins to take the form of patience.

This is an evolving process, a hard-won spiral of insights and skills: awareness and acceptance of the loved one's changing limitations, actively testing out where the gaps are, learning from others who have gone before or can give guidance. But essentially the learning of patience is a shift from valuing outcome to valuing process. The intimate carer learns to '*hold back*' from the need to rush to an outcome such as the successful completion of a task. Instead, he learns to 'be' with the process of 'what movement is possible' and of valuing this for its own sake; the mere moving of a piece in a puzzle, or beginning again a sentence from scratch. This kind of patience also involves 'holding' for the loved one that which she cannot hold: the holding of continuity. This kind of patience involves the challenging acceptance of discontinuity and the provision of continuity on the loved-one's behalf. (p. 579)

The following paragraphs describe my response to Kathleen and Les' pair of texts above. I include a concise account of my process from initial experimentation to the development of my work towards its finished state and joint presentation with these same texts. The final part of this section introduces new writing of mine that hopes to convey a sense of my material investigation to those who didn't visit the exhibition.

An extended period of material experimentation accompanied my familiarisation with the two texts. Realising, perhaps from the use of the word 'nauseous', that the mouth was instrumental—and reflecting the carer's desire to both block and unblock his partner's flow of words—I started to work directly on printed copies of the texts, cramming them into my mouth only to try and recover what was decipherable from the now sodden material. A parallel and perhaps more optimistic investigation attempted to coax life out of household stones, achieving success with an avocado. Experimentation with the printed texts developed into a repetitive double movement of angry screwing up and patient smoothing out, fading the words and shrinking the surface area of the paper, yet giving it the supple softness and appeal of fabric over time. From these beginnings it was

Photo: Carol Harvey



somewhere between a natural step and a leap of imagination to begin a sustained investigation of the colours within a seemingly impenetrable enormous black gobstopper, following the mention of such an item in an unrelated context.

Buoyed by my 3-way conversations with Kathleen and Les, I began the process of removing layers of colour from the gobstopper, at first with my tongue and eventually, when it was small enough, by working it in my mouth. The rule was that every speck of colour from the existing layer had to be removed before a new layer could be identified and claimed. On no account should I be able to determine the outcome by choosing the most interesting layers myself. Far from being an illustration of Kathleen and Les' texts, my process, once intuited, was free to run its course to form its own structural identity. A series of 57 gobstoppers, declining in size millimetre by millimetre to reveal unique patchy layers of colour, were painstakingly produced.

In the gallery a pair of tables, almost touching, held writing and objects together. The gobstoppers were mapped out on graph paper laid on one of the tables in an attempt to signal my hard-won sequence. Otherwise unfixed, the gobstoppers were always in danger of being nudged out of position or lost from the table completely. Surprisingly beautiful, the chalky-looking globes bunched big at one end of their table, diminishing quietly and inevitably towards its opposite end. On the sister table two physically identical stacks of text, *Essential narrative structure: learning to live with her memory loss* alongside its partner *Embodied interpretation: the experience of learning patience in response to the dawning realization of*

her memory loss, also began to diminish as visitors to the exhibition took Les and Kathleen's words home.

Perhaps most startling for me was what the method of re-writing had delivered in terms of visual clarity via the series of gobstoppers. This much was plain to see: communication can be unblocked and things of beauty kept on the table but, in the context of Alzheimer's Disease, only in direct relation to the acceptance of a poignant reduction. In retrospect, my choice of gobstoppers surely manifested my dread. By bringing our audience face to face with this emotion, the potential for more complex readings (the subject of further discussion in the final section below) was opened up. Taking the objects and stacked texts together, patience, for example, might be understood as a long game of skill applied to a situation of chance.

A further, if under developed, element of the exhibition consisted of offering visitors first-hand experience of golf ball sized gobstoppers. One visitor commented "Sucking the gobstopper relates to difficulties experienced in the process of learning to care [and] to understand an illness in that it is difficult, unpleasant, resisting [and needs] patience, time, awareness" (my punctuation) (P. Forster 2011, pers. comm. 9 November).

The question, now that the exhibition is over and the objects packed away, is how to convey something of the phenomenological element my material investigation added. Keeping faith with the methodology of re-writing that delivered the project as a whole, I attempt this task below by re-writing my part once more—this last time, perhaps somewhat ironically, in the form of new words: *mouth notes: ELEMENTARY TERMS*. Derived from jottings made during my making process, I hope that *mouth notes* packs some of the punch evident at the gallery each time a visitor squeezed a gobstopper into his or her mouth. In this way, I hope that *mouth notes* will set the scene for a discussion of the impact and value of our project in the closing section of this article.

mouth notes: ELEMENTARY TERMS

Hardness

When you look you see stones everywhere. A clod in a ploughed field makes a good mimic. And in the house it is easy to bring a collection together: pumice, avocado, and, surprisingly, two separate stones to sharpen knives. The avocado sits in water, sprouting. Tempted, you find hyacinth jars in which to grow rocks.

Cleavage and Fracture

Don't talk to him about being prepared to wait for as long as it takes. Maybe he would rather shut her gob than face her repetitions? You practice an obscenity of stuffing and retching. Sheets of printed words cram and the black ink runs blue and brown in your mouth.

A chance remark, gaily delivered, "I'll get her a gobstopper, that will do the trick". Why didn't you think of that? A gobstopper the size of a golf ball fills the mouth perfectly.

Colour

He's sorry for his outrage soon enough, though: he's gone and got them both boxed in. Gentle now he lets her words tumble and sorts them quietly where they land. If he straddles and sidesteps he can hand one back as she needs it.

You make a start methodically, a mother animal, you think, cleaning her young. It's a beautiful object: billiard-black, speckled white like a night sky in the round. Loosened, the blackness gives way to barnacles—not stars after all—and your tongue rasps then bleeds. But you can smell the next colour coming.

Density

"Look, this is a good one!" Triumphant, a mottled pink gobstopper, just a little smaller than the first, takes its place on your table and you begin again. You consume a lot of sweetness. White layers, peculiarly glutinous, take hours to get through.

"Oh, so blanks count too." The line-up of little planets needs reshuffling to make room. It pays to keep your eye on the game. Yellows have to be covered with an upturned cup to slow down fading. And one roll too

many around your warm mouth and a colour is missed.

Transparency and Lustre

The table lifts and lengthens and levels itself most carefully for the task. It is dazzled by the array of gobstoppers you have successively devolved. Resilient surface to resilient surface it registers an inextricable waning from each lovely colour to the next.

Photo: Megan Calver



DISCUSSION

Can I make an objective assessment of the impact of our inter-disciplinary exhibition?

What can be said about the project with confidence is that the research was brought to a new audience who were given an array of entry points into that research, including and with attention to the visual. Our rounded package, consisting of faithfully relayed concrete findings plus more evocative written and material variations, offered the opportunity for a combination of intellectual and emotional engagement. Far from being confused by our presentation, evidence that our audience engaged with the work was seen at the exhibition launch when a wide range of people spent time looking and discussing it closely. This suggests that multi-faceted research with attention to visual presentation is useful for widening the field of successful dissemination.

It is fascinating that this was shown to be the case even though each new facet of the work was added from a position of further remove from the testimony of the carer on which it was founded. When I took up the research, I translated it through my different discipline using processes and materials that had no concrete connection to the original findings. Even so, the collection of gobstoppers that I produced was understood in relation to memory loss within the context of the exhibition. Evidence that empathetic understanding was provoked by the work might be found in this feedback received via email: ‘How the collection of large balls were reduced down not just in size but in complexity really spoke to me about what dementia does to our powers to think’ (J. Ringrose 2011, pers. comm. 18 November). Another person, whose father had dementia in later life, directly related the initial chaotic patterning of the gobstoppers and their eventual more settled diminishing to the progress of his disease. It was good to be ‘given the go ahead’ by someone with this experience, but my material investigation was never intended as a metaphor. Instead, my process aimed to be both analogous and different enough with and from these things to add something useful and unexpected to the research, to contribute to its richness.

I suggest that the reason that it is possible for something useful to be added from a position of remove is to do with the nature of equivalence. When ‘like’ things group, they work together through their similarities and, equally importantly, through their differences to express more complex meanings in much the same way that we build a sentence from individual words. Neither the process of illustration or metaphor can do the job so successfully. Illustration, being little more than repetition, adds little that is new. Whilst within metaphor, as the artist and writer David Batchelor (1996) points out, “there is always a stronger and a weaker term in the relationship” (p. 17). Metaphors are built on hierarchies that ultimately narrow the field of understanding, bringing comparison to a sudden full stop: a series of gobstoppers read as a metaphor for Alzheimer’s disease is potentially belittling. But, as Batchelor suggests, equivalence is about equal emphasis and it moves, and keeps things moving, in a more subtle way. It can be used to point up differences between apparently identical things—as in pointing up the difference in tone across the two identical looking stacks of text presented at our exhibition. It can be used to point up likenesses between apparently dissimilar things—as in pointing up the relationship between these texts and the series of gobstoppers presented on an identical table. By presenting different facets of research in parallel and pointing to unexpected likenesses and un-likenesses, we asked our audience to become actively involved:

Equivalence is more than a bald statement of fact; it is a suggestion of a relationship. It is above all an *invitation to look*, and everything depends on how closely and how widely one is prepared to look. (p. 17)

The complicated route by which meaning arises is addressed by Michel Foucault (1994) and seems relevant here:

Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an

Photo: Carol Harvey



examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression. (p. xx)

This sort of complex meaning making, Foucault implies, is not really about surface likenesses, but more about finding ways to make unforeseen connections between otherwise separate positions or subjectivities. He explains that a sort of step-by-step way of ordering is no longer “in a position to link representations or the elements of a particular representation together.” (p. 239)

The condition of these links resides henceforth outside representation, beyond its immediate visibility, in a sort of behind-the-scenes world even deeper and more dense than representation itself. In order to find a way back to the point where the visible forms of beings are joined [...] we must direct our search towards that peak, that necessary but always inaccessible point, which drives down, beyond our gaze, towards the very heart of things. (p. 239)

Operations that proceed entirely logically may not be in the best position to get an occasional glimpse of this linked up ‘behind-the-scenes world’.

Kathleen Galvin, Les Todres, Megan Calver *In winter look patiently around the edges of pools* (2011, pair of texts, gobstoppers, found cups and bowl, graphite marking on graph paper)

In so far as the collaboration between Kathleen, Les and myself has been successful, I suggest that this is largely due to holding back from consciously forcing meanings through; due to taking a chance on non-specialism and inter-disciplinary relationships; due to my rigorous process-led activity that allows physical objects to have their say (echoing Les and Kathleen's pre-established process of waiting for words to arrive). By letting go of ourselves a little, whilst drawing close in our joint commitment to a single research focus, we have brought unexpected variations alongside each other. In doing so we have de-familiarised the subject of memory loss perhaps just enough to ask our audience, in turn, to let go of any pre-conceptions and look again.

As long as original concrete findings are left in play, I propose that parallel re-writings—awaiting discovery on the periphery of practice where disciplines touch and overlap—can be effective both in delivering wider dissemination and in developing complex understanding. The notion of equivalence outlined above is a useful tool for understanding how this kind of poetic inquiry works. Not least because it frees-up poetic inquiry from claiming justification for its existence by being in some essential way the same as the concrete findings it describes. Turning the tables, this notion of equivalence allows poetic inquiry to be powerful by virtue of its un-likeness or difference.

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**SECTION II: VOX AUTOBIOGRAPHIA/
AUTOETHNOGRAPHIA**

WE COMPOSE OUR OWN REQUIEM

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF MOURNING

YVONNE SLIEP

I wade in
tangled patterns
of ever changing ripples
cords of rubbery kelp

tangled patterns
in the yellow sunrise
cords of rubbery kelp
just below the surface

in the yellow sunrise
feathery foam bubbles
just below the surface
reflecting transience

feathery foam bubbles
of ever changing ripples
reflecting transience
I wade in

WHY TRANSIENT?

One of the meanings of transience is *moving over or across a space or time* (Kavanagh, 2002). When my son Thomas died a few years ago my world was altered. I only realised later on that I was altered too. In my professional life, trauma counselling and working with a process of healing features strongly. I am an academic and one of my focus areas has been on understanding and promoting strategies for collective healing. This focus was initially around multiple losses due to AIDS but for the past twenty years has been on rebuilding social fabric in war traumatised countries (Sliep, 2011). In that sense death and trauma are not unknown fields to me. My mother died at age thirty-nine so I also experienced the impact of untimely death at a young age. None of this however prepared me for the experience of the death of my child. I resisted any preconceived theory, belief system and wisdom from others to aid me in my journey. That did not make it easier for me but it was the only way I could do it. Through writing and sharing, my journey has become visible. In this article I am offering the story of my journey as I experience it. I am not saying that, with rendering visibility to my journey, I have found a way that can now become a map for others to follow. All I want to say is that if given the space and time in a supportive environment it is possible to embark on the journey without a map.

In my experience it was not knowledge but staying close to the process that helped me find a way. It is not that there is no place for knowledge or theory but that we should be mindful of how we apply this in the helping professions. I resisted static forms of knowledge and frameworks about loss. I did not want to go through predetermined stages of grief and loss or whatever framework an experts on grieve management would try and fit me in. I did not want to attend groups that shared similar experiences or read self-help manuals. I did not want a religion that would give me the answer or the hope of a beyond this life. I did not write for therapeutic purposes, although it all also had a therapeutic effect, but because the writing offered a space where I could freely express and wonder out loud. I wanted to walk my own journey. I only wanted support to inhabit the time and space I needed without judgement.

I do not want my writing on the matter to be read as *the* way, but another way that can enable others to follow their own created journey, navigating a way that works—covering a territory in space and time that is too complex to be summarised in a map.

What I am presenting in this article is the narrative of what happened to me over time. Some pieces of that internal process I will share in poetry, as poetry seems to open spaces rather than closing them down. I will make academic reference around the research and writing; illustrate text with pieces of poetry and include letters written to my son. The form of writing is both a challenge, as well

as a motivation to contribute to a body of knowledge. I want to emphasise that I was not alone in this journey but that my loved ones stayed close by, supporting me daily. They offered generously the time and space I needed to navigate my own journey through the unknown territory of immense loss. Walking close to the pain helped to shape a way that enabled me to continue the journey of life in a meaningful way. I deeply treasured but put aside the green ink letters; composed songs and the flow of creative supportive gestures from many people and places, knowing that no response was required from me. Pieces that I would visit many times in the years after, but not in those first months.

WHY WRITING?

It is said that meaning is shared through words finding form, moving from thought into language. For intellectual thoughts I use the academic discourse available to me. Often the discourse is embedded in language that is only understood by those who specialise in the area—it enables them to take shortcuts to ideas and thoughts that would otherwise take a long time to articulate.

the silent swell of my writing
is pregnant with memory
I wait to see what I will birth

Experiences that shake me tend to appear in poetry or prose, in words that need to get out so that something in my body can get released. Feelings that otherwise overwhelm me, strangle me, suffocate me. That is not the only time I write but it is the time when I have to write. To convey feelings I use metaphor or reference to images that somehow offer a gateway to understanding. For a long time in my life the use of metaphor went underground to hide from an education that proclaimed metaphor was a defence to not owning and taking responsibility for a particular feeling. Thankfully that has now changed.

WHY POETRY?

I love the spill of words. How they can elicit surprised laughter or the brimming of tears when least expected, even to the author. I love discovering how two words on a page can do it all, just so. The way words capture the elusive self as it flutters by—becoming an image beyond seeing.

After numerous attempts of trying to kill the poet in me, hiding it in the closet or trying to escape its embarrassing shadow, I have decided to yield. It is not going to go away. It is not going to give up. It revels in misery and detail, in love and anticipation, finds its way into every moment of celebration or mourning—the

only companion that sneaks in no matter how private the party. I am an underground poet in my professional life. It is not something that is readily understood by everyone as being a means to contribute to social sciences. The Psychology department I work in is housed under the umbrella of Applied Human Sciences. As an academic I have used poetry in teaching and in representing research. I have found that years of in-depth research can be presented more accessibly in poetry than in long and dry research reports that are less likely to be read. It also tends to be the only kind of writing I can revisit again after its completion. But although the movement in this kind of work is growing it is mostly still frowned upon. That will not change unless we go more public.

my writing works best
when I am flipped over
and my shadows spill out

WHY AUTOETHNOGRAPHY?

How did it happen that I am prepared to use myself as the subject to gain deeper understanding about grief, to make something prescribed “private” a public matter, even if it is clothed in poetry instead of standing naked?

For years I have taught that the personal is professional (Sliep, 2007; Sliep & Kotze, 2008; Sliep, 2010) but at the time I meant something else. I meant that we cannot separate our ideas and political ideology from how we stand in our work. I never thought that I would invite the professional to scrutinise the personal. It was the one place I could take a position of resistance against dominant discourse. Now I hope my sharing can increase understanding and challenge discursively our widely held assumptions of how best to deal with loss. Over the past nearly thirty years of doing research my one constant delight was that I would still discover things I did not know or that surprised me. Things that made me feel curious to discover more. It used to be a relief to discover that we do not only do research to prove that which we think anyway. I have had the privilege of being the principle investigator of large multi-country studies, as well as supervising many postgraduate students during my academic career. A study of the self is the total opposite. An autoethnographic study through the use of poetry is even more challenging. But in the very micro study I still made discoveries which have surprised me and have made me feel more knowledgeable; understanding that could contribute academically and therapeutically to the existing body of knowledge on mourning. It is my hope that people will feel more supported and validated in following their own journey in relation to mourning.

It has been a very difficult writing project for me. Each time I pick it up I am not sure where it will take me. There is the poetry as it happens, and there is

writing about the writing of the poetry. In willing the mind to reflect on multiple levels that are infused with emotions, it has been helpful for me to see myself as a witness in the narrative. Maybe writing myself into the third person would have been helpful. I am not sure. I reminded myself that ethnography is what Denzin & Lincoln (2005) refers to as “messy” (p. 26). Fortunately Thomas helped me find a form of writing through his constant interruptions. He watched me so that I could not just give it my slant. I guess revealing him and myself through an autoethnography became what Holman Jones (2005) calls an “intimate provocation, a critical ekphrasis”.

During the writing of this article where my experience becomes a subject of study, the crafting of the poetry in a particular form has offered me unexpected gifts of insight. Each revision led to a further reduction of words that seemed to crystallise until it finally surpassed me and sat comfortably in the universe without needing my physical presence to explain or support it. An unintentional effect was that it attuned me more mindfully to the detail of the lived experience of others.

THE REFLEXIVE DIALOGICAL SPACE

Initially the reflexive dialogical space was inside my own head but, by putting it into the public space it became a reflexive dialogical space between myself and others. The initial resistance around dialogue was unusual for me as I strongly believe in the importance of inter-relational reflexivity (Gilbert & Sliep, 2009). Presenting the work and sharing the writing created an opportunity for internal distancing between myself and the material. In the case of autoethnographic study it is not only helpful but essential to have a sense of standing outside ourselves and observing while simultaneously stimulating the unconscious to become conscious (Hunt & Sampson, 2006). Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) suggests that creative writing leads to dialogical reflexivity even more than what happens during speech. I personally found it difficult to reach that level of objectivity in writing and reading my own poetry. It may have been because the subject is such an emotional one. What did help was to stimulate the dialogical space within myself by sharing the poetry with other critical readers and then discussing it more objectively.

My data is the poems and prose I have written over the last four years since I was told that my son had died. I revisited the writings a number of times as Gle-sne (1997) suggests one should do. Sometimes a poem stayed as it was originally written, other times reflections on the poem turned it into a haiku and still other times it prompted new writing. In all the writing there was a creative tension that seemed to provide gateways to deeper understanding.

In choosing the poems for this article I mainly extracted intuitively that which I thought went deeper than me, that which may create a reflexive moment in the reader. I have tried to stay faithful to what really happened to me. I have tried to

ensure that the poetry expresses or stirs life on a sensory level for the reader. I hope for the writing to be embodied.

Through the presentation of the material I encountered a rendering of visibility, respect and acknowledgement that had an unintentional healing effect. In the article I deliberately pose some of my headings as questions in order to enact the positive uncertainty I promote in the journey of mourning.

The following section forms the main body of my poetic expression. I have also placed some context in the chronological writing as it helps me understand how my responses unfolded.

Note that when poems are centred on the page it is either to indicate it is a different poem written during that time or because the shape of the poem works better centred.

The journey in time.

I am in Switzerland for a conference when I receive the news of my son's death which happened in Taiwan.

First hours

**I crawl on the bathroom floor
press my head on cold stone
I can not breathe
vomit violently
the walls come down on me**

The hotel manager arranges for a doctor to come and see me.

**someone speaks to me in German
I wonder if he is a Nazi
will his injection bring mercy
through death
no such luck for me**

First days

Back in South Africa

**I search hungrily
for a word—an act—anything
that has you in it**

**I swear if you were here now
I would turn cannibalistic
and devour you -
stuff you back inside me
forever**

In Taiwan

**the fridge door is opened
his body rolled out
without a word
the bag unzipped
it has been days
but his body is unwashed
his torn clothes have his smell
on his face a peaceful smile
sculpted in wax
stubbles on his handsome face
I kiss his frozen lips**

Then follows negotiation about the cremation –we want everything as simple as possible; the ashes will be brought home and ceremonies conducted there not here. I can't understand a word but feel like slapping the corporate mask off the undertaker's face. "Now now Mom... don't make a scene" I hear Thomas say and I sit on my hands. Finally they are done, I have no idea what they have agreed on.

The young people in Thomas's life teach me whole different way of mourning. They celebrate his life, commemorate by sharing stories while eating together and folding origami cranes. Putting different cultural understanding together each person staying true to their own understanding –truly multi-voiced. Eating meals together, going off to work and returning for more sharing. They take me to the places they usually eat, to the classes he taught, to the meditation centre they attended, the markets ...put me on the back of a motorbike and let me bodily experience the life Thomas led those last months. I fold my arms around the waist of his girlfriend as she aptly swerves through the traffic with masses of other mo-

torbikes around us. It is an experience that not only adds to the understanding of my son but deeply influences my own journey.

**1000 folded paper cranes
scribbled messages
on a life size lantern
blazing up in the sky
up up up
soaring into
transience
magnificently
so**

Cremated on Christmas day in Taiwan.

**he has been stuffed
in an eastern coffin
way too small
wearing white silky robes
with blue crosses on his chest
white socks too tight on his feet
his face all shaven and clean
there is nothing left of him
they still push and pull
his jowl this way
and that**

**I do not look
when they close the lid
I said goodbye
the other day**

He whispers in my ear – “*treat this as a pantomime, it has nothing to do with me*”. He often chuckled to himself, saw so life so clearly as a stage—actors taking themselves too seriously, more often than not the show predictable. He could laugh at himself and that makes all the difference. I tell him the only good thing that has come out of this is that I never have to worry about him again. During the days that follow his friends celebrate his life and a whole new understanding of him is revealed to me. The nights remain very hard.

**sleepless I ride waves of nausea
my maternal body has invaded me
my breasts are heavy
and ache with every memory
tumbling haphazardly
contractions come and go
but there will be no release by delivery
no reward at the end
my breasts have started lactating
I lose track of time**

In transit between Taiwan and South Africa

I shlep my son around in a suitcase in an airport where everyone else seems to be going on holiday. What do I declare when we check in our luggage for three. I show the documents, the porcelain lady behind the check-in counter tells me I cannot keep him on my lap when the plane takes off or lands. This is bizarre –he weighs 16kg and I feel I am slipping into some crazy place I may get stuck forever. Our flights to Hong Kong have been cancelled and we have to buy new tickets and get upgraded to first class. For the first time enough space for his long legs....

One month

**every day I break a little less
but what is gone does not come back
my tears create pathways
to find a different life
another identity
my deep motherly love
could not protect him enough in this life
and now he is the one that looks over me**

Two months

**before when day was day
and night was night
and in days we did
and in nights we slept**

Alice in Wonderland (1)

**I fall down a hole
shrink and grow
sip my tea
and eat my biscuit
become invisible
all too deliberately
and when offered
support on a plate
grow above it all
politely I say
no thank you
and try and squeeze
back in my chair
why does everyone
behave so strangely**

Three months

Mares in the night

**there are times
that I ride my mares
like a mad woman
eyes wild in my head
thundering over borders and
dreamt up obstacle courses
night sweats running down my spine**

**or get dragged by one foot
thumping over bushes and stones
and that voiceless scream
struggling to break through
the barrier of reality
until my pillow partner
manages to wake me**

Days are filled with images and memories

Six months

Everyone thinks it's a good idea to go away for the July school holiday. I have a daughter to think about. I manage to go through all the motions but it feels like sleep walking. I want a holiday but can't bear the thought of people or entertainment.

**six months to the day
it bubbled up again
a flash of excitement
from where it was buried
along the debris**

**ten more sleeps
before a campervan
will take us across the Namib sands
a future flirts with me**

**taken by surprise
maybe I did not die
after all
the day
he did**

Namibia. It was in the vast empty spaces of the desert I started to recognise myself again.

**yes, the red dunes
yes, the sharp edges
matching the bare longing
I felt, but could not name**

**a good place
to catch yourself
is in the desert
in vast spaces
in shimmering silence
in the cracked pan
with skeleton trees where
the jackal leaves tracks
but less than a story line
wait for despair
which is sure to come
come and go again
linger a little longer
until you grow
back into your shadow
longer in the setting sun**

**my thoughts evaporate
in the hot dry dust of
the Namib
where even the sky
is abandoned**

After six months:

I notice I have great lapses in my memory over the past year. Even about things I really do not want to forget.

**I embrace Déjàvu
like a long lost friend
welcoming any sign
of returning memory**

Nine months

This time it also took nine months of gestation –starting from the moment you died. But this time the birth of you offered nothing to hold, nothing to see or smell. But I knew from now on, for better or worse, you will be part of me always.

Not even death can take that away. Over the past months the focus was first on you, then on me but increasingly on us, finding a new way of being. I spend a lot of time reflecting high up in a tree in our garden where the children play on a jungle gym.

**way
up a tree
closer to after
until the turn of season
sorrow drops like autumn leaves
burnt orange and yellow
creating space
in a tree
you
me
I
I
we**

One year

**how to not
fall apart
when falling
in memory
but gather
glimpses of connection
that increase
my being
your being
our being
inside more
than apart
I fall
towards us**

**my moaning mingles
with the winter wind
gusts of pain
whip up dead leaves
vibrant in autumn colours**

**I could easily cross
Over to the other side
Or I could wait
Frozen in time and space
For you to cross back**

Eighteen months

**close your misty eyes
rest your head right here
let's sway on the thread
of a blue/berry night**

**hope follows sorrow
closely like a shadow
changing shape and sound
hiding in shades of colour**

**place your despair
in the downy lap of the dark
the morning will unfurl
like a yawning buttercup**

**my poetry is
cultivating words
in burrows of sorrow
in rhythms of nature
where bittersweet seeds
of love and loss
when harvested
nourish my soul**

**a hanging moon
changes its mood
waxing turns to waning
dragging the tide behind**

**I will never walk alone again
my shadow has been joined
by shades travelling with me**

Third year

**lava over rocks
once upon a time
marks transformation**

Then there was a time when I noticed that images that moved me did so in contradictory ways simultaneously. I could be stirred by a deep sense of beauty but at the same time feel painfully sad. As when I witnessed a perfect lunar eclipse:

**a bright white moon
turns the colour of dried blood
mourning the shadow**

and

**the moon as a womb
aligns earth and sun
birthing a warm glow**

Somehow it was reassuring to know that I could stay with the contradictions. Accepting that it is how life will be for me from now on. I feel I am starting to form different ways of knowing.

It doesn't come fast –it does not reveal itself in detail but when you sit with it for long enough, when you are patient in your contemplation some things become apparent.

**patterns of ancient knowing
carved with precision
onto the shell of a tortoise**

Third anniversary

**a dragonfly
suspended
whirring wings
hover over
dark languid
liquid
brooding
a matter of life
and death
the needle
darning
a case
in point**

Three and half years –preparing for the presentation at the conference

**getting to know
the hole
to become whole
enough
for dialogue
no howling
on stage**

**floating spots of light
igniting ripples of (in)sight
on a black mass of water
inviting me to go deeper**

For days I did free writing about the whole process. Prepared to enter a black hole without expecting I will come out again. The opposite happened.

**exhaled and sprayed
through the blow hole
before diving back
into the depths of the ocean
parting the seas
enfolding me
in vast spaces**

**vines cling evergreen
forget-me-nots whispering
life is lived between the spaces
where pieces of moss
weave intricate patterns
which you see best
down on your knees**

Until the last minute I am not sure what I am going to present. I cross pieces out and find others to add.

**not eclipsed
behind a shadow
not hooded
secluded in a storm
not stealthing away
to lick my wounds
not camouflaged
in harsh terrain
but recondite
finding a way
by parading words
naked in the public's eye**

**to find
that we
are not
separated
by time
or space
is the
bittersweet
reward
of undying
love**

Alice in Wonderland (II)

**mad as a hatter
in the garden of Eden
led by the grin
of a cat Cheshire
amusing and vexing
without a body
getting me to write
jabberwocky
filling my head with ideas
that I don't understand
but make me feel
so much the better**

And now at the end of the time line that I am describing here, four years later, there are pure moments of experience that seem to not only stand on their own but expand outwards instead of contracting inwards.

**a flash
of azurite blue
lit from within
the king of fishers
dips into me**

The writing is not all light-hearted but the shape has changed to haiku. Deeper, shorter, more contemplative and less emotive.

**boulders balance
on the edge of time
over dark valleys**

Fourth Anniversary

**the longest embrace
you have grown older and more mature
you are the one holding me
but complete in being held as well**

**we can do this thing
December and Christmas
without getting lost
being wrapped
suffocating in glitzy paper
while jingle bells toll
we can do this once again
smiling through
balls of the madness
swinging from a tree**

An ethical position

Although this telling is my story it is also about my son, Thomas. How would he have felt about us being revealed in this way? The way I dealt with it was to write to Thomas in preparation for the conference that preceded the publication. I insert an extract of the letter:

*Dear TomTom,
Although it has been nearly four years, no you are right, it has been four years since you moved out and the last time I saw you alive. What I was going to say is nearly four years since you passed on to some other place. I know you are a stickler for detail and the truth is the truth so if I want to tell it I must get it right but I am trying ok. And yes it is right if you keep*

interrupting to point out where I move too much to my emotion instead of sticking to the facts. But you see the purpose of this is to share the experience of our journey the last four years. I can't really say our experience because I cannot say for a fact how it has been for you but I can say our journey because although it started separate it became together. And that is really the part I want to share with people out there. Why does that seem important to me? Well for a long time it wasn't. It was actually the opposite, it was nobody's business. But then I drove back from a retreat with friends one which I had not seen for a long time. No you are right she was more an acquaintances than a friend. Anyway she is a therapist and thought she had the right to ask me about you and how I have been since she last saw me which was before you died. I weighed it up in my head a bit but because we had a few hours in a contained space but moving along, I decided to tell her. If this was going to be a 5 minute conversation I would not have bothered. Then I would have answered her like I answer the hairdresser who asks how many children I have. In my head I answer: do you want to me to count the ones alive, adopted, fostered, cared for, given birth to ...? And then I choose a boring answer that will not lead to further polite or curious questions. Two. But with my Buddhist acquaintance it was different, she really wanted to know and we had three hours driving time. It took all of those hours to tell the story but that was also because of the dialogue that took place. I don't remember much of the content but I do remember her comment when we arrived. She said I should share our experience with the world. I had to share it because in her forty years of working with loss and grief she had never heard or understood it in the way I expressed it, captured in 'we have found a way'. The "we" meaning you and I, not just me. She thought it may be useful for others to hear about it. Ok she said help others. You are right, that is probably why I thought about it seriously.

When you were six you went out on your own to the beach and came back with your pockets and hands filled with shells. When I admired them you said you were going to sell them to make money. It took me by surprise as I had never made an issue about money. Then you explained that because I was always giving away what I had, I would end up with nothing. So you better start saving so there was something for when I got old and had no money.

Your words stuck with me because you had put into words what I had not yet formulated out loud to myself. I need to help others. So I guess that now changes the whole tone of what I am writing about. I started off adding this kind of writing believing it may help others—that is what gave me the

courage to write and to come out of the closet about our experience over the last four years.

Yes, yes, by helping others I am helping myself, you of course can do it on your own as you always told me. But may I remind you of the time you told me to stop lecturing you about what to look out for while you were traveling, as you were already an experienced traveler. Despite this you managed to land up in the wrong state in America without any money because your father was waiting at another airport. Yes, some things I am not going to let go, not when you start behaving like you know it all.

Suddenly I am stuck for words. You have tripped the flow by getting me to reflect on the process of sharing as being my need. I do not have the courage to do this only for myself so thanks for the interruption but I prefer to return to my earlier intention –responding to her comment that sharing our journey may open possibilities for other people. Yes I know she did not use those words. Stop being a stickler for detail. That was the spirit of what she said, can you at least agree to that. And if you agree to that can I also have your permission to now share this with the rest of the world? I know you are a private person and this had been a private affair but it has been one that is helping me become strong again –and you never know it may just open spaces for someone out there. If it does we will never meet them, never see them face to face so that should be ok. Isn't it?

It is not like the time we were being outrageous thinking no-one could see us and then there was a farmer on a tractor in the field outside the window staring in. We both cracked up and ducked down giggling and dying a little on the floor. Caught in the act of seeing who could make the rudest signs. It was my answer to you being rude as a way of provoking me for not letting you have your way. We could do it because we were alone, except we weren't. But at least if sharing this journey becomes embarrassing it is easier for you to hide than it is for me. So I will take that risk. All I ask from you is permission that it is ok to share it at all. Ok you are right I am going to do it regardless of what you say and feel, it is the prerogative of being your mother that can make me say that but I really do need to know you will forgive me. You never know.

A moment of reconfiguration, an unknown self emerges. Unknown to others but also to myself. Writing into a different reality creates the possibility for it to become known to me. A bit like going through the Looking Glass; “It is said that if

you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there” (Carroll, 1871, n.p.). I get a sense that people are still waiting for me to come round, to be like I was or at least to present back to the world the me they had known. Anything else creates a position of discomfort, maybe a concern that all is not well with me.

One of the things that surprised me is that the writing became performative in the sense that it constituted an effect on what I thought I had understood our (Thomas and my) relationship to be (Butler, 1997). The writing enacts his aliveness. It fulfils, annoys, frustrates and delights as he would have in real life. At times accessible and at times out of reach—just like it used to be. A part remaining unknown, this is also comforting. Our identities as we are now coming into being by virtue of being performed (Solomon, 1997).

in the meantime

I could

reinvent you

fill in

more white

less black

but I won't

do that

instead

I write you

into the margins

away from mainstream

where you and me

can more fully

be we

to not lose

my way in the dark

I use your moral compass

even though

the needle points

too straight for me

Because of the pain and intensity it has asked from me, I hope that this article will be able to stand on its own in print. Ultimately I hope that people will feel more supported and validated in following their own journey where life and death is concerned but have access to other knowing if desired. What made it work for me

was keeping the writing over a three year period before revisiting it. The words here challenge the medical and cultural boundaries that advise when and how to move on.

**I myself
will draw
a line
through
the shadows
but you
have to
give me
time**

CONCLUSION?

There is no conclusion to this journey, it will be part of me as long as I live. Transience can take many forms and does not come with a definition of time. For everyone it will be different. Like choosing the way will be different. I had poetry as a pathway but the each journey will be shaped personally with different forms of expression. Hand drawn maps differ and makes the most sense to the person who created it.

In sharing my reflexive experience through the use of autoethnographic research created the possibility to use my personal experience to contribute to the understanding of mourning as part of a social phenomenon (Wall, 2006). It has further made me an “I-witness” (Spry, 2001 p. 706) to understand how I have constructed my own experience. It has allowed me to see how in my writing I shifted from placing focus on my son, then on the impact of a sense of loss on me and then on **we** were finding a new way. I noticed how I changed in the world. People talk about the alchemy of falling in love, how everything in and around you seems to be different. Why is the alchemy of death not spoken about in the same way?

In this article I underwrite that the personal is indeed the professional and request a critical mindfulness of how dominant discourses shape our lives It is a position I feel strongly about and have written about academically preceding my son’s death (Sliep, 2007; Sliep, 2008). Going public with my own lived experience has put me more closely in touch with the vulnerability such a position places one in and what it is I ask from my students when they deconstruct and share their life stories as part of becoming more “contextual savvy professionals”.

But I also experienced the powerful effect that re-telling of stories to respectful witnesses had during the process of writing and presenting. I add my voice to others who advocate that a social scientist who has lived through an experience can make a strong contribution to the field studied while reducing the risk of silencing the representation of groups studies in that field (Ellis, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Clough, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, Wall, 2006). In this article the field of study is mourning and should be read as ephemeral whispers. ... breathing towards a more collective choral voice (Shidmehr, 2011), in harmony like it happened during the Poetic Inquiry conference in Bournemouth (2011) with the many presentations and themes. Resonating with meta-narratives yet unique as only experienced poetry can be, inherent in the writing but not answered explicitly.

**we compose our own requiem
from a score unknown before
which lie in the swell of memory
held by the moon in ebb and flow**

**from a score unknown before
translucent whispers in the wind
held by the moon in ebb and flow
blowing in from the sea**

**translucent whispers in the wind
carry us on waves of transience
blowing in from the sea
to roll onto different shores**

**carry us on waves of transience
which lie in the swell of memory
to roll onto different shores
we compose our own requiem**

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WHISPERED (IM)PERFECTION

POETRY AS RELATIONAL REVERBERATION

SARAH K. MACKENZIE

Silence
Searching for lines
I do not remember
Memorized
over and over
and over
again
Each gesture carefully choreographed
and rehearsed
Self-centered, egocentric,
as people call it nowadays
look
don't look
 at me
see me
 caught
in the frozen gesticulation
of scripted expectation
forever trying
to arrange
 the lights
 the ballet

the scenery
the rest of the play
 in my own way
to cast a shadow
upon my secrets
my loss
 lost
to pause,
but for a moment
I may forget
that I am not
 my own
but something, someone
shared
and borrowed
a blue emptiness
that beckons me forward
whispering my name
within unprovoked improvisation
a story of myself
unrecognized
lines unfamiliar
truths
intertwined with the echoes of someone
else's ballad
frightened by the once imagined
monster
breathing to break
the silence
I remember
It is the secrets
I hold
you hold
we hold
within whispered subtext
yearning to let go
to know
possibility
within what
 is
it isn't all about me

Not long ago I had a dream, similar to those anxious dreams I am sure so many of us have before the start of a new school year. In my dream I had been given a role, a lead, one I had been assigned many times before. This time I was confident I knew my lines so I never bothered to look at the script; and then the evening of the performance came. As the audience chattered quietly in anticipation, I was beside myself—all of a sudden realizing I did not know the lines, I did not even know the story. To no avail I searched the old church where the performance was taking place, for something that would help me make it through. I thought to myself, I have had so many nightmares about this happening and now it is real. I didn't know what to do. My stomach lurching with anxiety, the soft ding of the alarm clock was a welcome savior. When I woke up I realized that this had everything to do with my nerves about school, and about life, the fear of not being prepared enough, good enough, of failing.

Despite what this dream might seem to indicate, I have learned to think differently about my teaching practice, looking at it from a spiritual perspective where education centers on the self as whole: body, mind, soul and spirit. It is within this such model that you, as Moore (2005) suggests, "... educate for the soul by giving it the things in life it needs: love, beauty, spirit, pleasure. You teach a person how to focus on the soul, how to live poetically and aesthetically, how to step into eternity" (p. 15). This is a pedagogical and epistemological model that does not align with the egotistical, ideological direction that I had for so long found myself following; however, far too often we find ourselves caught within these dark spaces of external expectation, disconnected from ourselves and others. Supporting this observation, Riley (2002) remarks:

Although each person's experience is unique to their circumstance, I would venture to say that within western culture, many of us are acquainted with feelings of numbness, of separation. We live in a mechanistic world that has taught us to think in terms of separation: inner self; from outer self; self from others; self from nature and the planet. (p. 104).

When I saw myself and my practice within this one-dimensional space, my focus remained on some external image of perfection, both in relationship to my expectation of self as well as my hopes for my students. This was a lonely space as expectation slowly began to envelop my sense of self in the world, in relationship. I felt silenced, ashamed, I wanted more for my life, my work, but the drone of expectation lead me to work outside myself—seeking some sort of external sense of approval so that I might know that I was good, that I had worth. Within this selfish search, I had forgotten what Snowber (2005) so thoughtfully reminds me, that teaching is "an act of eros, and act of creation, an act of love" (p. 216) and loving ethos; where as hooks (2000) suggests, "everyone has the right to be free, to live fully, and well" (p. 87), to be imperfect and whole. It is by embracing hooks'

(2000) “ethic of love” (p. 87), that I have begun to accept myself, and my students as multi-faceted beings who are imperfect, unpredictable, and wonderful. I enjoy teaching today because I have begun to allow myself to be present, practicing within that space of acceptance. While I still work hard to prepare, with plans and contingencies, I am learning to free myself from expectation and fear. Palmer (1998) remarks “By understanding our fear, we could overcome the structures of disconnection with the power of self knowledge” (p. 37). If I can be aware of my fears, admitting them to myself, I no longer have to hide or separate parts of myself from my practice; instead I can learn to be with the emotions, rather than having them dictate my actions, disconnecting me from myself and my relationships with others. I am no longer (most of the time) silenced by the fear of evaluation or judgment, nor do I work seeking the approval of others; rather I seek to connect, offering what I have to offer rather than worrying about what I think I should be doing. The more I do this, the more I find myself content in my work and connected to people, place, and spiritual sense. This practice is not exclusive to my teaching, for over time I have discovered that I wasted so many moments assuming that I forgot to be present, to acknowledge my needs as well as what might be going on with those around me. We are spiritual beings seeking connection and it is through these connections that we come to know ourselves and the world around us, but when we forget to be present, instead caught up in false images of perfection, we lose that connection.

Eastern spiritual and contemplative traditions “share an understanding of the self as a nondualistic continuum of fluid experience, ranging from the dense expression of the body to the more ephemeral expressions of mind and spirit” (Kesson, 2002, p. 52). What beauty there is in this fluidity that allows us to grow and become through experience, to be body, mind and spirit in union. However far too often we find ourselves caught up in the mind, burdened by the loud voice of ego that beckons us toward judgment, etching images of false perfection across our consciousness. As these images become stronger—lines deeper—our connections with the spiritual aspects of self and experience become distant, quietly lingering in spaces of unacknowledged longing. Experience is situated in relationship; yet rarely do we gaze thoughtfully at these relationships, to expose the gestures of disguised vulnerability, the secrets that echo within our silence. Far too often we find ourselves negotiating in a world of make-believe where we perform linear gestures of imagined perfection to demonstrate our own worthiness within the world, the academy. These performances isolate us, creating deep fissures between self and other, self and experience, self and practice.

The story I share with you today is a poetic return to my one of my own experiences with disconnection, longing, and imperfection. An experience of yearning that goes far beyond the classroom, entering into every crevice of relationship and sense of self. It is about a spirit so desperately yearning within the deep liquid of

scripts, careful observation, and escape—and of course always, always there was the fear of being found out. This is a hopeful story, with a happy ending, but it is also painful as I return to the memories of where I was and where I could be. I stand before you today, naked and vulnerable, tossing the script to the wind to acknowledge my own imperfection, perhaps my greatest imperfection and certainly for a long time my greatest fear. Like Redfield-Jamison (1995), on sharing the experience of bipolar disorder,

I have no idea what the long-term effects of discussing such issues so openly will be on my personal and professional life, but, whatever the consequences, they are bound to be better than continuing to be silent. I am tired of hiding, tired of misspent and knotting energies, tired of hypocrisy, and tired of acting like I have something to hide. One is what one is, and the dishonesty of hiding behind a degree, or a title, or any manner and collection of words, is still exactly that: dishonest. (p. 7)

We are who we are, and who we are is imperfect and wonderful. Within this poetic rendering I seek to enter into a place of relationship, to gaze upon and whisper softly those secrets that reverberate within my (own) silence, disrupting the perfect gesture, as a means to expose the (im)perfect self, creating space for vulnerability and loving relationship with/in and beyond experience.

THROUGH POETRY

In sharing this experience I wish to adopt a pedagogy of compassion (Denton, 2005, p 181), where through acceptance of self I begin to create a space for relational learning and becoming. This is often uncomfortable territory for as Palmer (1993) reminds us, “We are well-educated people who have been schooled in a ways of knowing that treat the world [and experience] as an object to be dissected and manipulated, a ways of knowing that gives us power over the world” (p. 2). Knowing with compassion goes beyond power or intellect to enter those soulful spaces we rarely acknowledge within the academy, spaces where the spirit resides. It is when we dwell within these spaces that we can begin to connect at a more spiritual level with one another. To connect at this level requires a stepping away from traditional methodology to embrace those practices that bring body, mind, and spirit together –facilitating the opportunity to engage holistically and fluidly with experience, creating space for soulful awakening (Denton, 2005). Poetry offers the opportunity for us to awaken, to enter into the echoes of longing that reverberate across the crevices that seem to isolate self from other and experience, creating opportunity for “collective witnessing” (Boler, 1999) and “self understanding” (Pinar, 2004). It is multi-dimensional and fluid, situated in the past, present, and future reflecting the nature of experience itself, but also emotion,

possibility, and change. Through its pauses, images, rhythm and story, poetry creates the opportunity for a communal engagement, returning to experience, not for retelling (Leggo, 2008) or recognition, but rather to create space for the echoes of a moment to reverberate across individual and collective consciousness so that they may become something shared. Dobyn's (2003) comments:

A work of art gives testimony as to what it is to be a human being. It bears witness, it extracts meaning. A work of art is also the clearest nonphysical way that emotion is communicated from one individual to another. The emotion isn't referred to it is re-created. The emotion shows us that our most private feelings are in fact shared feelings. And this offers us some relief from our existential isolation. (p. 10)

Through artful forms of expression, we create opportunities to enter into a dialogical space of wholeness where knowing becomes something more than a truth to be generalized, but rather a spiritual exploration of being one—self and other, in relationship. “Education” [and research] according to Miller “has tended to focus on the head to the exclusion of the rest of our being” (p. 3). Poetic inquiry creates the opportunity to connect heart and mind, soul, self, and other through the acknowledgement of experience being that which is fluid and felt, tangible and transient, known and unknown.

So often within research and education we seek generalizations and truths, yet within these concrete spaces too many of us find ourselves, our stories left out. Palmer (1993) remarks, “We depend on generalizing from the particular, and in that movement we detach ourselves from the personal” these are practices that “divorce us from life and from ourselves (and one another) if we do not remember their origins” (p. 63). Through poetry the personal is remembered, generalizations are replaced with awareness, and we enter into spaces of communal knowing. Poetry takes us to “moments of memory” (Luce-Kapler, 2009, p. 75) mindful, spiritual, emotional, or physical and it is in these moments that we begin to see ourselves in relationship to an other. According to Palmer (1993) “When we allow the whole self to know in relationship, we come into a community of mutual knowing in which we will be transformed even as we transform” (p. 54). Through poetic inquiry, “We can” as Richardson (1997) suggests, “lay claim to a science that is aesthetic, moral, ethical, moving, rich, and metaphoric as well as avant-garde, transgressing, and multivocal. We no longer need to give up our humanity for the illusion of objective knowledge” (p. 16). Scholarship is personal and when we create opportunities for holistic engagement with experience within our research we invite both reader and writer, researcher and participant to enter into intimate spaces of mindfulness and praxis that allow us to see self and other in context, as part of a larger whole—a whole that we are both responsible to and for the social experience of becoming (Riley, 2002). Sameshima (2008) remarks,

“that the articulation of the intimate frees because others are given the chance to see what is hidden. To free that which is hidden is to liberate all who think oppression is acceptable” (p. 44). It is this liberation that creates opportunity not only for knowledge, but also acceptance of the (im)perfect self. Riley (2002) thoughtfully comments that “This is our life—it is all around us, it comes to us regardless, of times unaware. We do not create it nor do we control it, rather we are it and it is we. We are a part of it” (p. 118). Through poetic inquiry we may begin to embrace the “it”, as something worthy of acknowledgement as we continue to grow as individuals in community, negotiating within and without experience.

WITH/IN ADDICTION

All addicts, regardless of the substance or their social status share a consistent and obvious symptom; they're not quite present when you talk to them. They communicate to you through a barely discernible but un-ignorable veil. Whether a homeless smack head troubling you for 50p for a cup of tea or a coked-up, pinstriped exec foaming off about his “speedboat” there is a toxic aura that prevents connection. They have about them the air of elsewhere, that they're looking through you to somewhere else they'd rather be. And of course they are. (Brand, 2011, July 24)

This evening I passed
 the liquor store
 remembering
 in the stoic face of a young college student
 myself
 ironed out in shame and longing
 for a different reflection
 numbness
 escape
 fresh places, spaces
 just to be
 but the thought of absence in that moment, past
 sends romantic shudders across
 my consciousness
 as I walk, she walks with purpose
 looking around to make sure no one sees the bag of bottles
 desperate to not
 take that drink
 for the glass
 the ecstasy of our first kiss

two
 three
 I want to hear
 basking in language
 poetic visions
 of possibility
 and beauty
 I am drowning
 in a glasses condensation
 pooling, pulling
 three, four, five
 the count is lost
 caught up in mindless chatter
 and concern

I think I may have made an ass of myself
 quick glances to the bar
 I feel like I might vomit
 just
 one more
 more
 to drink
 to numb
 to feel
 confused and woozy in my shame
 I am losing

Knapp (1996) intimates that, “most of us have already tried, and consistently failed, to moderate our drinking on our own, experimenting time after time with control” (p. 130). This was certainly the case for me in terms of my drinking, but also in relationship to how I might be perceived by everyone else; my life was a performance. However much I tried to be in control, I found myself caught up in a faster spiral than I had imagined possible. I was ashamed, I drank, I wanted to connect with my emotions and with others I drank, because somewhere on this spiral I had let go of what mattered to me. I could see hope in my relationships, my teaching, my research and writing, but when the nighttime came or when I found myself alone or in social situations, I struggled to be still within the present. Was it that I had drunk so much alcohol that finally my synapses had become confused, rewired to make me think that I could only be comfortable with myself with a drink in my hand or was it something else? Alexander (1997) remarks that, “In active addiction, the present moment is a terrible and threatening place. The remorse for things done and the fear of what is to come crowd the eternal holy

now into oblivion” (p. 17). I had forgotten what it meant to live in the now or even what truly mattered to me, instead I found myself seeking and performing, caught in an endless cycle of want and disappointment. Knapp comments (1996) that, “We become so accustomed to transforming ourselves into new and improved versions of ourselves that we lose the core version, the version we were born with, the version that might learn to connect with others in a meaningful way” (p. 89). For the alcoholic, alcohol is like the abusive first love who for a moment made us feel wonderful, yet after a while he begins to beat away at everything that made us who we were and so we try to escape, to become someone else, someone acceptable. We intellectualize our fears (Karr, 2009), our disease, our actions, and try to maintain control, working really hard to perform some image of perfection. Unfortunately we remain caught in the escape, too afraid to pause, to see who it is we are meant to be, too afraid to connect, to live. During these moments of escape our addictive lover holds on entangling hope with denial, confusion, and we return to the survivalist tendencies we have long depended upon; “Imagination [is] ... replaced by cunning, creativity by imitation, and feelings by sentimentality” (Alexander, 1997, p. 23). We yearn for the unknown, yet find comfort in the known, and thus we return to the violence and reinforcement that we are just not good enough—the relationship takes its toll, and eventually, though hidden, we carry the bruises with us wherever we go. Even during brief moments of sobriety I focused on my shortcomings trying to compensate for the truth of who I thought I was.

A face in the mirror
mine
broken blood vessels
and pallor
part the veil
a moment
I see myself
what
I have become
am becoming
staggering through life's
vocation
misconducted
A voice I barely recognize
whispers
Oh god, please save me
I am dying
lost

shirked in shame
 help me
 move one foot forward
 speaking
 truth
 so that I might live
 I will
 not imbibe today

“[D]rinking interferes with the larger, murkier business of identity of forming a sense of the self as strong and capable and aware” (Knapp, p. 80). We focus so much on compensating for the shame of having no control or not remembering, that we forget the person we once were, losing sight of what Palmer (2004) refers to as that “seed of selfhood that contains the spiritual DNA of our uniqueness—and encoded birthright knowledge of who we are, why we are here, and how we are related to others” (p. 32). All we know is the person we don’t want to be, and for me and I think many of my fellow addicts, an outside image of perfection, what we think we should be, that reinforces our sense of self as failure. It is hard enough to find contentment in life and a sense of peace with yourself. When you are an alcoholic caught in the throes of addiction, it is impossible. Instead I found myself caught up in fear and wanting—control, (dis)connection, escape, anything that might let me get past the truth of who I thought I was. Griffin (2004) points out “It’s amazing the lengths of convoluted thinking to which an alcoholic will go to avoid the truth” (p. xvii). We are afraid of the truth; there is only one thing that we know for sure and that is that we cannot control our drinking and this indicates, by much of society’s standards, that we just aren’t good enough, perhaps in fact we may be unlovable. And so we keep this one truth to ourselves, even trying to rationalize it away; comparing our drinking to someone else who drinks as much as we do and seems to be okay, dwelling on the evening when we only had one drink. We tell ourselves it’s not that bad, but deep down we know the truth and our dishonesty leads us further into the silence, isolation, and shame.

He doesn’t forget
 waiting
 a promise unfulfilled
 as she collects the glasses
 sets a timer
 He looks at his watch
 waiting
 5 more minutes
 the dogs bark his eyes scan the parking lot

perhaps
 he missed her
Stumbling along after a forgotten number of
just one mores
how long ago was it the phone rang
She forgets
where she is
filling the glass
Love doesn't matter
the wine
warm
a blanket of numbness
she never wants to let go
until she remembers
faintly
love
She goes through the motions
wandering
wondering
wasting
She can't erase the time
across the darkness of her anger and the cold night air
she returns
no choice
but to go home
Where he sits waiting on the couch
In his bright orange shirt
that burns her eyes
Have you
been drinking?
Slurring, she whispers, no

I still find myself amazed at my own lunacy during active addiction. I tried so hard to pretend that I was just fine that sometimes I would lie outright. The above poem references an evening when my partner found himself waiting for me to show up for our evening walk with the dogs, for more than thirty minutes. While he waited I was busy finishing a bottle of wine—trying to get as much in before I absolutely had to meet him. I even set the kitchen timer, but without being aware of it, I just kept adding more time. When I finally made it out the door, I was way too late, but I had no idea. Instead I thought I had just missed him or he was running late. I searched the fields where we walked—asking anyone who passed if

they saw a man with two dogs; I am sure I was quite a sight. I was scared when I could not find him, but in my mind I could not recognize that it may have been my fault, that I might not have been able to maintain the image of normalcy I worked so hard to protect. When I got home, I am not even sure I was walking straight, but when he asked me whether I had been drinking, I just could not admit it—I was so afraid for him to know the truth. Of course, he already knew. When we acknowledge our shame, our imperfections, we create opportunity for dialogue and change; dishonesty simply breeds silence and stagnation, so that the painful cycle can continue onward.

One day without
 Peace
 hope
 yearning within contradiction
 a specter
 seated alone
 at the hotel restaurant
 just one
 two
 three
 what might the waitress think of me
 I cannot risk
 more
 Want takes over
 until alone in my room I sleep
 Hopeful that tomorrow
 tomorrow
 things might
 perhaps
 be different

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous begin with the first step, which states: “We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001, p. 59). My life had certainly become unmanageable, no matter how hard I worked to maintain some semblance of normalcy, I felt like my life was in chaos. I was out of breath from how much work I was having to do to make sure no one saw how sick I was, how weak. I was so focused on pretending I was fine, that I could not see anyone but myself. Karr (2009), shares “When my disease has ahold of me, it tells me my suffering is special or unique, but [really] it’s the same as everybody’s” (p. 241). Alcohol disconnects us from spirit, self, and other forcing us into a space of silence and self-

centeredness. We stay silent, participating in games of pretend so as to preserve the peace or at least the image we work so hard to project. To speak the truth may lead to an unpleasant outcome, one we cannot predict—so we continue to live with the secrets, the silence with no hope of moving beyond them.

I don't remember much
from that last night
the first sip
place or position
instead I remember elation
basking in that place
of numbed imagination
where pain and joy united
if only for a moment
a hidden bottle I went back for
again
and again
only one more
but I can't
stop
and so with glass in hand
I wrote
sappy poetry, sang love songs, danced
and contemplated suicide
not really wanting to die
I wanted
another drink
but what I wanted more
was life
and so when he came home
my love
amidst melancholy lamentation
I leapt toward hope
and spoke the words
shame had held silent in her crippled hands
I am an alcoholic
and with those words
my life slowly
began

I love the first step because it requires we acknowledge our imperfection, our powerlessness in life, a powerlessness that exists when we, on our own try to control things according to our perceptions of what it means to be a good person, a loveable person, intelligent, accomplished and responsible. We build these worlds for ourselves, protected and distant (Irigaray, 2002), spaces where ego speaks louder than spirit. We begin to trust in the external to the extent that our souls seem to lose their breath, unnourished and disconnected from the whole. To know the world and to know other means we must know the self; however, this can only happen when we let go of our grip upon the ego's quest for power, embracing self as imperfect, fluid, a whole connected to something larger than self. As Irigaray (2002) points out, "In Western philosophy [and I would add, ways of living] the thought of the world as living no longer exists" (p.45). Fixed with a vision of permanence, we trust things as they are, fearing change as a lack of control and so we work hard to hold on to what is the same, while the world in fact keeps moving. Unfortunately, all too often in this process, we find ourselves caught in our thoughts, no longer able to see what is going on around us, or how the world is changing, sometimes even —no longer able to hear the words of the spirit, feel the pain of the body—life becomes rote, disconnected, impersonal. Even within disconnection there is hope when we let go, pausing —to see, to listen, to move with awareness in those spaces where we have been afraid to go. Letting go, claiming powerlessness forces us to become present, while also beginning to depend on the whole self—mind, body, spirit as well as the other from who we had become disconnected, our survival depends upon it. This need for dependence—connection demands that we call out from the silence.

I remember those last few months when I was drinking, wanting desperately to stop but knowing deep down that I couldn't do it without help. The burden of ambivalence lay heavily across my consciousness; on the one hand I knew I needed help to stop and that help could only come if I was honest about my problem, on the other hand I was afraid of what people would say or think, so afraid to disrupt the façade I had worked so hard to create. They say change sometimes doesn't happen until the pain becomes so much that we can do nothing else. Here I was daily going about my responsibilities, researching, teaching, writing, but when the evening came I wanted to drink, I wanted to die, but I wanted to live; lost, I could no longer escape in the numbness of alcohol. Finally, I let go and I told my partner the truth he already knew —It was a risk, I might lose everything my ego told me, but my spirit said and the pains of my body hinted that the fears of that loss were far less than the deep reality of losing myself. The funny thing is, when I told him, he didn't say I was awful person or that he could not love me—he said you do what you need to do and that next morning he reminded me that I needed to continue to be honest and to reach out. There are times today when we are walking the dogs, where he remembers the night I never showed up, and at first I wanted to deny it, to pretend that I never did these kinds of things.

However, to deny would mean to disregard his experience and the impact that my choices had on his life, to deny would contribute to the schism between souls, moving me closer to the silence, closer to disease and disconnection.

The Embrace of (Im)perfection

A basis for reflection
 pools of human
 (in)discretion
 we speak in silence
 our breath
 words rippling on the water
 bodies of shame
 move carefully
 through a breathstroke choreographed
 what if to pause
 splashing the words
 the unrecognizable one
 who
 carries our reflection
 swimming beside
 sunset, sunrise
 hours, days continue
 contagion
 isolation
 too many
 bodies lay beneath
 the surface
 waters opaque with fear
 glistening in expectation
 we struggle
 afraid to stop
 to splash
 to know
 the neighbor
 to bask in the audacity
 of secrets
 awakened to sight
 in the sunrise
 y/ou(r)
 (im)perfection
 humanity revealed

Experience is fluid, shared, and uniquely one's own. This brief rendering of my alcoholic journey is both my own and yours, metaphorically speaking (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Our lives reflect off one another, sometimes distorted and displaced on our journey to be loved, to have worth. Too often we hold tight to our individual stories, to our secrets, making sense of our stories through only one lens; however when we share them we create a new space for understanding of self and other, spaces for relationship and acceptance, possibility and growth. Dewey (1980) notes that it is "only when an organism [human] shares in the ordered relations of its environment does it secure the stability essential to living" (p. 15). This ordered living that Dewey refers to is not one of control or judgment, it is organic, arising when we are willing to let go of our control, our desire for perfection and we begin to see ourselves as part of a greater whole. It is important, too, to recognize that we cannot live isolation, for it is only when we enter into the aesthetic spaces of the shared experience that we can live wholly. These spaces are enhanced when we draw on aesthetic forms/methodologies to express experience. The aesthetic allows us the opportunity to engage with experience on a holistic level. However Connelly and Clandinin (2000) warn us, that, "To put the body back into the mind is to wreak havoc with certainty. Emotion, value, felt experience with the world, memory, and narrative explanations of one's past do not stand still in a way that allows for certainty" (p. 37). The way we live our lives, and often do our research, reflects this desire for certainty that leaves us disconnected; individual egos operating within insanity so that we might be able to predict, to know on a spiritual level our purpose, our place. Certainty disconnects us from one another, the earth, and spirit; however when we can let go of this we may begin to find peace, perhaps even a sense of playfulness that allows us to engage with life and one another. Lane (2005) says, "It is the present I seek. Not to deny the past not to ignore the future, but to have them live were they must, in memory and in imagination" (p. 7) and I would like to add, uncertainty. It is important as Karr (2009) quoting a friend, reminds us, to:

Yield up to what scares you. Yield up to what makes you scream and cry. Enter into that quiet. It's a cathedral. It's an empty football stadium with all the lights on. And pray to be an instrument of peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is conflict, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope (p. 234).

Our experiences are a reflection of our imperfection, but they are also an expression of ourselves as living beings—imperfect and beautiful negotiating within an unpredictable and amazing world. Moving beyond certainty and silence, to share ourselves our experiences—warts and all, is an act of love as we reach out to another in acceptance, moving toward possibility.

I don't have to worry about memorizing the lines anymore. There is no perfect image of myself, which I must perform for the audience. Life is not about knowing what to do next; it is about connecting with ourselves, and those around us, in this moment. When I drank I was never present, I was always worrying about what to do next, how to prepare myself or cover up my past behavior—it was a tremendously empty and lonely life. In my two years of sobriety, I have learned to embrace myself as imperfect, and through that embrace I have gained the strength to speak, to share, to ask for help when I need it and the strength to accept that I am not in control. There is a tremendous freedom in letting go of control, it allows me—all of me, body/mind/spirit—to live in the moment, connected (most of the time). And when I forget or start worrying about being perfect, I acknowledge it, ready to move forward, because I know now that I am not in the leading role, I am only human, one among many.

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POETRY

THE EDGE OF KNOWING

SHEILA STEWART

My mother washes

my sheets at the big
basement sink. How to get rid of red

cement. She would know
better than me. Read, read,

read. Contain-
(h)er. Between the pages,

my mother and I –
what do we speak?

–our mouths opening closing.

Turn down the covers. My nightie laid on top.

Stained sheets
flapping
on the line.¹

I begin with this poem to place the body and its complex relationship with language and family at the beginning of this reflection on poetic inquiry. I attempt in this poem to enter the unspoken territory between my mother and me – “what do we speak?” *The body as wrong* flaps with “stained sheets...on the line” –exposed. I write poems to know myself, attempting to lift a heavy blanket of shame and feeling not good enough. My poems contain threads of knowing and not-knowing, reaching and asking.

The church and its disavowal of the body is part of what shaped the undercurrents between my mother and me. My mother was shaped by her rural Presbyterian Northern Irish upbringing and embraced her role as minister’s wife. I was the only daughter growing up in the manse in Stratford, small town south-western Ontario, Canada. Another undercurrent was my mother’s heart surgery in 1964 when I was four and my childhood caring and concern for her often frail body. She went for weekly blood-work and consultation with a doctor at the hospital; I accompanied her.

Horses

My mother taught me:
2 cups, 1 pound
1 cup, half a pound.

When I’m anxious
the Vs turns to Fs,
Fs to Vs. I can’t

find my way in and
out of a building,
a sentence, problem.

The doctor said, *I’m
trying to teach you some-
thing, listen.* Mother

taught me: Wednesdays
take the bus with your
mother cross town

to the hospital to
the doctor’s office,
sit with her while
the doctor takes her

blood, play Xs and Os
with her in the waiting

room, wait with your
mother, don't ask
questions, the doc-

tor's job, wait
in a room with a woman
called receptionist who

answers a black phone.
If your mother is talking
to the receptionist, draw

in a small notebook horses.

The doctor we saw happened to be the father of my friend from across the street, strangely transformed from how I saw him at their dinner table and around their home, to a doctor in a white lab coat. Like my father, Doctor Penniston held power; he donned the clothing of his profession and my mother consulted him about her health.

SHAME

Poetic inquiry gives me the space to trace the skeins which connect my life as a poet, community-based adult literacy worker, literacy researcher, and United Church minister's daughter. I use poetry to inquire into shame, and the grief and silence within shame, which weaves between these parts of my life, a tangle of warp and weft.

Shame can permeate the fabric of learning. It is a particularly social emotion, felt before another person, even when that other has become an internalized voice, before whom one is *not enough*. There may be a harsh judging figure perched on our shoulder, sometimes resembling a parent, teacher, or employer. Shame is visceral, often experienced as blushing or cringing—like fear, it is a bodily sensation.

Gowns

Dresses, choir gowns, first communion crinoline,
the Bride of Christ. This poem unravels
my white choir gown, can't find the one I wore

at Thursday's dress rehearsal –this one too short,

scraped knees above white knee-socks. I can't
cover myself quickly enough –
wanting and exposed, face full of feeling
I'd rather deny. Conceal. I visit my child-

hood church, fall over the balcony into the parishioners,
trail the ghosts of the choir director and
Our Father talking before the service –they couldn't
see me.

“I can't / cover myself quickly enough” –shame in being seen, shame like a
scraped knee.

SHAME AND LEARNING

As an educator, I inquire into shame because of the possibility of re-shaming in educational settings. Learning is relational and so too is shame, worming its way into dynamics between people, or feelings accompanying certain places or kinds of experience. I am interested in the intersubjectivity between educators and students, as well as dynamics of learning and blocked learning. Shame can cling to institutional experiences of family, school, and church, which attempt to regulate and normalize our complex desires and selves.

Shame's social nature is examined by such diverse thinkers as sociologist Sara Ahmed (2004), psychologist Judith Lewis Herman (2007, 1992), and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1943). “Shame,” according to feminist philosopher Sandra Bartky (1990) “is the distressed apprehension of the self as inadequate or diminished” (p. 85). Shame often involves hiding and concealment (Bartky, 1990) and trauma (Lewis Herman, 1992). It is entwined with the effects of trauma on learning (Horsman, 1999). Shame often arises in a *rupture* in relationship, making it an important element for educators, particularly those who understand learning to be relational, holistic, and embodied.

Writing practices can lodge and dislodge shame, since writing is fundamentally about the relationship with self and a coming forward to address others. I recall secondary school and university papers, with a red AWK in the margin, for awkward. Awkward. I felt completely awkward and had no idea how to help Awkward. Writing is entwined with our relationships with others who we hope can hear and understand. As writers, we know external and internal critical, censoring and self-censoring voices which feel ready to pounce on us.

body asks word

are you
listening?

can you read me, must I write
it down

who might we trust rust-
forming worn pitchfork's tines
the partial/ity
of a word, prongs
pluck and pick

word isn't sitting alone
in a pastoral field
natural?

word is getting in and out
of the elevator
beating down on word, telling it, you
speak the wrong

language, wrong word,
wrong place
a cell of padded words

exclusion's red pen all over
zoning in:

*this word is in-
appropriate*

A-W-K AWK in the margin
Awkward. Full stop. Auuuwwk –word

you've done it wrong again
register harsh overly polite
tone trouble masking more than
semiotics, linguistics, hermeneutics

word wants a place
to hang
its hat

a body to call

BODY AND WORD

Poetry is first of all oral, spoken or read aloud, coming from a body and received by another body, the tenor and cadence of the voice bringing the poem alive. Feminists have talked about writing from the body and I ask myself what this can mean in my writing. In my first poetry collection *A Hat to Stop a Train* (2003), I find my childhood body/self. That book is an exploration of my relationship between my mother and myself, her reluctant emigration from Ireland, and her life as a minister's wife. I write about my mother's hat collection, gloves, and outfits, approaching my mother's body and my own through her clothes. In some ways I feel I was hiding behind my mother in that book. In *The Shape of a Throat* (2012), I come forward as an adult, attempting to speak about the complexity that lies between self and another person, as well as between self and the natural world.

Working with the words shame, grief, and silence unleashes a torrent of feeling, a train my mother dealt with by wearing the right hat for the occasion. Women were expected to be quiet in my family; my father and brothers discussed the sermon over Sunday lunch served by my mother. I listened and was not expected to have an opinion.

Toward the end of writing *A Hat to Stop a Train*, a largely elegiac work, I managed to write a poem which expressed anger.

Dress

You left me a thin flowered dress and a box of hankies. I can sit in your dress, sleeveless in the Canadian winter. Put it on and head to a strawberry social. Thank my lucky stars I'm in a pretty dress just my size. They can look and say, hey, she's been to a lady's dress shop in downtown Ontario.

I could sniff around the entrances of dress shops, or glide in the way you did. Never bat an eyelid at the prices. Pretend royalty.

Or I can sit in your dress and play with my box of hankies. A blue Birks' box about the size of a bread and butter plate. Take them out one by one, examine the embroidered garden scenes, the tatted edges, fold them up again, put them back. I could iron them all. Fold them in triangles. Sort them in piles. And crumple them. Use them as face cloths, dish cloths. Dirty them. Throw them out the windows of trains. Toss them like confetti from the top of the Royal York Hotel.

I'd still have the dress: I could hoist it up a flagpole. Hello, air. Let it grow grey, limp. Or yank it down. Pull out the threads one by one, bare the interfacing, rip out the zipper, knock its teeth crooked. Cut on the bias, it might rip real nice and smooth down the middle, or around the

waist.

Rip it up, or cut it. You'd prefer I use pinking shears to cut zigzag edges in perfect circles, like the gingham ones that top jam jars at the Kitchener market.

Any scissors would do. Scraps of dress. Reds, greens, pinks. Purple poppies, variegated leaves, snips of stem.

A perfect plate for a tiny scone beaded with the red of strawberries.

I was angry at the weight of my mother's sense of decorum and propriety, her version of being a woman. The poem's fierceness is uncharacteristic of my mother and me. If I raised my voice, my mother would say, "You sound like a fishmonger" –someone shouting to sell fish, to hawk their wares. The sound of my voice disturbed her.

I write into my relationship with my mother, re-mem-bering and re-creating it. Poetry gives me a way to dwell *with* grief and anger, and feelings and bodily sensations as yet un-worded, beginning to think-feel my way into new understandings.

Poetic inquiry helps me return to mind *and* body, *with* body, *in* body, to write my way into how body and mind dwell together –in organic, associative, non-linear ways of thinking and feeling. To call body through image, through the feel of a flowered dress, through imagining ripping and cutting, through the physicality of the words.

SHAME IN LITERACY TEACHING AND LEARNING

Another avenue of that brought me to focus on shame was through the research I did with adult literacy practitioner-researchers inquiring into how they hear and understand students across multiple social differences, including gender, culture, race, class, sexuality, language, and ability (Gaikezheyongai, 2009; Stewart, 2008b; Stewart et al., 2009). My work has focused on literacy practitioners' subjectivities, examining how trauma can shape learning –including that of practitioners (Stewart, 2008a) –and how narrative and social differences are entangled. Literacy practitioners' delved into their stories of learning, exclusion, marginality, privilege, and an often ambivalent relationship to power. Shame's slippery place in the teaching-learning dynamic emerges.

People who have experienced trauma often "space out" or dissociate, see things in all or nothing terms, and struggle with control, connection, and meaning (Horsman, 1999). Shame and grief can be entwined with *fleeing* body and mind –with not being present. Literacy workers, like other educators, may tend to see certain students as having experienced trauma but be reluctant to examine their own complex relationships with trauma. Whether the trauma we experience

is vicarious through the news, systemic, individual, or all of these, it is profound. I am brought back to myself, asking why I want to help others and the complex question for educators of what “help” looks like.

In the previous paragraph, I notice how I used third person when I began to talk about trauma. I want to distance myself from trauma, think of it as belonging to someone else, as having happened to someone else. Similarly with shame: I want to be rid of it.

Working in adult literacy, viewed by many students as “teacher,” and struggling to do as much as I could to “help,” I rarely found time to think what I thought, know what I knew, and ask why. The work of facilitating groups of students and tutors contained a longing and grief—as well as joy—and with some distance I can begin to articulate and examine that experience.

I turn now to a narrative piece which explores my work in literacy, also drawing on the feel of fabric. I have had a literacy voice, often a careful public voice connected to programs or organizations where I worked, usually a polite voice, aware of the politics of funding. My poetry comes from a deeper place and I am trying to let that intuitive, visceral knowing find voice as I probe what it means to do literacy work.

Comfort

Across the street from the Parkdale Library on Queen Street between Lansdowne and Dufferin is Designer Fabric’s organza, brocade, burlap, and buttons, puffy pillows, gingham and tweed, zippers of every colour, length, and width. I worked in the basement of the library in the literacy program, two rooms that had once been a cloak room and a storage closet. People still came to the folded-out wooden windows to ask for a glass of water and the washroom keys.

The first time I cried at work was during a long meeting about the Personnel Policy after an interminable discussion of the number of days you can take off if a family member dies, the number of months for maternity and adoption leave, and how you can take a day off if you move, rest, or support a friend. I slipped into the staff bathroom, eyes filling before the magazine shot of a koala taped to the wall. During the meeting I wanted to answer the phone, rather than let would-be students hear the answering machine and not leave name or number. Many did not have a number. This was 1989—most students didn’t have an answering machine. My early days working in Toronto in literacy, I tried to speak, but there was a hurdle to climb, a need to pull words from my throat. I couldn’t believe we could meet all afternoon while

students waited on the waiting list. *Oh, to be useful.*

One of the librarians quit the library to make pillows, left the other staff talking about people overdosing in the W.C. She got the idea walking through Designer Fabric, running her hands over velvet and ultrasuede. She started making pillows and couldn't stop. I saw her last at the Kingston craft fair, surrounded by reversible tote bags and cushions as varied as candy.

Literacy work was another site of silence, though certainly different from my family, but it was also a place of power where I affected students and colleagues.

In "Comfort" I found an entry point to writing about literacy work through the fabric store across the street from the program, similar in some ways to how I wrote about my mother by writing about her hats, approaching tricky material sideways, as Emily Dickinson says, "tell the truth but tell it slant."²

In this article, I include poems which focus on cloth and clothing to reflect on the knowing of the senses, particularly touch. Our visual sense is so dominant and often a metaphor for knowledge—for example, when we say, Do you see what I mean? Poetic inquiry lets other forms of sensory knowing emerge. My work moves forward through poems and poetic narrative, edging toward knowing—sensory details calling up fragments of memory.

My intuitive, unarticulated understanding of shame drew me to adult literacy work, where I heard many stories about schooling, which were a complex mixture of shame, racism, ableism, classism, resistance, and resilience. None of these words sum up the students or their stories. Unpacking my own story helps me understand more of *how* I heard what I heard. There was a grief within the telling and the listening, grief about the diminished, hidden self, using Bartky's words, and grief about how our the society contributes to this diminishing.

SHAME IN CHURCH AND FAMILY AS THE MINISTER'S ONLY DAUGHTER

Gloria Anzaldúa was the first in her family to leave home, but she says "I kept the ground of my being." (p. 16) Anzaldúa was part of the 1980s swell of feminist writing, particularly women of colour, using direct, powerful language to claim their strength. Anzaldúa, in her chapter "Towards a New Consciousness," says, "We are ashamed that we need your good opinion, that we need your acceptance" (p. 88). My poetry helps me work through the ways I am burdened by my need for others' good opinion and acceptance.

Shame usually starts early—mine is entwined with growing up in the church and my parents' silence, propriety, and restraint counterpointed with my father's explosive anger. As Sara Ahmed says in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, emotions,

including shame, can be sticky (2004). Shame dwells in a rupture of relationship, which characterized my family, due in part to my mother's surgery and illness, which was rarely mentioned.

Poet and minister's daughter Maureen Scott Harris, in "Opening the Grief-case" (2007), writes,

We weren't a family practiced in sharing feelings, especially not bad feelings like anger or sadness. All extravagant feeling was unseemly, but bad feelings were a kind of dirty secret. Maybe we felt that bad feelings made us bad people, or that we were—or ought to be—above the failings of ordinary people. Believing ourselves exemplary, how could we encompass our fall from grace? Mutual silence was our strategy, a strategy guaranteed to keep us safe and at a distance from each other's hurts. (p. 71)

Church and family were married in my home and, like for Scott Harris, "bad feelings were a kind of dirty secret."

Disability Studies Scholar Nancy Mairs (1996), in *Carnal Acts*, talks about Western discourse's "mind/body split":

The utterance of an "I" immediately calls into being its opposite, the "not-I," Western discourse being unequipped to conceive "that which is both 'I' and 'not-I,' or some other permutation which language doesn't permit me to speak. The "not-I" is, by definition, other. And we've never been too fond of the other. We prefer the same. We tend to ascribe to the other those qualities we prefer not to associate with our selves: it is the hidden, the dark, the secret, the shameful. Thus, when the "I" takes possession of the body, it makes the body into an other, direct object of a transitive verb, with all the other's repudiated and potentially dangerous qualities." (p. 85)

Mairs talks particularly about how the female body has been linked to shame. She says, "Let the word for my external genitals tell the tale: my pudendum, from the Latin infinitive meaning "to be ashamed" (p. 86). Mairs connects shame with female sexuality and with her "crippled body" (p. 86). She goes on to say, "Speaking out loud is an antidote to shame," (p. 91) something long affirmed by many feminists.

Writing helps me unlearn and rework layers of being a minister's daughter—the confinement, constraint, and comportment of my female body beginning to breathe more deeply.

A Slip

on the street corner in front of our home.
My mother's old clothes piled
atop the steamer trunk.

More than prepositional phrases, preposterous
–plundering wool plaid skirt, browns
and greens, fleck of yellow. Clothes I won't

wear, should part with. Let the ghost
slip from her navy blue hat matching gloves matching
purse navy and cream checkered suit matching.

Royal Stewart tartan kilt-pin –
a feather holding folds
together, pricking thighs. The trunk

that migrated, like them, puncturing
the curb for all to see.

Close the curtains. Never

*lick your knife. Don't slurp your drink
as if you'll never get another.*

My mood matches hers

matching absence not her fault
child disappearing. Sent
away from my father and brothers.

My small suitcase.
Moons drained from her
doing her best transfusion

confusing my best fault inflecting
shame held together kilt
folding guilt

slipping.

In “A Slip” I write into my mother’s clothing and her desire to be seen as “just so” –eventually exploring our intersubjectivity and entanglement. I take up the feel of cloth, like touching tissue paper, perhaps as close as I can get to the sense of my own body I had in relationship to my mother.

THE EDGE OF KNOWING

My poetic inquiry is in the wrestling with language. Senior Canadian poet Don McKay (2001) says that, “A poem, or poem-in-waiting, contemplates what language can’t do: then it does something with language –in homage, or grief, or anger, or praise” (p. 87). “What language can’t do:” it cannot name experience fully or even well. It tries and fails, but the trying and failing is in the world and evocative. It reaches, attempts, mirroring our attempts to reach, speak, and be with each other. Poetry and academic writing both contribute to and change discourses over time as they try to work with language attentively and precisely. After decades of post-structuralism, we know it is more complex than saying that poetry is emotional and academic writing is rational. We know that Descartes was wrong about the mind-body split, but our daily language and ways of thinking are still recovering from that split.

I appreciate McKay’s awareness of what language cannot do. McKay writes here of the poem doing “something with language –in homage, or grief, or anger, or praise.” Homage, grief, anger, and praise are powerful, fitting states of being in response to the world, particularly a world reliant on categorizing people according to their skin colour, which labels people as “literate” and “illiterate,” “disabled” and one in which the most common schoolyard taunt is “that’s so gay.” Do we create categories as a repository for shame, to attempt to rid it from our “selves”? What do these categories do? In what ways do they shame, assign shame, illicit shame, and contribute to acts of shaming?

As I visited Northern Ireland as a child during the 70s and as an adult in the 80s, I saw a processing of othering. For most of my Protestant relatives, Catholics are other. The attitudes are riddled through the language. My aunt said after sweeping the floor, “there, that’s more Protestant looking.” Another expression Northern Irish Protestants might use about Catholics is “he kicks with left foot.” Here is a sense of the body being different, kicking with the wrong foot. How does our language betray how displaced shame lurks in the ways people view others as less than themselves, as “different” and “wrong?”

As a poet I need to attend to the way our words categorize and perpetuate the mind/body split. I want to think about metaphor –for example, the pervasive use of “disabled” as a metaphor for anything broken, as if broken and whole are two opposites, as if some of us are whole and others broken.

POETRY OPENING KNOWING

Poetry’s ways of knowing are as varied as the worlds of poets –lyric, language, narrative, performance, poets interested in social justice, poets writing poems on mobile phones. My poetry might be called a kind of “data” though that word sits

uneasily with me. Poetry helps me crack open what it meant to me to grow up in the United Church manse in my particular family. It helps me uncover layers of unspoken knowing, to find my way through years of dissociating and coping through busyness. I use poetry to inquire into the shifting space of memory because poetry works with fragments, images, the symbolic and unconscious – supporting transformative holistic learning and a knowing, embodied self. I try to let the poems lead my analysis in a journey of healing discovery, a fierce kind of inquiry.

When the streetcar falls off the wires

When the driver gets out to re-orient the tracks,
when your youngest daughter leaves
home, when your childhood best friend's dad dies,
when you stare out the window, when you open

your mouth, when the man in the SUV shouts
at the woman riding her bike, when she gazes at her
grandson sliding-skating over the gallery floor,
when a woman says she likes coming

to memorial services, when you try to stop,
when they tease you again and again, when you count
the vote, answer the phone reluctantly, talk to a stranger
on the bus, look at the family at the next table, when you

start to fear your brother, when you realize you aren't losing
your mind, start writing in a notebook all the time,
notice yourself leaving, when you stamp your feet and
gave him the finger though

he isn't there. When you notice the parts you
erase, what you don't type
out.

Poetry helps me gather fragments of memory, associations and images helping me edge toward knowing. Poetry and learning are about meaning making and wrestling with the constraints of language, dwelling in the tensions between body and word, fingering the fabric.

ENDNOTES

1. This poem appeared first in my article “Shame’s Shadow: Shhh!” In *Our Stories, Ourselves: The EmBODYment of Women’s Learning in Literacy*. (2011). p. 133.

2. Tell all the Truth but tell it slant.
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth’s superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind –
— Emily Dickinson (1129)

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USING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POETRY AS DATA TO INVESTIGATE THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING WITH END-STAGE RENAL DISEASE

AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

JOHANNA SPIERS & JONOTHAN SMITH

The experience of living with End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) and being on dialysis is a complex and life-changing one that has received some investigation within the qualitative psychological realm (see e.g. Gill & Lowes, 2008; Martin-McDonald, 2003; Polaschek, 2003). This is a period of time that can lead to difficulties with autonomy and empowerment (Burnette & Kickett, 2009; Hagren, Petterson, Severinson, Lütznén & Clyne, 2001).

Before dialysis, the diagnosis of ESRD was a death sentence (Bevan, 2000). Bevan suggested that the dominant medical model sees dialysis as a cure for ESRD, whereas the reality is not so simple. In fact, dialysis could be seen as an ongoing experiment, which leaves the patient unsure of which role he or she must fulfil within society –that of a patient, or a healthy person.

Meanwhile, Martin-McDonald (2003) found that dialysis patients' sense of control tended to see-saw according to how their treatment was going at that point in time. Each loss of control was met with an attempt to regain it. One review of qualitative articles about dialysis (Morton, Tong, Howard, Snelling & Webster, 2010) highlights the importance of involving patients in the decisions about treatment, hence adding to that sense of control.

Authors of these previous studies have tended to use interview or focus group data. Here, we use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the autobiographical poetry of Jon E. Seaman. The poems in question are located in

the appendix; it could be that the reader would prefer to read these poems before continuing with the text of the article, so as to experience the poetry for themselves before the authors' interpretation is presented.

It is our belief that analysing poetry in this way is an innovative method that can explore the experiences and challenges faced by an ESRD patient in a fresh manner. We believe that this idea has the potential to be useful in many other areas of health research, and that this article can stand as an example for other researchers interested in using non-traditional methods.

One might question whether it is appropriate or relevant to use poetry as data in scientific qualitative research. Poetry can be used not to replace interview data, but instead to supplement it. Of all the qualitative approaches, it could be argued that phenomenological approaches such as IPA, which have depth and focus on language, are the most suited to an involvement with poetry.

Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with going back to "the things themselves" (Husserl, cited in Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 12) –that is, trying to understand phenomena as they really are, stripped of external noise and biases. Phenomenological psychology uses this philosophy to step inside the lives of others. Van Manen (1997) says, "In thoughtful phenomenological texts, the distinction between poetic and narrative is hard to draw" (p. 368). Willis (2002) says that good poetry "names and distils human experience" (p. 6), which good phenomenological writing also does. Thus we can see a link between poetry and phenomenology.

Influenced by Heidegger's view of hermeneutic phenomenology as helping the phenomenon to make its appearance, Smith (2010) has introduced the concept of the gem within qualitative research. A gem is an extract from data which is laden with meaning, which appears to sum up several, or perhaps all, aspects of the participant's experience. Smith talked of three kinds of gem: a suggestive gem, which hints at the experience, but needs filling out; a shining gem, which is totally present; and secret gems, which require the most detective work on behalf of the researcher.

It could be posited that when viewed as texts ripe for interpretation by researchers, poems are packed full of polished gems. Within Jon's poems, the gems are there, waiting to be picked up and inspected. The polished gems seen within Jon's poetry are perhaps an amalgamation of Smith's (2010) shining and secret gems. They are totally present and yet also benefit hugely from detective work by the researcher.

The acceptance of an artistic element within social sciences is not a new concept. In 1981, Eisner drew attention to how artistic approaches within qualitative work could complement the emphasis on understanding rather than measuring: "To know a rose by its Latin name and yet to miss its fragrance is to miss much

of the rose”s meaning. Artistic approaches to research are very much interested in helping people experience the fragrance” (p. 9).

Using poetry in this way to explore the experiences of patients in a scientific setting seems to be a new and exciting opportunity for experiencing that fragrance. Eisner (1997) says, “Poetry was invented to say what words can never say. Poetry transcends the limits of language and evokes what cannot be articulated” (p. 5). There is a contradiction here, as poetry is made up of words, yet Eisner is saying that it is more than words. How can this be? Perhaps it is that there is something about the way words are put together in poetry, using rhythm, rhyme, assonance, alliteration, pitch and tone that combines to create a resonance that is more than the sum of its parts. All poetry lovers have experienced that feeling of reading a rhyme that goes deeper than prose, that uses words to paint a picture everyday conversation cannot.

There is an established tradition of qualitative researchers who transform interview data into poetry. Sociologists Richardson (1995) and Poindexter (2002) have used the words of their participants to create poem-like pieces, sometimes referred to as poetic representation. These poems are mostly left to stand alone, without further interpretation from the researcher. Öhlen (2003) suggests two possible approaches: letting the poetry speak for itself, or including a more standard phenomenological interpretation. While both options are valid, we felt that the latter approach had the potential to provide more richness, depth and resonance for the reader, and so was the aim in the current article.

While there is a wealth of researchers creating poetic representations, there seems to be a dearth of researchers analysing pre-written autobiographical poetry, in the way that this article does. One researcher (Furman, 2004; 2006; 2007) explores his own poetry. However, while the poetry itself (see e.g. Furman, 2006) can be thought-provoking, Furman provides little analysis alongside it.

The current article sets out to use IPA to deeply interrogate and interpret the poetry in question. We believe that using original, autobiographical poetry in this way is a highly innovative method that does not appear to have been done before. It is not our intention to suggest that poetry should replace interview data, but instead to show how poetry can add to the pool of data collection methods by opening a new door into the experience. It is our belief that the beauty, precision and depth of Jon E. Seaman”s poems (see appendices) provides an extremely resonant picture of his experiences, and so offers a fresh insight into the life of an ESRD patient undergoing haemodialysis.

METHOD

Jon E. Seaman is a poet, advocate for health care reform and ESRD patient living in Portland, Oregon, United States. He received a kidney from an anonymous

living donor and is now healthy, but was on haemodialysis and the waiting list for a transplant at the time of writing these poems.

Jon's poems were analysed by the first author using IPA. This is an inductive qualitative method that is built on the epistemological groundwork laid by the phenomenologists Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre (Smith et al., 2009). Increasingly, IPA uses single case studies (see eg Bramley & Eatough, 2005) as a way to dig deeply into one person's experience and find the connections within that experience (Smith et al., 2009). Qualitative work emphasises understanding, rather than measuring, and individual experiences, rather than generalisability.

The poems were approached in the way that traditional IPA data would be. The first author read the poems again and again to familiarise herself with them. She then made initial notes relating to the descriptive, linguistic and conceptual elements of the texts, before grouping these observations into sub-themes. The sub-themes were then grouped into super-ordinate themes. The analysis process continued throughout the writing, and was checked and refined by the second author.

Throughout the process of analysis, the first author was in touch with the poet. She found his poetry online and was struck by its depth and eloquence. A dialogue was struck up between them, with Jon giving his full blessing for the analysis to go ahead. Jon read the complete analysis and gave some comments, which were incorporated into following drafts. For example, in an initial reading of the poem *On Disaster* (see appendix four), the first author interpreted the left hand verses to be a prayer to potential donors. However, the second author felt that the poem was more general than this, a reading that was confirmed via discussion with the poet, who said:

The waiting list is definitely a part of the dependence, but the theme is the overall dependence on society. Americans pride themselves on personal independence (really the illusion of independence). Some of the inspiration for the poem is me wondering about the dialysis patients who were in New Orleans during the Katrina catastrophe. I am certain that many of them died. (Seaman, 2011, personal correspondence)

Of course, poetry is open to interpretation, and anything a reader genuinely finds within a poem can be valid. However, in the interests of this project, which aimed to find out what the experience of haemodialysis was like for Jon, it was felt that the dialogue between Jon and the first author adds validity. Ethical approval was gained from Birkbeck University of London. This article presents the fullest and most important theme from the analysis –the battle for agency.

FINDINGS

There is a battle for agency going on for Jon that arises very strongly from the poems. Mostly, it seems as though his agency—his sense of control over life—has been taken away from him. At times, Jon attempts to claw it back. However, when he doesn't have this sense of agency, the battle rages on as to who or what does: the doctors, the disease, a higher power, or perhaps the haemodialysis machine itself.

This vehicle I own,
but I'm not the driver
just a sideways tracking passenger (*Resonance*, lines 21–23, see appendix one)

The vehicle Jon is talking about here could be his body. We usually consider ourselves to be the “drivers” of our own bodies, the ones who are in charge of where we are going. However, for Jon, something else has taken control of his body and he is left as a “sideways tracking passenger,” which sounds awkward and precarious.

The word “tracking” here could have several different meanings. It could be that he is tracking himself, in the way that a hunter might track an animal; his mind is trying to catch his recalcitrant body and pin it down, to get back in control. When used in conjunction with the word sideways (and the following line, “an anonymous blur”), “tracking” also conjures up the memory of the tracking function that would often go wrong when watching VHS tapes, making the screen fuzzy and blurry. Is Jon's agency fuzzed out slightly? Can the tracking be fixed? If so, by whom?

This sense that Jon lacks agency over his body is reflected in many places throughout the poetry. Jon is passive—someone to whom things are done, rather than someone who does things. He is:

spun in circuits,
squirted through
a cheesecloth stretched

around the lip
of a mason jar.

(*Waiting for a Transplant: Dialysis Day 466*, lines 6–10, see appendix two)

Words like spun, squirted and stretched all convey a sense of being manipulated and used, in a painful, uncomfortable way. Indeed, there seems to be a contrast here between the way Jon sees himself, as an object to be spun and squirted, and the way he sees the dialysis machine, which has a lip—a human body part

—and is perhaps more human, more full of agency, than he is. A mason jar is used to preserve food; does Jon feel as though he is currently in a state of preservation—that his life has been disrupted and put on hold? This image brings to mind the notion of cryogenics, of a person suspended in time, perhaps to be released back to life one day, perhaps not. This lack of agency appears to lead to a loss of self for Jon.

My drowning defiance
 a distant voice
 carried off in wind. (*On Disaster*, lines 22–24, see appendix four.)

Our voices are how we make our selves known. The term voice is often used as a metonymy for a person’s opinions, as in the phrase “let your voice be heard.” Without a voice to make ourselves heard, we are nothing. Jon’s voice is fading away, defeated by the wind. He is separate from his voice, his self. What, then, is left? Elsewhere, we have these lines:

Until my feet

 Stop fizzing,
 The whorls
 Of my fingerprints
 Stop whirling (*Waiting for a Transplant: Dialysis Day 466*, lines 24–28)

Just as our voices can be a metaphor for our selves, our fingerprints are a metaphor for our identity. It seems here as though Jon is predicting that he will fizz and whirl away. What will be left of Jon if his fingerprints, the stamp of who he is, finish whirling? Note the ambiguity of the word “stop” when used here. What is Jon hoping will stop—the treatments? Or his life?

So if Jon has lost his sense of agency, who are the other forces at play in the battle for control over him?

The route defined, but destination indefinite.
 Someone else judges this map.
 Waiting, waiting, waiting
 Where is my stop? (*Resonance*, lines 37–40)

It could be interpreted that the “someone else” who is judging the map of Jon’s life is the as yet unknown donor who he is hoping will save him. This faceless “someone else” knows where Jon’s “stop” is—he himself does not. Once again, the word “stop” could be read in several different ways. It relates metaphorically to

the idea of Jon being on a journey that has a route and a map, and together with “waiting, waiting, waiting” conjures up the image of a bus stop. However, “stop” could mean the point where he will stop being on the list, receive a new organ and step back into his life; or when his life will stop and he will die.

As well as referring to a potential donor here, the “someone else” on whom Jon is dependent could also mean a higher power, or his doctors. The use of the word “judges” in line 38 as opposed to “reads” or “follows,” as one would usually do with a map, hints that perhaps Jon believes that this person who has the agency, the one who is in control, is judging his life. Perhaps, then, he is talking of God, or of a God-like being? It could be read that, in his situation, both donors and doctors might take on a God-like significance, as his life is in their hands. He is forced to depend on this someone else, meaning his sense of autonomy is diminished.

My life arrested
 Subject to the kindness
 Of supply chains. (*On Disaster*, lines 7–9)

Jon’s life is on hold, disrupted – “arrested.” He is imprisoned. While prisoners have had their agency removed by the state, Jon’s has been removed by ESRD. It might be returned to him, but this is “subject to the kindness of supply chains,” a play on the phrase “the kindness of strangers.” Unlike strangers, “supply chains” aren’t human. They are faceless and corporate, not kind. The word chain, when used within a poem in which one of the major themes is imprisonment, could be taken to be a piece of prison imagery. Jon is chained up – trapped and restrained – within this “supply chain” on which he must be dependent.

Does Jon believe he is part of a supply chain that includes the machine, the chemicals it is topped up with, and the healthy blood that it then “supplies” to him? Here, the humanity that blood is usually infused with is stripped away, and blood itself becomes a cog in a chain, mirroring the loss of self and humanity that Jon appears to feel. Jon is dependent on having all the elements of that supply chain ready to hand. Should disaster, as in the title, strike, and he not be able to find those tools, then this would have a very bad outcome for him.

We can see, then, that potential donors, doctors, a higher power and the hospital equipment are all vying for the control that Jon feels ESRD has taken away from him. The haemodialysis machine itself is another strong contender in this battle, and Jon’s relationship with it is especially complex and changeable. At times, it seems that Jon wishes to take a more empowered stance—he plans to assert himself over the machine and take hold of his own agency:

Today I will ride
this robot kidney
like a mongoose

attack this vacuum cleaner,
double-stitch my claws
into the dialyzer. (*Waiting for a Transplant: Day 466*, lines 14–19)

Unlike the passive Jon we have seen elsewhere, this is an active Jon who is taking control: “I will,” “ride,” “attack,” “double-stitch.” This Jon has claws. It is noteworthy that Jon is dealing with the here and now in this poem, talking of “today,” which seems to make it easier for him to maintain his sense of self, as opposed to looking into the unknown future. This could also be read in a bittersweet way. Jon is determined that today will be different, but how can it be?

Jon is riding the dialysis machine, literally taking control of it. He is a mongoose, attacking the snake that is the haemodialysis machine, as the mongoose attacked the snake in Rudyard Kipling’s *Rikki Tikki Tavi* (1984), and as mongooses do in reality, often as the unlikely looking victor of the battle. Calling the dialysis machine “this robot kidney” reframes it; here, it sounds futuristic, even “cool,” where previously in the poem it has been visualised as a vicious snake sucking him dry.

In contrast, Jon at other times seems to have a painful but necessary reliance on the machine, which has the agency:

Stabbed again,
again and again my blood torrents out
in cold quivers, but then returns revived.
(*My Empire*, lines 34–36, see appendix five)

Use of the word stabbed highlights the intrusive nature of haemodialysis. The repetition of “again” refers to the fact that Jon’s fistula is penetrated so frequently by the needles of the machine. The image of blood “torrenting” out is alarming, and also juxtaposes with the “cold quivers,” which sound quite pathetic in comparison. As the blood leaves Jon, it is cold and quivering –however, because of the necessary evil of the machine, it comes back revived, and hence Jon is revived.

There is a sense throughout many of the poems that Jon and the machine are fusing, or even have fused together to become one. This is illustrated in *Waiting for a Transplant: Dialysis Day 466*, where Jon says that he will:

double-stitch my claws
into the dialyzer. (*Waiting for a Transplant: Day 466*, lines 18–19)

suggesting a literal fusing between himself and the machine.

Treatments contains several references to Jon becoming one with the haemodialysis machine, such as:

I'd dig into the drip, disappear (*Treatments*, line 4)

This line seems back to front. Generally, one would say that drips dig into people, not the other way around. Perhaps this inter-changeability of roles hints that the two are one: Jon can dig into the drip just as the drip digs into him. He then “disappears” –subsumed by the machine, there is nothing left of him.

As we have seen, there are points in the poetry when Jon strives to become empowered and active, and attempts to take hold of his agency. Indeed, the very fact of writing poetry in the first place is a clear bid to retain agency. In the poem *My Empire*, Jon talks of trying to reclaim his body and therefore his agency from the disease, the doctors and the dialysis. It is all written in the present tense, suggesting again that perhaps it is easier for Jon to be positive and to maintain his sense of self when he focuses on the here and now, rather than looking to the future. The empire of the title could be read as being Jon's body, over which he is the ruler.

Today I graduate to fifteen gauge
silver straws. I refuse the lidocaine.
I want to feel the big bore bite
of the needles. I want to stand
and face the armies of artery and venus
these invaders the vein. (*My Empire*, lines 13–18)

Jon is moving up to a bigger needle size in dialysis today. This stanza is filled with agency, as demonstrated by Jon's refusal of the painkiller lidocaine. Unlike in the opening stanzas of *Waiting for a Transplant: Dialysis Day 466*, where Jon is stretched and spun and so on, here he is taking control. Refusing painkillers could be seen to be an attempt to gain a certain image, that of the “hard man.” This is in contrast to the Jon we have seen so far, who can be blown away by the wind. Note the repetition of directives from Jon here: I refuse, I want, I want. He is calling the shots.

It is clear, then, that although the battle for Jon's agency is one that rages on, it is not one that is lost just yet –Jon is still a contender in the battle for control of his body and his life.

DISCUSSION

There is a strong sense throughout the poetry that Jon is experiencing a lack of agency. The term *lack of agency* suggests a dearth of control and choice about one's own destiny, a sense of disempowerment. Jon isn't in charge of his body, but rather the doctors, the machines, the possible donors, maybe even God are. Jon, while in dialysis, is passive. There are times where he attempts to regain agency and take the control back, but this only seems to occur when he focuses on the here and now rather than looking into the future at all.

The sense of a loss of agency for dialysis patients is one that has been noted in the literature. Burnette & Kickett, (2009) look at the feeling of disempowerment that Australian Aboriginal ESRD patients experience as they undergo treatment for their condition. These participants found that they experienced a widespread disempowerment. A disempowerment caused by a dependence on the machines, which Jon also seems to experience, has been noted elsewhere (see e.g. Hagren et al., 2001), so isn't restricted to this cultural group.

Burnette and Kickett (2009) talk of a struggle between the negative impact of a dependence on dialysis versus its upsides, such as the simple fact that those on dialysis often start to feel stronger. This struggle can lead to confusion and vulnerability. We would suggest, based on the existing literature, that dependence on haemodialysis implies a removal of agency from the patient and toward the machine and the hospital staff. However, the analysis of the poems suggests that a sense of independence and positive change comes from a taking back of the agency by the patient and a focus on the here and now.

This sense of a swing and struggle between the positives and the negatives is mirrored in Jon's relationship with agency; he surrenders agency in some poems and moves to claim it back in others. There is an ever-shifting complexity to the experience of being on dialysis which means it is hard to sum up neatly. Martin-McDonald (2003) talks of a sense dialysis patients have of their feeling of control see-sawing; the disease might take some control away, so the patient must make an adjustment to get it back. Martin-McDonald's participants talk about using assertiveness as a way to regain control, a finding that is mirrored in the current article when, for example, Jon talks about refusing painkillers and graduating to a higher needle gauge.

However, some of Martin-McDonald's (2003) participants also go on to talk about pushing the boundaries of their treatments, such as eating out-of-bounds food, as being the ultimate way to remain in control of their condition. This is not a finding of the current analysis. While other dialysis patients might push external boundaries like this, Jon seems to push internal ones more, focusing more on his state of mind and at times seeming to inhabit a fantasy world whereby he can take control of what controls him to find some agency. He fights for his sense of

control through writing poetry. Of course, there will be as many different ways to deal with ESRD as there are ESRD patients, and this contrast explicates some of those differences.

It seems from the poetry that it is easier for Jon to aim for regaining a sense of agency and control, and hence a sense of self, when he focuses on the here and now. When one takes into consideration the unpredictable and unstable nature of life as an ESRD patient on dialysis, it becomes clear why looking into the future might increase uncertainty, loss of control and rates of depression. Therefore, it seems that an intervention to help dialysis patients focus on the here and now, such as person-centred therapy, may be beneficial.

Charmaz (1983) talks about the importance of freedom and choice in maintaining a sense of self, using the example of driving. Her participants felt they were more able to maintain a sense of self if they knew they could access the freedom offered to them by driving, a metaphor for agency that links back to the quote used earlier – “This vehicle I own, but I’m not the driver” (*Resonance*, line 21).

The relationship that we have with machines is a lens through which we can look at our sense of agency. Charmaz’s (1983) work shows us that if we are able to have agency over a machine, such as a car, we feel that we have a sense of self. However Jon’s poetry shows us that if a machine has agency over us, as in the case of a haemodialysis machine, this is somewhat dehumanising and our sense of self is eroded. When we lack agency, our sense of self suffers. If we take the narrative construction approach to the view of the self for a moment, then we can see that a lack of agency might mean we no longer feel in control of the stories being told about us, which make up our selves. Instead, these stories are, for Jon, being authored by his doctors or even by the dialysis machine itself. Again, this insight could be valuable in terms of the therapy being offered to haemodialysis patients, if the relationship with the machine is seen to be key and worthy of exploration. Of course, again, it must be noted that this will not be the case for all dialysis patients, but it is an area worthy of exploration.

Jon’s relationship with the dialysis machine is the central relationship portrayed in the poems. At times, he seeks to find agency over it, but mostly, it looms large and appears to have agency over him – he lives in the shadow of the machine. There are times when it is suggested that Jon has fused with the machine, such as when he says he will “double stitch my claws/into the dialyzer” (*Waiting for a Transplant: Dialysis Day 466*, lines 18–19). This fusion erodes Jon’s sense of self, as he starts to see himself as being joined with the dialysis machine, perhaps becoming part-machine rather than fully human.

This fusion of dialysis patients with their machines, and the subsequent psychological obstacles this leads to is a finding that has been hinted at in another case study (Smith, 1996; see also Smith et al., 2009 for a more detailed analysis). Smith’s participant, Carole, a woman on haemodialysis, describes a loss of con-

trol, which Smith (1996) links to Rotter's (1966) locus of control construct, making the point that many haemodialysis patients perceive a high external locus of control (Poll & Kaplan De Nour, 1980), meaning that other forces, rather than the self, are in control. Hence, one could argue, self becomes diminished. For Poll et al.'s participants (1980), those with a higher internal locus of control were more able to adjust and adapt to treatment, showing the importance of maintaining that sense of self and the potentially disastrous results for mental wellbeing if the sense of self is lost.

It could be then that feeling part of the machine, as both Carole, Smith's participant, and Jon appear to, might contribute to a lower internal locus of control and therefore to a lessened sense of self. This again emphasises the importance of addressing the relationship between haemodialysis patients and their machines, as Poll's (1980) results suggest that this can have an impact on the success of the treatment.

Meanwhile, another set of haemodialysis patients spoke of the machine as being both a literal and a metaphorical lifeline (Hagren et al., 2001). This concept can be seen in two ways: a positive sense of gratitude at the sense of life given back by the machine, or a negative sense of reliance and dependence; "Holding on to this lifeline, metaphorically speaking, meant that they avoided death, but at the cost of restricted freedom" (Hagren et al., 2001, p. 199).

The concept of dependence as a noose around one's neck is a theme that runs throughout Jon's poetry. Jon is dependent on the machine, but also dependent on the doctors, the hospital, the state, even on a God-like being. Hagren's findings focus very much on the role of the machine in this sense of dependence and loss of freedom. However, the current analysis shows that the issue of dependence can be connected to more than just the machine.

For Hagren's participants, just as for Jon, although this sense of dependence was hard, it did not destroy the will to live and to keep fighting to be as "normal" as possible. Thus we can see that dependence on these multiple factors is not enough to destroy the self—however, when it is combined with the other difficulties faced by haemodialysis patients, a total loss of self becomes more of a risk.

LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This article presents a single case study and, as such, raises issues about generalisability. However, single case studies add to our knowledge in a detailed, considered manner, and can be used to challenge commonly held beliefs. While larger scale, quantitative studies look at the ways in which variables influence each other, case studies focus on the confluence of variables, and look at how a set of factors can vary (Sandelowski, 1996). It is also the case that idiographic studies such as this case study locates generalisations in the particular (Smith et al., 2009). Idiographic and nomothetic generalisability can work together to correct and complement one another (Sandelowski, 1996).

This article has used an innovative approach to qualitative research by using the high-quality, autobiographical poems of an ESRD patient to examine and interpret his experiences in-depth, and suggests that loss of self is a potential problem for dialysis patients. This loss of self can have very serious implications, damaging mental health, which is linked to mortality rates for ESRD (Martin & Thompson, 2000). Therefore, it seems that addressing this problem within ESRD and dialysis patients should be a crucial part of the service offered by teams. For Jon, it seemed more possible to hold on to a sense of agency and self when he focused on the here and now. Perhaps, then, other patients facing this struggle might find it useful to focus on the here and now.

APPENDICES¹

Appendix One: Resonance

This roller coast coffin
 injected into the wintering city
 like a pyroclastic flow
 a full-veined contrast solution.
 My body ratchets along methodically
 CAT scan slow,
 clicking smoothly forward, merciless.
 I plan, calculate, and queue
 every breath a chambered bullet.
 Who sees my future?

This journey tastes of aluminium,
 smells like mentholatum and ice.
 Anonymous, cold, ergonomic,
 I stand on this sterile Portland Streetcar.
 It's pale aesthetic green gunmetal thorax
 sectioned like sheets knotted together,
 twisting—elastic. Time stretches
 in a pull of white taffy.
 Freeze. Don't move or shatter.
 When will numbness cease?

1 The poet Jon Seaman has given permission for these poems to be published here. "Resonance" was first published in 2003 in *Willamette Week* and was the winner of the "Smokin' Word" Poetry Prize.

This vehicle I own,
but I'm not the driver
just a sideways tracking passenger,
an anonymous blur.
A process for red and green lights,
invisible breaks and pauses.
I want to see this X-Ray of my mind,
close my eyes and with magnetic resonance
locate shallow silver tracks.
Have I been a good man?

This answer comes without vowels
in a language I cannot decipher.
Electric letters, many transparent
shapes and shades
bone florescent white and gray displaying
whispers, faint fricatives, and epileptic consonants.
The route defined, but destination indefinite.
Someone else judges this map.
Waiting, waiting, waiting
Where is my stop?

Appendix Two: Waiting for a Transplant: Dialysis Day 466

Today I will be more
than blood.
More than venom
sucked out and snaking
through plastic,

spun in circuits
squirted through
a cheesecloth stretched

around the lip
of a mason jar.
I won't just twitch there
like a cooling coil
while I'm milked.

Today I will ride

this robot kidney
like a mongoose

attack this vacuum cleaner,
double-stitch my claws
into the dialyzer. I will fang
the power cord cobra
until this suction stops

and my electrolytes
cease to effervesce.
Until my feet

stop fizzing,
the whorls
of my fingerprints
stop whirling, until
my blood is clean.

Appendix Three: Treatments

During treatments, she chattered in a non-stop rising rattle. Suddenly she'd sing "Puff the Magic Dragon" with a voice like brittle breaking sticks. She'd orate from on high, "You know that song is about marijuana." I'd dig into the drip, disappear, cancel her noise with my head phones, but she bled through.

Today I sit in that dead woman's chair. This throne for bones, this slow recliner, this polyvinyl splendor. So practical; It does not stain, or stink, or leave any trace. Just wipe blank with common bleach. My spine cleaves to the plastic back with a thin sediment of skin and sweat.

Her fingers turned black from the tips on up and melted like icicles, down to nubs. Every few days another digit dissolved. I could not fathom her absences or why she smiled at me and sang. I'd try not to watch her dribble-drink, plastic bottle pinned between her palms as she regressed back to infancy.

Today stuck fast in the dead woman's chair, I stare at my fingers while the other patients lie limp, hibernate

in blanket shrouds. She had more life in her than me and all these stiffs, our souls adrift. My throat spasms, scrapes hot and from my mouth –a dragon, shaped from smoke.

Appendix Four: On Disaster

Catastrophic
interconnectedness,
my new penitentiary.

I pray thee pass
oh hurricane
of sleep.

My life arrested,
subject to the kindness
of supply chains.

I cannot swim
the storm surge currents
of the waking well.

Those sprawling webs
of red, white and blue
construction paper strips.

This is the best me now.
With every flowing moment
I erode.

Scissor thin
and circle linked
absently attached

My drowning defiance
a distant voice
carried off in wind.

with opaque smears
of grey glue
and double sided-tape.

I beg thee strangers
take me from these torrents
with compassionate hands.

I am manacled to you,
all of you,
a prisoner for life.

Appendix Five: My Empire

Engineered in the crook of my left arm,
that blank crease opposite the elbow,
just beneath a precise purple scar,
an aqueduct juts with blood.
You can see it vibrate beneath skin
like a slapped bass string. You can feel
the tingle of the thrill with a finger,
feel it surge in time with my heart.
You can hear the woosh-woosh rush
of the bruit, listen to my blood swarm
like barbarians singing of my downfall
in the key of B.

Today I graduate to fifteen gauge
silver straws. I refuse the lidocaine.
I want to feel the big bore bite
of the needles. I want to stand
and face the armies of artery and venus
these invaders the vein. Today
they infiltrate. Under the transparent
sheen of skin a bruise sets
like a sultry Roman sun;
flesh of green followed by purple,
heat soaked reds. A stain, trapped,
swelling, around my bicep.

This is my empire;
this body, this bruise, this blood.
My true corruption invisible and inside.
I am a Caesar who understands
his Ides. I proudly show this pulsing

fistula. It is my spigot, my lifeline.
 It throbs, and bleeds, and clots.
 It scars under assaults from giant
 sucking spears. But it never betrays,
 and is brave when I am not. Stabbed again,
 again and again my blood torrents out
 in cold quivers, but then returns revived.

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SECTION III: VOX PARTICIPARE

I WANTED TO GLIMPSE

PERINATAL ISOLATION, WOMEN'S SUFFERING AS MOTET

JOAN HUMPHRIES

Something of a revelation has transpired for me as I consider possibilities for using poetic expression as a way of articulating nursing knowledge. I know that enhanced understanding around the health experience is at the forefront of my scholastic efforts. However, the possibility for linking health research with artistic expression (in this case with the use of poetry) has offered me the possibility for a transformational approach. In turn, I wonder if exposure to the process could have meaning for practitioners just as meaning has been created for me. I consider my current insights, and the excitement that increasingly consumes me when I imagine possibilities for integrating artistic sensibilities with philosophical thought and research around nursing issues.

In this article, I introduce general discussion founded in philosophical discourse, which pertains to the use of the arts (as exemplified by the motet form) as a method of disseminating nursing research and knowledge. The “motet” (a medieval musical form) was adapted by Gadow (2004b) and offered a unique and original presentation of research. Gadow describes the form as follows:

A motet employs troping, the adding of words to textless musical passages; several textless parts are sung simultaneously above a vocal accompaniment. Troping—giving voice—epitomizes interpretive work. Voices in a motet remain distinct while woven together, each affecting the sound of the others, making and unmaking meaning. (p. 209)

I discuss two works of nursing theorist Sally Gadow (2004a; 2004b) in some depth, including the philosophical groundwork that underlies her innovative approach to disseminating nursing knowledge. Finally, I describe a study that I undertook with women who live with perinatal mood disorder and who had decided not to breastfeed their infants (Humphries, 2012). The experience of post-partum depression occurs in approximately 13% of women who give birth. This condition is mired in immense emotional anguish for women, who struggle with the ability to maintain emotional equilibrium while coping with the many demands of infant care (Beck, 2002; Beck & Watson-Driscoll, 2006; Beck, 2009). My study uncovered much about the current culture of breastfeeding promotional efforts by healthcare providers, and the suffering that ensued among these women as a result of those well-meaning, but misunderstood practices. I present an original motet, inspired by Gadow's work, which offers excerpts from the texts of the participants from my study as well as other supportive and contradictory statements in order to exemplify meaning.

HEIDEGGER, HERMENEUTICS, AND THE ARTS

I describe the evolution of thought that led me to using the motet to express the results of my research. It seems no accident that I am attracted to hermeneutic inquiry as a research methodology. Hermeneutics, like the arts, embodies *interpretation* as the foundational perspective towards creating understanding. Hermeneutic methodology, as it is currently understood and practiced, has been influenced by German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), who views interpretation of experience as central to our understanding of human existence (Blattner, 2006; Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1953). It seemed natural that interpretation of experience, through research, held the possibility to resonate for me in the ecstatic manner that Heidegger describes with relation to attention to the “now”. When contemplating the implications of Heidegger's attention to the present moment, I am reminded of a night at the theatre, or exposure to a piece of transformational literature. Indeed, Heidegger's description of temporality is linked with the *experience of being* in an “altogether” occurrence that transcends notions of past, present, and future (Heidegger, 1953). This portrayal suggests to me a kind of celebration-of-the-moment, which acknowledges the influence of that which is previous, and some anticipation for meaning that is yet-to-occur. How often, for example, when reading a classic piece of literature, can we marvel about the miracle that allows freshness and discovery that is relevant to our everyday existence, while knowing that the work was written centuries ago! In other words, there resounds a mysterious effect of *being altered*, or transformed in an *altogether* way that is reminiscent of encountering the power of artistic expression. This is not to say that it is impossible to analyze the knowledge or understanding

that has transpired in a way that is scholastically articulate. Rather, I am suggesting that the experience of being “altered” is perhaps the way in which we hope to influence those who come across our investigations when we attempt to publish and disseminate the knowledge that has been created through research. We wish to *impact* those who encounter our work, and leave them with a sense that their perspective has been shifted as a result of the encounter; that they have something to think about, and perhaps in unique ways. For many of us, the possibility of integrating or interpreting artistic expression may hold promise as natural extension of that impulse.

THEORETICAL CONUNDRUM

I outline an epistemological dilemma associated with conflicting and ambiguous impressions that surfaced as a result of my study with women living with perinatal mood disorders. It is clear that there are layers of complexity at play between women and their nurses in the context of infant feeding support. For example, a dilemma exists among nurses to fulfill population health imperatives that promote exclusive breastfeeding practice. However, the obligation to execute those population-based guidelines can be at odds with nursing imperatives that strive to make meaning of individual exigencies (such as an emerging depression in the presence of breastfeeding challenges), and the consideration of alternate feeding methods (Humphries, 2011; Humphries, 2012).

There are many contradictory and conflicting influences that surround the perinatal experience which have shaped my query around expression, and how best to describe the meaning of my learning. For example, the way that the participants of my study expressed their experience was often contrary to statements emulating from best practice guidelines, or theoretical approaches to breastfeeding promotion. And, as I engaged with the text of women’s statements, I responded with thoughts of my own.

I explore the possibilities for using the lens of artistic expression to capture this dynamic, advocating its value towards articulating and disseminating nursing knowledge.

ART AS ARTICULATOR

The prospect of employing an artistic perspective for articulating knowledge that appears ambiguous, complex and often contradictory beckons as a possibility that could offer meaning. Malinski (2005) refers to the very complex human act of nursing and posits:

“Both active involvement in artistic expression and the appreciation of art produced by others facilitate self-expression, understanding the human-environment mutual process, and finding meaning in varied life experiences” (p. 105).

The philosophy of Heidegger, wherein interpretation of human existence is put forth as a foundational approach, underpins much of the way that the hermeneutic research of today has evolved. In hermeneutic research, the interpretation of narrative text honors the “being-in-the-world” experience of the participant. The interpretation, which occurs without formal frameworks, “facilitates the emergence of the unknown, or hidden aspects of the phenomenon being studied” (McBride-Henry, White, & Benner, 2009, p. 34). Heidegger’s appreciation for art stems from the possibilities that he holds for explicating truth. He says: “In the art work, the truth of what is has set itself to work. Art is truth setting itself to work.” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 38).

Ultimately, Heidegger believes “the poetic” to be at the base of all understanding and truth, and the constitutive form that opens and expands our understanding about human life (Hofstadter, 1971). Heidegger’s expression is always-and-uniquely poetic, and invites the ongoing interpretation that is so intrinsic to his search for meaning.

DISCOVERING RESONANCE

The promise of using the motet as a means for interpreting and expressing the meaning of my research presented itself joyfully when I was introduced the writing of Sally Gadow. Gadow (2000a) offers a compelling option for enhanced understanding of a health experience through poetic expression. In the work, *I Felt an Island Rising: Interpretive Inquiry as Motet*, Gadow emphasizes the importance of “multivocality” (citing Jardine, 1994, p. 171) as integral to interpretative work (as opposed to a univocal expression associated with a view of an independent reality). She uses the structure of the motet to illustrate the need for multiplicity of voice as a function of postmodern inquiry, drawing on key features of the medieval musical form (the motet) to illustrate opportunities for conveying contradictory and interruptive text. The distinctions associated with exposing the contradictory, according to Gadow, embody the essence of interpretive work.

Gadow (2000a) emphasizes the importance of interpretive work as exposing *multiplicity*, rather than *unity* of meaning (which Gadow equates with a rational approach that pre-dates post modern inquiry). She stresses the value of emotion, empathy, conversation, literary allusion and other humane approaches to methodology, which attend to what Gadow views as additional voices that have the potential to provide insight and meaning into a given phenomenon. Gadow endorses the partiality of postmodern inquiry as a conduit for exposing the in-

dependent voice, which in turn ensures the ongoing nature of the inquiry, since no voice can represent the others, and no voice takes precedence over the others. Clearly, Gadow envisions a prospect for revelation that can be epitomized by disruptive expression.

Gadow (2000a) introduces her motet by identifying two phenomena that are central to nursing: suffering and engagement. She reflects as a researcher who has explored an encounter with prisoners, and the effect that education (while imprisoned) had on their experience. She winds practical and theoretical aspects of nursing into her description, and warns that the voices are capable of changing parts (transposition) so that, for example, the theorist reveals suffering, and the prisoner theorizes. “Voices multiply and diverge, new ones emerge; even objectivist voices are heard. Together they embody the interruptions, dissonance, and harmonies of interpretive work” (p. 209).

Gadow’s (2000a) venture into the domain of transposition and exposition is alluring to me, as I consider my ontological predisposition towards entertaining multiple truths, allowing for ongoing shifts in understanding, and engaging in interpretive conjecture. Gadow (2000b) extends the theoretical groundwork associated with using the motet and other aesthetic expressions in *Philosophy as Falling: Aiming for Grace* by focusing on what she sees as misappropriation in philosophical writing. Gadow (2000b) argues: “Unlike poets, [however] philosophers tend to view the new as final; they want the surprises they produce to shed their fragile metaphoric quality and become truth” (p. 95). She stresses that conceptual reference to embodiment is foundational to the human condition, but that philosophical writing, for the most part, “remains abstract and disembodied” (p. 89). Gadow presents a poem about women’s bodies in labour (*Raiment*) and proposes that reconciliation of the body into philosophical discourse can occur by exposing the influence of cultural narratives existing around women’s bodies that are social, scientific and political in nature. Gadow (2000b) stresses the advantage of imaginative narratives, such as poetic expression, which will ultimately “surprise” (p. 94) and therefore enlighten the reader in unique ways with unending opportunities for interpretation.

Gadow (2000b) suggests: “A poem confirms what philosophers write volumes explaining, namely, that there is no pure concreteness, nothing that is only ‘this, here, now’” (p. 94). Her words reinforce the perspective of situated understanding to which she alludes when introducing the motet as a mode for acquiring heightened insight about a human experience (Gadow, 2000a; 2000b). Gadow (2000b) summarizes: “The elegance of irony and motet is not the perfection of logical conclusion, but the grace of the finite and fallible—the human condition that patients and nurses alike embody” (p. 96). In this statement, Gadow invites attention to the multiplicity that resides within the human world of nurses and patients. Her work incites a desire in me to extend the use of the motet to describe

the cacophony of influences that were revealed in my own hermeneutic study with women who lived with perinatal mental health challenge, and who fed their infants with formula. I am intrigued with Gadow's inference to the unfinished and its possible congruence with my study.

As Gadow (2000a) suggests, "Because interpretations are constructed, they are contingent and alterable; their contingency provides the freedom of new interpretations" (p. 209). Her statement suggests promise for innovative interpretive possibilities, which is consistent with the hermeneutic tradition, the value of which holds much promise for approaches and understandings around health. What possibilities, then, apply to aesthetic interpretation as a valuable means for disseminating nursing knowledge?

MY HERMENEUTIC STUDY

The impetus for my study arose following exposure to women's infant feeding challenges while I was completing graduate work in a local Perinatal Mental Health Program. During that time, I encountered many women who were struggling with post-partum depression. Many women were feeding their infants with formula, and therefore endured an added measure of emotional distress associated with the stigma of not breastfeeding. Breastfeeding practice is generally considered to be the optimum form of infant nutrition and encouraged for virtually all women who give birth (BCC, 2011). It is important to emphasize that the women I initially encountered, as well as the participants of my study, were well aware of the well-publicized advantages of feeding their infants breast milk. The reasons for alternate infant feeding decisions varied among the women; sometimes because of concerns with medications that they required to treat their depression, but also for reasons that involved challenges and frustrations with establishing successful breastfeeding. I was moved to explore the experience of women living with mood disorders further, with a view to achieving heightened insight about the issues around infant feeding that these women faced. I obtained permission from the Joint Ethics Board of the local Health Authority and the University to investigate the experience of women who were formula-feeding their infants in the context of a mental health challenge. I began my interviews after my practicum experience had ended in the clinic, in order to maintain confidentiality and professional distance in the research process. Participants were then recruited with the assistance of the Perinatal Mental Health Team (the Psychiatrist and Clinical Nurse Specialist) who identified potentially interested individuals, and forwarded my contact information. A total of six women were interviewed in a variety of settings, but most often the homes of the participants. The text of these interviews comprises my study, and excerpts from the texts comprise the motet that I present here.

HERMENEUTICS

Whitehead (2004) identifies key principles for guiding analysis of data in hermeneutics. She describes the process of entering into the hermeneutic circle as engaging “in a process of moving from the part to the whole, allowing emerging data to remain open to divergent interpretations, and recognizing the temporality of truth and the horizons of the interpreter and the text” (p. 515). In the spirit of hermeneutic inquiry, I have continued to contemplate the meaning of my work (Humphries 2011, 2012) and open myself to shifts in understanding and re-interpretation. I have been struck with the evolving understanding that unfolds even as time passes around the experience of women who participated in my study. The study unfolded in unexpected ways, and uncovered significant vulnerability among the women participants. Their vulnerability was complicated by the mood disorders that they lived with, as well as guilt, and a sense of being misunderstood about their intentions to mother well in spite of decisions not to breastfeed. Importantly, these decisions were often reached following a tortuous journey of disappointment and frustration about an inability to achieve success with breastfeeding practice.

The experience of the participants led me in many directions of contemplation. I wondered about whether breastfeeding challenges could be profiled as a predictor of post-partum depression. I was struck with the pathos associated with women’s desire for nurses to give “permission” to stop breastfeeding, and speculated about the need for these new mothers to be mothered *themselves*. The ethics of breastfeeding promotion featured prominently in my interactions with women, ethics that concerned the notion of informed consent that is said to be required if a woman is to choose something other than breastfeeding practice, even though there are certainly women who struggle with breastfeeding and who, in certain circumstances, may ultimately be better served by entertaining a different infant feeding choice (Humphries, 2011).

As I recall the many impressions that surfaced for me as a researcher, I am called to describe a sense of chaos that existed for the participants around their experience-and a reaction in me that there was a cacophony of influences that were contributing to women’s emotional pain. Gadow’s (2000b) interest in exploring the poem about women’s bodies in labour (*Raiment*) intersects with my own interests, for in the process of exploring breastfeeding challenge, I came to consider the meaning that is held around women’s breasts. A tendency to view breasts as “equipment” (another Heideggerian reference) that may not be functioning according to expectations may lead to feelings of disembodiment (McBride-Henry, et al., 2009). This was evidenced by references to “feeling like a cow” and the despair that women associated with the mechanization of pumping their breasts to enhance lactation.

In reference to *Raiment*, Gadow identifies the social, scientific, and political influences that shape women's perception of their bodies as they labour, and it is possible to link those influences with the experience of breastfeeding, or the decision not to breastfeed, especially in the context of worldwide breastfeeding promotional efforts that are sanctioned by the World Health Organization (WHO; Breastfeeding Committee for Canada, 2011).

I contemplate the possibilities surrounding Gadow's (2000a) work, wherein the motet explicates contradictory and interruptive voices surrounding her participants' experience. I ruminate about the context of my study, and consider the advantage of the motet framework to honor the voice of my participants, the theoretical influences, and myself as researcher. Like Gadow, I refine the expressions of the participants into conceptual understandings. In my case I offer "suffering" and "isolation" as guiding terms upon which to build understandings when navigating the motet I have written. The voices in the motet represent practice (excerpts from the BCC [2011] and references to nursing influence), theory (critical reflection using excerpts taken from relevant literature), and anguish (associated with the experience of breastfeeding challenge and perinatal mood disorder). The "accompaniment" is represented by my own voice "trying to find its own part in relation to the others without silencing them by my analysis" (Gadow, 2000a, p. 209).

While the origin of the motet is a musical form, neither Gadow nor I present melodic offerings in the context of academic presentation. Instead, I propose that the "voice" that is referenced represents a conceptual notion of an unexpected melody, resplendent with the dissonance and atonal musical qualities that are implied when describing the "interruptive" and the "contradictory" aspects of the text that is presented. At certain junctures, I have formatted the poetry of my motet in ways that reflect the imagery of shifting and fused horizons that are so intrinsic to hermeneutic thought.

I Wanted To Glimpse

*I wanted to glimpse their
World of peri-natal mood disorder; that
World of isolation
and suffering
That they inhabit
And that inhabits them. (Joan)*

And I can imagine that, you know, twenty years from now, if the baby gets
Whatever- stomach cancer, I'll relate it back to breastfeeding,
I'm sure.
I'm sure

That I would blame myself for this, for the rest of his life.

Whatever consequence, whatever

Physical consequence

He has in the future,

I will, in the back of my mind, say is that because of something I did?

You know if I could breastfeed, I would by far choose that. (Alicia)

I suspected that infant feeding choices had the potential to marginalize women, but her words left me shaken, altered. (Joan)

The public health nurse came over to see if everything was working properly and said:

‘If he’s latching properly, there shouldn’t really be a problem’

But he was screaming and he wouldn’t take it.

So he would maybe latch for

A minute,

Two minutes,

And then he would pull away and just be

Hysterical

Hysterical.

And so it was starting to get upsetting for me—but I just I think

‘Oh god, is there going to be a consequence later on for this formula?’

(Brenda)

Increased expertise is reflected in many ways, but especially in more effective and efficient diagnosis and in the more thoughtful identification and compassionate use of individual patients’ predicaments, rights, and preferences in making clinical decisions about their care (Sackett, 1996, p. 71).

And the Public Health Nurse kept pushing and pushing it and pushing it; Nurse again!

I was pumping every three hours for two months just because there was such a big push to breastfeed.

And I finally had it.

My husband was home for five weeks with me

(This seems like an incredible expectation) and he

Went back

Went back to his job

And when he went back to work I broke down, I cried for two days

straight.

I just wanted to stop pumping so badly and I just felt such
Guilt.

Just pure guilt

Because you know all the books say you should

Breastfeed your baby,

Breastfeed your baby. (Brenda)

You feel like a cow.

You feel like you're a cow producing milk

And you're hooked up to this machine,

But I'd be up pumping at three in the morning.

And there are some shows I can't even watch anymore

Because they remind me how I was so alone.

I was sitting there

Pumping. (Brenda)

How, then, must it feel

When I told the Public Health Nurse that I really wanted to **stop**

pumping Because I couldn't have a life -that I was tied to

That pump

She kind of went sideways and you could tell that she was not

impressed and So that just cut me right off from her, because it felt like

that was obviously Not a good enough reason for her-

To be 'let down' by the lifeline,

And I don't care for that kind of 'support'

*Or have the perception that one is disappointing that group of
trusted caregivers?*

(Brenda, Joan)

**Step 6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk,
unless medically indicated. (Breastfeeding Committee for Canada [BCC],
2011)**

But there are tons of posters around saying

Breastfeeding is this,

Breastfeeding is that.

But nowhere does it say anything about formula if you can't do it.

So it's all around you.

And they talk about Breast is Best- it's hard to hear that.

It just really brings back horrible memories of

Her trying,

Me trying,
Just extreme frustration
Cause it hurt. (Brenda)

So during that time, they were trying to get him
to breastfeed immediately to help with the bleeding.
And I had the nurse going through breastfeeding. And she's
talking to me about the latch. And right now I'm in a fog, and I didn't
even have a good moment to even really realize that I had a baby. (Dana)

The expectations for women loom large they put him on my chest but it was so
painful. It immediately hurt. I didn't know it was going to feel like that
and yeah, it is painful. I didn't really know that there was going
to be in so much pain associated with breastfeeding
*but the trauma of the initiation into the breastfeeding experience
remains with her months following the birth.* And then, when I was
in the hospital, I had six different nurses tell me six different ways. I
wanted to breastfeed -of course I just wanted to breastfeed
and do the best job I can and all that kind of thing.

I wonder how that experience shaped her journey towards depression so I was
very overwhelmed and very frustrated that they didn't know which way was
the right way to be doing it *and the eventual decision to feed with formula.*
(Dana, Joan)

It is rare for a woman to be medically unable to produce a sufficient milk supply, However, the experience of the women who participated in my study but without adequate social support was that the support was unwanted women may lack confidence in their ability to breastfeed, or of the wrong variety and thus turn to formula to cope with the uncertainty as evidenced by their desire for 'permission' to stop their attempts at breastfeeding. (Frerichs, Andsager, Campo, Aquilino, & Dyer, 2006, pp. 97–98; Joan).

And I remember him
Standing at the door
And I'm crying as I'm trying to breastfeed the baby and
I just felt really helpless.

And then I'm not feeling all motherly, and warm, and happy,
And he's looking at me like, well,
You just had a baby,
And you wanted that baby.

What relationship between

Why are you not happy? (Dana)

*mother and baby is forged
when feeding is fraught with
feelings of frustration and
personal failure? (Joan)*

He (the baby) would really start freaking out.

He would scream with his fists clenched and he was getting so frustrated.

So I don't know exactly what was happening but

It was becoming clear that someone needed to talk with me about the bonding.

I contemplated the possibility

Because, I mean, I was really ready for the feeding, but he didn't want the feeding

That the process of bonding

And then he was crying and so I was feeling like a failure,

And I was feeling guilty,

And I was feeling overwhelmed,

And I was feeling like

I can't, I don't –

I don't know how to cope with this.

Is actually interrupted by the expectations to breastfeed successfully.

(Dana, Joan)

But it was just-

It was just the way

She looked at me that really

Affected the way

I felt for her (Clarice)

*Could be value in critically examining the assumptions we currently hold about
women's bonding behavior? (Joan)*

During the preliminary class they talked about breastfeeding throughout and how the babies look if they are developed properly from breastfeeding, and the statistics say that the baby will be more likely to have leukemia if fed with formula.

Oh my.

But comments like breastfeeding 'properly'

—those are things that made me feel really bad.

Like I was a bad mother before I've even ever done anything. (Evelyn, Joan)

In effect, it dawned on me that the experience of formula feeding is very much concerned with the experience of coming to the decision (Joan)

I told the prenatal instructor halfway through

I wouldn't be attending the breastfeeding class.

Evelyn and her partner did not return to prenatal class.

I felt like she gave me like a stern

look and she was very short and I don't want to put myself through that again
because why would I?

Evelyn and her partner did not return to prenatal class.

It was the gang mentality. And I didn't feel like I shouldn't have to get
into why I made that choice. *Evelyn and her partner did not
return to prenatal class.* (Evelyn, Joan)

I remember

Feeling disembodied (Joan)

I cried,

Sobbing, hooked up to this machine that made this horrible sound and,
I felt like a cow (Fiona)

*I have glimpsed the multi-layered meaning about infant feeding that is held by these
women* (Joan)

The nurse needs to figure out who the client is.

Are you treating the baby as the client?

Then breastfeeding is best for them.

Are you treating the Mom as a client?

Then they should support the mom.

But I think if the client is a unit, you're going to make different choices,
Based on how the 'unit' will benefit from it.

You know? (Fiona)

And the glimpse disrupts my vision.

CONCLUSION

In my life, I have held a passion for many facets of "the arts" while concurrently living my nursing career. However, it wasn't until I pursued graduate studies in nursing that it occurred to me that what may have been a *concurrent* interest had the potential to translate into a *coherent* interest, wherein I am lured to connect one sensibility with the other in order to explicate meaning. It is through the lens of retrospection that I am able to glean significance surrounding the transformation of ideas that has evolved by creating the motet.

As I consider the process of illumination that has occurred for me I am struck with two elements. Firstly, I am startled at the power of the text of my partici-

pants, whose words, in many cases, transitioned from text into poetry with ease and authority. Their words, articulated in poetic format, procured a new lens of meaning for me concerning the suffering and isolation that surrounded their experience. The language, when presented as poetic expression, offered another dimension or possibility for interpretation that may have eluded me in the first instance.

Secondly, I contemplate the distinctions between multiplicity and unity that underline much of the discourse around the motet as a vehicle for expression. These distinctions disrupt historic philosophical assumptions, and challenge notions about the finality of philosophic thought. In turn, these wonderings fuel my quest to creatively and authentically approach knowledge dissemination using an interpretative stance that is unending.

Mostly, though, I am altered in a way that is reminiscent of an artistic experience. I have glimpsed the world of perinatal depression which had been previously undisclosed to me, and I have expressed my impressions using a poetic lens. I have come away from this experience with insight that is dense and deep about the anguish and complexity associated with women's regret about infant feeding, the many contradictory influences that pervade the experience of breastfeeding challenge in the context of a mood disorder. I sense that I have been transported and transformed in an "altogether" kind of way that has offered opportunities for rich analysis and heightened insight, and which paradoxically transcends description.

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"WE'VE HAD OUR LIVES, WE'VE HAD OUR LIVES"

A POETIC REPRESENTATION OF AGEING

MARY BREHENY

Poetic representation is presented as a way to engage the reader with the visceral and emotional aspects of participants' lives and by doing so, better represent their lived experience. Poetry as a form of analysis has tended to focus on poems being created by participants as part of their involvement in research (Lahman et al., 2010), or transcription poems created by the researcher as part of the analysis and representation of the qualitative data collected (see Clarke, et al., 2005; Sparkes & Douglas, 2007). Transcription poems are often supplemented with researchers' own poems created in response to the experience of hearing the participants' stories (see Adame et al., 2011; Connelly, 2010; West, 2011).

Such approaches to poetic representation are often based in phenomenology and seek to represent the messy, fleshy nature of human experience in areas such as trauma (Reilly, 2011), poverty (Connelly, 2010), or homelessness (Carroll, et al., 2011; Finley, 2000). Such use of poems is consistent with phenomenology, which endeavours to describe how the world is constituted and what it is like for people to live through and experience particular phenomena (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Experience is revealed through a person's reflection on their lived situation (Ashworth, 2003). As phenomenological analysis foregrounds individual experience, it may provide a limited account of wider social influences. As people narrate specific events and provide personal evaluations, individual agency is further reinforced. Poetic representations that attempt to capture the unique experience

of each participant in poetry also focus on individual experience and can reinforce individual explanations. Poetic representation has usefully been used to represent individual accounts, but the metaphoric nature of poetry also makes it suitable to create poems that provide an opportunity to explore the social patterning that structures individual lives.

The ways that individual accounts tell us how the wider social world is structured has been explored by narrative theory. Narratives are employed in everyday life to make sense of experiences and to constitute social identities (Somers, 1994). Through storytelling, people negotiate a positive identity using shared linguistic and social resources. Narrative theory highlights the way that personal stories are located in wider social narratives, and how analysis of individual experience tells us about the society in which such experiences are lived (Stephens, 2011). Narrative research has offered a variety of frameworks to identify levels of narratives working together. A simple framework distinguishes the personal story that an individual tells about their own experience, the interpersonal story that takes place between the narrator and their audience, and the publicly available narratives of social life (Stephens & Breheny, in press). This framework can be used to highlight certain features of poetic representation. Such representations involve the personal experience of the participants, the interpersonal relationships between the interviewer and the participant, (and the researcher and the poem), and the shared 'narratives' about how to practice social relationships and the moral positioning of subjects. Thus, the experiences of ageing that people construct with an interviewer, and the experiences of ageing illustrated in this representation, reveal 'narratives' of social life and available social identities.

Incorporating these understandings from narrative theory, poems provide new opportunities for representation. As Josselson (2011) suggests, the analysis does not tell us about the person interviewed, but about the interview in which the person participated. Further, the analysis displays the social world that made that interview between those people possible, in that time, place, and space. In addition, participants are not singular selves, but multiple selves linguistically constituted and shifting according to the requirements of context (Josselson, 2011). Poetic representation offers a way to represent the multiplicity of the self as it shifts through time, space, and place. One way in which poems offer additional flexibility is through the opportunity to disrupt linear narrative flow and the acceptability of pauses and gaps in poetic representation (Adame, et al., 2011). By casting off narrative conventions, poems provide a medium to represent the fluid, inconsistent and disorganised nature of human existence. This is particularly valuable for exploring topics in which time is a prominent feature. Poems also provide an opportunity to experiment with representing multiple accounts that are similar in experience but diverge in detail. Narrative research highlights the role of characters in the unfolding story line. Poetic representation can also use characters to

represent different aspects of experience and different positions available to speakers at different points.

The experience of ageing is one area that particularly lends itself to this approach. Older age is a time of embodied physical changes which conflict with widely available positive ageing discourses (Pond, et al., 2010). Attention to a positive and successful later life effectively ignores the decline of the ageing body, although the ageing body is a central concern of older people (Laz, 2003). The ways that older people have of describing themselves, their health and future, depend upon accounts available in their social world, their specific experiences, and the conditions of their lives. As people age, such aspects become increasingly difficult to ignore. Experience of ageing is not singular, but shifting, social and embodied. Poetic representations provide a way to show how the embodied aspects of ageing cannot be separated from the discursive and social aspects, and how individual lives are played out together across history and time and place.

WIDER STUDY

As part of an interview study on the living standards of older people, 143 people aged over 65 years from around New Zealand were interviewed. Interviewers were selected from a range of communities, in urban and rural areas around New Zealand, and from specific ethnic groups. Using their community links and contacts, these interviewers selected older people to represent a range of living standards from living a life of comfort to living in very constrained circumstances. The approach to living standards was based on the broad ideas of Sen's (1987, 1992) capability approach, which shifts attention away from the specific material conditions of life and focuses on the freedoms people have to make choices that matter to them (Alkire, 2005). Consequently, the interview questions enquired about what people needed to have and do, what things they must do without, and what they would do differently if they had greater or fewer resources. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis to establish the domains of living standards important to older people. From this analysis, questionnaire items were developed to assess the living standards of older people in New Zealand. The study was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. All interviews were conducted between March 2010 and May 2011. The data collection was not about the experience of ageing, but about life circumstances for older people. In response to such questions many people responded in terms of differences now they were older. Being older and growing older were at the forefront of these interviews.

POETIC REPRESENTATION

As I analysed the interviews for the thematic analysis I was struck by the subtle humour of them, the gentle phrasing and the playful sense of fun these partici-

pants displayed in describing their lives and their living standards. As I sat at my computer reading these interviews, the words from the Eliot poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” ran over and over through my head:

I grow old...I grow old
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled

Eventually I gave in to this and re-read “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”. From this point I returned to the transcripts and copied lines from each interview that struck me and pasted them into a document optimistically called “Poem”. Like Connelly (2010), I had identified the inherent poetry of the accounts given by those participating in our research. Lines were initially selected simply because they appealed to me. Each line was added to the document with the participant number and line number; there was no other criterion at this stage. Some of the interviews yielded many lines, some provided none at all. As Öhlen (2003) states, “Some people have a habit of enriching it [language] with metaphoric paraphrases and symbols, whereas others adhere more to the literal meaning, using imagery only occasionally.” (p. 558). Those who speak colourfully and metaphorically are represented, but this is interspersed with the factual when it exposes the metaphoric. Each line represents an extract from one part of one interview. The lines are word for word as they were spoken; no alteration or repetition has been used. The only exception to this is the name of the child whose speech is reported on line 50, which has been changed to ensure anonymity. There are 67 lines in the following poem and these are from 30 different participants. To make the poem easier to read, the participant and line numbers have been removed. At the end of a each day, I sorted the lines into groupings and slowly a pattern developed. The initial selection of lines was about imagery and the organisation into stanzas about content and a developing story line that drew the poem together into a coherent framework. As I worked through the process of adding, organising and dropping lines, the poem took shape. In the final stages of this, I read the poem aloud to check the flow and fit of the lines together. The lines were building blocks that seemed to fit together in certain ways. As I moved them around they clicked into place. This sense of fit however, exists within the researcher, rather than existing in the lines, or the participants from which they have arisen. Qualitative researchers tend to describe themes, or discourses, or narratives as having emerged from the data. However, analyses are the creation of the researcher to serve a particular purpose and whatever shape they have is constructed not emergent. Here the poem took on a shape, but to refer to the shape having ‘emerged’ obscures the researcher’s authorial power over the final result. Clarke et al. (2005) describe how poetic representations highlight the relationship between the researcher and the text. The authorial power of poetic representation is a strong call for reflexiv-

ity (Glesne, 1997). What is presented here is a poem about ageing from one not yet old but still ageing. My research focuses on inequalities for older people. In particular, I am interested in the ways that material conditions of life influence the social identities that older people can have. This is the position from which I approached the data and this position provided the lens from which I approached the construction and the interpretation of this poem.

Rather than drawing together portions of one interview to achieve a sense of poetic representation, lines of many interviews have been drawn together to create a poetic representation based around the experience of ageing. The purpose to demonstrate what I appreciated about these interviews: their sense of humour and fun, the looking back and looking forward, the sense of place and time, future and past these older people offered us. This poem provides a window through which we can view what it means to age.

Poem

So I've made it in life
 I'm happy with what I have
 And I've had quite a rich life
 Actually you don't need much to be happy
 Whatever was there was, was more than enough
 With the sun just through the door there, you couldn't wish for more
 It's as though the world has been washed
 But you never know what destiny has in store for you.

Do you want to know what happened to me when I was young?
 I started on the stage when I was 3 years old, dancing for returned soldiers
 During the Depression, the only meat we had was rabbit and tripe
 I was put in camp by the Japanese
 We used to walk up to the East Coast Road to catch a bus
 When you were a young man, I'd wear my suit to church
 Well you see, this is all history.

Oh I've lived all over
 I've no inclinations to go into posh hotels, or five nights at the Hilton
 I walked the Inca trail
 I went camping up to the North Pole
 I wanted to see China from the inside
 Hundred miles off shore you can smell Calcutta
 And in the evening time I can see the sunset over the Waitakere.

Where have you been?
 I've been on a ferry to Devonport. That's as far as I've been
 He promised that once he retired we'd go on a trip around the world. Well
 we never went round the corner
 Can't get to London on my push bike
 There's nothing more annoying than living in your house looking at
 somebody else with the sun shining on them
 Oh I tell Him off sometimes he's not fair to me
 So that's the life of this old lady.

You get to do what you want
 I write very quirky kind of off-beat little stories
 I would like to hear people talk intelligently, you know and making a point
 It's most uncomfortable to be able to think really. But somebody has to
 You're allowed to do as you like now
 Pardon me, but I didn't put my bra on for you this morning
 My grandfather used to smoke a pipe. Sign of a contented man.

Look, I'm an old man now, but I cannot avoid looking at beautiful women
 Well a lady in charge of our choir, she's 84 now, she still wears high heels,
 stilettos with a split skirt
 I have a lady now, not my wife, a lady partner we sing duets
 I'd like to have a nice girl come and live with me
 Most men's workshops you go into is always a picture of a dolly bird in
 revealing sort of poses
 I'd die happy wouldn't I? Die with a smile on my face.

I've seen neighbours come and go. I don't know
 It's astounding how this street alone has changed
 As I've got older that hill has got steeper
 Went back to where I'd been born. It was as flat as a pancake, which it
 always was
 Young people are so patronising. Often I have to laugh
 They tell you things thinking you don't know
 Two doors down, the children there, the little girl is only seven. She often
 says to me, "Aren't you lonely in this big house all by yourself"
 "Yes Clara, I'm often lonely."

Most of them are dead, would you believe it?
 When your friends die, your memories go. And, you know, in a sense there's
 nothing to discuss

I can remember him saying to me “Oh no-one ever comes and visits us”
“Dad, it’s because they’re bloody dead”
I used to look at them and think you poor old thing, and I’m in their box
now
I can’t run for buses like I used to
I suppose I’m clattering along
We’ve had our lives. We’ve had our lives.
All the summers and after that as the cold seeps in.

Some people drag out such ghastly end too, don’t they really?
I’m probably falling apart at the seams
I’ll be carried out of here
I’m down a no-exit street
I’ve left it too late
Doesn’t matter if you’re an hour late or ten hours late, you’re still only late
Oh I haven’t finished yet. I haven’t finished.
Bit late now my dear, bit late.

Poem with Line Numbers Added (for Interpretation to Follow)

1 So I’ve made it in life
2 I’m happy with what I have
3 And I’ve had quite a rich life
4 Actually you don’t need much to be happy
5 Whatever was there was, was more than enough
6 With the sun just through the door there, you couldn’t wish for more
7 It’s as though the world has been washed
8 But you never know what destiny has in store for you.

9 Do you want to know what happened to me when I was young?
10 I started on the stage when I was 3 years old, dancing for returned soldiers
11 During the Depression, the only meat we had was rabbit and tripe
12 I was put in camp by the Japanese
13 We used to walk up to the East Coast Road to catch a bus
14 When you were a young man, I’d wear my suit to church
15 Well you see, this is all history.

16 Oh I’ve lived all over
17 I’ve no inclinations to go into posh hotels, or five nights at the Hilton
18 I walked the Inca trail

19 I went camping up to the North Pole
20 I wanted to see China from the inside
21 Hundred miles off shore you can smell Calcutta
22 And in the evening time I can see the sunset over the Waitakere.

23 Where have you been?
24 I've been on a ferry to Devonport. That's as far as I've been
25 He promised that once he retired we'd go on a trip around the world.
Well we never went round the corner
26 Can't get to London on my push bike
27 There's nothing more annoying than living in your house looking at
somebody else with the sun shining on them
28 Oh I tell Him off sometimes he's not fair to me
29 So that's the life of this old lady.

30 You get to do what you want
31 I write very quirky kind of off-beat little stories
32 I would like to hear people talk intelligently, you know and making a
point
33 It's most uncomfortable to be able to think really. But somebody has to
34 You're allowed to do as you like now
35 Pardon me, but I didn't put my bra on for you this morning
36 My grandfather used to smoke a pipe. Sign of a contented man.

37 Look, I'm an old man now, but I cannot avoid looking at beautiful
women
38 Well a lady in charge of our choir, she's 84 now, she still wears high heels,
stiletto's with a split skirt
39 I have a lady now, not my wife, a lady partner we sing duets
40 I'd like to have a nice girl come and live with me
41 Most men's workshops you go into is always a picture of a dolly bird in
revealing sort of poses
42 I'd die happy wouldn't I? Die with a smile on my face.

43 I've seen neighbours come and go. I don't know
44 It's astounding how this street alone has changed
45 As I've got older that hill has got steeper

- 46 Went back to where I'd been born. It was as flat as a pancake, which it
always was
- 47 Young people are so patronising. Often I have to laugh
- 48 They tell you things thinking you don't know
- 49 Two doors down, the children there, the little girl is only seven. She often
says to me, "Aren't you lonely in this big house all by yourself"
- 50 "Yes Clara, I'm often lonely."
-
- 51 Most of them are dead, would you believe it?
- 52 When your friends die, your memories go. And, you know, in a sense
there's nothing to discuss
- 53 I can remember him saying to me "Oh no-one ever comes and visits us"
- 54 "Dad, it's because they're bloody dead"
- 55 I used to look at them and think you poor old thing, and I'm in their
box now
- 56 I can't run for buses like I used to
- 57 I suppose I'm clattering along
- 58 We've had our lives. We've had our lives.
- 59 All the summers and after that as the cold seeps in.
-
- 60 Some people drag out such ghastly end too, don't they really?
- 61 I'm probably falling apart at the seams
- 62 I'll be carried out of here
- 63 I'm down a no-exit street
- 64 I've left it too late
- 65 Doesn't matter if you're an hour late or ten hours late, you're still only late
- 66 Oh I haven't finished yet. I haven't finished.
- 67 Bit late now my dear, bit late.

INTERPRETATION

Research that makes use of poetic representation, based on a phenomenological framework, tends to take the position that the poem should speak for itself as a representation. Further, O'Connor, (1996) suggests if the poem doesn't speak for itself, then poetic representation has failed to represent the lived experience of the participants. Representing the experiential element is one contribution that poetic representation can provide; however, there are further possibilities. Supplementing the poem with social interpretation provides an explanation of the experience represented. Lahman et al. (2010) question the addition of interpretations or

explanations of research poetry and suggest such additions can distract the reader from taking the space to make their own interpretation. However, providing a framework for interpretation opens up the possibility of beginning a conversation about what the poem might mean. The framework for interpretation is not the final verdict of what this poem attempts to do or does, it is one possible reading. As Richardson (2002) states, others may offer an alternative view that attends to different aspects and identifies different imagery. By providing a possible interpretation, the author invites dissent and by responding to this, new interpretations potentially shed light on the way that poems are not individually authored but are social projects made possible in certain historical circumstances. Consequently, representing the experience of the participant through poetry becomes the first stage of the developing understanding. Such representations are then interpreted as representations, to draw attention to the role of the researcher, and the wider narrative structures, in understanding the poem presented. As a poem it should evoke emotions and responses in the reader, but as a piece of research, it invites interpretation.

POETIC REPRESENTATION

The poem was constructed through immersion in the data, an understanding of the experience of ageing, and a sense of being in the world that these older people shared. Rather than attempting a representation of any one participants' lived experience of ageing, the poem attempted to provide an account of the experience of ageing common to some of these participants. The people represented here are positioned as ageing in the poem and by the poem, and more widely by their invitation to participate in the research interviews. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" called me to attend to these interviews and there are recognisable similarities in the themes of time and ageing and physical changes and futility.

The first stanza of this poem is about thankfulness. The interviews were replete with accounts of thankfulness from people living in all material conditions. This provided the position from which older people spoke throughout the interviews. Ageing is often presented as about completion, reflecting on the past with satisfaction and pleasure. Being able to look back on life with satisfaction is evidence of a life well lived. Although this stanza is about reflecting back, it was also a starting point from which these older people spoke as older people about their lives. Having situated themselves in this position of reflecting back upon their lives, many participants also wanted to tell us about what life was like when they were young.

Although the interviews did not explicitly invite a life history, participants' positioning as older people in an interview strongly invited the question "what happened when I was young?" This stanza is a brief taste of the history of these

older people. The lines reflected the history of this age cohort through references to war, the Depression, changes in transport and technology, and the changing expectations around appropriate social behaviour as illustrated by the line on wearing a suit to church. All these reflect parts of life that have changed markedly since these participants' youth, which is concluded with the summation "this is all history" on line 15.

From this social history of war, the depression and social change, the next stanza develops the theme of personal history through places visited. At the end of this stanza the poem returns the theme of place to the present, and to New Zealand, with seeing the sunset over the Waitakere Ranges.

The next stanza develops the theme of reminiscing through dissatisfaction. Although reminiscing is often viewed as a harking back to positive recollections and memories, it was also a way of reconciling expectations of earlier times with actual outcomes.

The next stanza of the poem describes the freedom of older age, the ability to do and be different, the release from the conventions of social pressure. For example, lines 32 and 33 are about taking time to think, line 35 is about not wearing a bra for the arrival of company, and the achievement of contentment in later life in line 36. It is important to remember that these lines do not represent unique experiences or unique trajectories of ageing. Across the interviews the participants reflected aspects of ageing that could be understood as contentment, resignation and freedom.

The final three stanzas move the poem forward in terms of the experience of ageing into decline and death. The poem shows how the physical and material world, and a sense of time and place, influences the experience of ageing for older people. Lines 43–46 demonstrate the intersection between the physical world and the embodied experience of ageing. On line 44 the poem describes how the street has changed over time. This segues into the hills becoming steeper and back to the unchanging nature of the physical world through the land still being as flat as a pancake on line 46. This draws a line through the ways the world can change, the experience of the physical landscape as becoming steeper through interaction with the declining body, the immutable nature of the landscape through the world staying the same, and the changing of the social world through the streets that change. The patronising of the young is also about how the world has changed from the perspective of the changing position of the speaker. As people grow older, the world shifts through their changing, and often diminishing, position in a Western society that values youth. The positioning of older people in such ways is not just conversational, but is tied to spaces and corporeality and their identity is shaped through social and physical interactions in the world (Phibbs, 2008).

This leads to the example of the young girl telling the speaker what she already knows, that she is lonely. The following stanza leads on to the explanation

for loneliness for many older people, that their shared world and memories are now gone. As shared memories are the basis on which older people story their identity, they lose much of the basis on which they interact with the world. The final stanza is built around the meaning of the word late. The idea of being late, leaving life too late, and becoming late, was ever-present for many of these older people. This poem demonstrates how the experience of ageing is not individual or personal, but social, historical, and physical. Experience of ageing occurs in a particular place and time and is structured by expectations of gender and social roles.

The stanzas mimic the ageing process through changes in tense. The poem moves from present to past back to present with a flirtation with possible futures both ghastly and pleasant. Richardson (2002) distinguishes between the epic poem and the short poem which focuses attention on an episode or epiphany. She argues such poems can be ordered into a sequence which echoes the shifting subjectivities by which we come to know ourselves. This poem presented here can be seen as following Richardson's short poem in sequence model. The whole poem is recognisably about the experience of ageing. There is no one singular story of ageing, and this faithfully reflects the experience of the participants. It is not the case that some were satisfied and contented, others lonely, and still others jovial. The interviews moved through these possibilities and the multiple voices in a singular poem do justice to the complexity of the experience of ageing. The flexible approach to time is also a strength of this approach. Clarke et al. (2005) refer to "braided time", the way that time weaves back and forth through the poem.

As narrative theory tells us, older people must manage their identity in terms of wider understandings about later life. Such moments of identity work require subtlety and humour. Through such moments older people construct themselves as active and engaged, as masculine and sexual, as declining and dying. To address one example, lines 37–42 draw upon a particular version of masculinity in later life. The poem demonstrates masculinity as based in sexual attraction to women, and the first line explicitly states that such a sense of oneself as masculine is not altered in older age. In this way, these lines show how men actively resisted the construction of ageing as offering asexual identities and situated themselves as having an enduring masculinity through such references. When asked if there was anything they would like to have, some men responded "a woman" or as one participant stated "a mistress". Such replies maintain an embodied masculinity in the context of ageing. Public narratives of masculinity provide difficult positions for men as they age and referring to the static nature of their preferences in the context of an ageing body is one way to manage this (Smith, Braunack-Mayer, Wittert, & Warin, 2007).

Within narrative analysis, Burck (2005) has noted that within a story there is often a refrain, an element of the story that is repeated for narrative effect. Poems regularly use a refrain to highlight aspects of the developing argument and

researchers using poetic representation often report using repetition to create a poetic feel to the presentation of the words (e.g. Connelly, 2010; Richardson, 2002). In narrative work, refrains often draw attention to the lack of fit between competing elements of public and private narratives (Breheny & Stephens, 2011). At times the final lines of the stanza have the character of a narrative refrain, in that they repeat certain features and highlight the competing elements of the previous lines in the stanza. Line 29 serves as a concluding line of resignation in a stanza about dissatisfaction. Line 42 brings death and ageing to the forefront of a stanza which denies the impact of ageing on the construction of masculinity. These refrains are recognisable as part of the management of alternative narratives of ageing, or the difficulty in negotiating identity in terms of the wider narrative plots that structure identity throughout the life span. The lines demonstrate how aspects of both narratives are required to make sense of identity as people age. In these two examples, we can see that constructing identities and maintaining relationships within competing narratives is complex, contradictory, and shifting.

DISCUSSION

Poetic representation provides a sense of what it means to be in the world (Glesne, 1997). Through this poem, the experience of ageing is shown in all its contradictions, resentment and satisfaction, exasperation and sensuality, and coherence and disorder. As an antidote to the often depressing lived experiences represented in poetic representation (Hemmingson, 2008), we wish to show the humour and intellect of those in later life. If we wish to represent the experiences of real people, this must include celebrating resilience, good humour and tenacity (Connelly, 2010) as well as decline and loss. This representation of ageing shows us what it means to be old, or older, or perhaps getting older. As shown here, ageing is not singular, but shifts over the course of the poem to show contentment, reflection, loneliness, and apprehension. This is a strength of poetic representation as “multiple, shifting and contested meanings are possible in the emotional utterances of poetry” (O’Connor, 1996, p. 20). Poetic representation opens up the possibilities for introducing the messy business of living. This poem also contains a variety of characters we can identify with to understand older age. There is “Clara” who asks about loneliness, there are the patronising “young people”, and there is the son who tells his father that no one comes to call because they have all died. These characters provide possible positions from which we can hear the poem and position ourselves.

Poetic representations are usually based on the reader understanding and empathising with one person’s specific experience, allowing “a window into the unique and disparate voices of the research participants” (Clarke et al., 2005, p. 928). What is offered here is the use of poetic representation to emphasise shared

experiences. By reflecting multiple voices and experiences, the poem is not bound to create a coherent story around one person's life. Lahman et al., (2011) also used metaphors from several participants to create a single poem on international students' experience of graduate school. In their first poetic representation, each stanza represented the metaphor of a single student; consequently, the effect was of a layering of experience. Gannon (2001) represented collective memory work through poetry to illustrate the "collective girl". In this, Gannon provided a singular account consistent with one character in a story. In the poem presented here, the effect is somewhat different; there is an intertwining of experience. This highlights the shared historical and social patterning of individual lives. It is strength of poetic representation that it need not present consistency, but it is possible to layer dissonant experiences to represent inconsistency. Moving away from the personal to the collective is one way to resist prevailing individualistic explanations of life experience. This is particularly valuable in the representation of issues such as homelessness and poverty which are routinely explained as the result of individual deficit. By representing shared experience the constraining effects of social structure are made prominent.

These lines are private accounts of intensely personal lives, which may also be understood as located within a particular social environment. This poem tells of physical decline in older age, satisfaction and resignation, history and time, and place. A particular strength of this approach is the presentation of multiple voices that tell about the experience of ageing. They do so in ways both harmonious and discordant. These older people do different things, their lives lack narrative flow and concordance, but together they also share a trajectory and this arguably tells us more about the social patterning of the experience of ageing than several individual experiences of ageing.

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MOVING OUT OF THE SHADOW OF CANCER WHILE LIVING WITH CANCER- RELATED FATIGUE

CONVEYING RESEARCH FINDINGS THROUGH AESTHETIC EXPRESSION

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Surviving cancer seems miraculous and cancer survivors take on a heroic status in a society that values health and a positive “take charge” attitude. For those who witness the daily struggles with fatigue that accompany cancer treatment, survival implies a leaving behind not only the cancer but also the cancer-related symptoms. More than 20 years ago Dow (1990) noted “too often, in our quest for certainty of cure or control of disease we can fail to understand the meaning that surviving cancer holds for the individual” (p. 514). Health care professionals’ knowledge of cancer-related fatigue is predominated by the results of empirical studies around issues such as prevalence, pattern, assessment, measurement, and management (Bower et al., 2006; Cramp & Daniel, 2008; Hofman et al., 2007; Price, Mitchell, Tidy & Hunot, 2008). As experienced nurses, we were naïve to the possibility that cancer-related fatigue could exist years post cancer treatment. A casual conversation with a breast cancer survivor experiencing fatigue seven years following the completion of cancer treatments alerted us that our professional focus on empirical studies had inadvertently created a shroud of secrecy around the human dimension of cancer-related fatigue. Faced with this awareness of our taken-for-granted knowledge about cancer-related fatigue, we then recognized that the silence accompanying it is not limited to health professionals. Society is also ill prepared to deal with this phenomenon. There is a taken-for-granted

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notion that a person who has completed cancer treatment is also cured from cancer and therefore should no longer experience the effects from cancer and cancer treatment. Winningham and Burke (2000) quoted a 9-year cancer survivor, “one of the hardest things involving fatigue is that many of my family and friends didn’t have any clue of what I was experiencing. One of my sisters asked me once if I had been making up the tiredness to get attention. Yeh right!!” (p. 391).

If health professionals are naïve and family members skeptical, do these attitudes typify society’s lack of understanding of the experience of cancer-related fatigue? Do naïveté and skepticism inadvertently contribute to silencing breast cancer survivors’ accounts of cancer-related fatigue? What is it like to live with an experience that remains hidden to society? Does the occurrence of fatigue following the completion of cancer treatment impact on how breast cancer survivors view themselves? What is it like to live with an experience that no one understands? These questions are reflective of a phenomenological way of thinking which Van Manen (1997a) noted is initially oriented to, or must become oriented to, questioning the way we experience the world.

We accept that questioning the way we experience the world and developing insight into the meaning of the experience may enable others to “act more thoughtfully and more tactfully in certain situations” (van Manen 1997a, p. 23). This increased understanding may assist nurses and other health care professionals to be more empathic, supportive and aware of the reality of living with cancer-related fatigue post cancer treatment. In this article, we describe the hermeneutic phenomenologic approach we used to develop aesthetic expressions of our research findings as one way to help health care professionals develop deeper insight to the human experience of cancer-related fatigue.

METHODOLOGY

In hermeneutic phenomenology the researcher focuses on developing an in-depth description, which is used to construct an interpretation and increase understanding. It is a process in which there is dialogical exchange between the researcher and the text, thus it allows the researcher to uncover and interpret the meaning of lived experience through a particular perspective (van Manen, 1997a). “Lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research” (p.36). The lifeworld is understood as being tacit such that a person is not always conscious or aware of his or her experience until reflecting on it. Through reflection, a more explicit understanding of the person’s worldview can emerge and this hermeneutic significance is most commonly expressed through language (van Manen, 1997a). However, lived experiences can also attain hermeneutic significance through other modes of aesthetic expressions; and the incorporation of

visual art and poetry can produce an emotional and experiential understanding not achieved solely through description.

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Much of the research that is completed on breast cancer survivors has its roots in an objectivist epistemology where random and representative samples are valued. Steeves (2000) suggested that when we limit recruitment to particular characteristics of participants an end result is oversimplification of the complexity of the human world that may result in an interpretation that does not provide an understanding of the uniqueness of a person's experience. Therefore, in recruiting participants we considered their willingness to talk in depth about how they made sense of their cancer-related fatigue as being more valuable than individual characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity. To receive ethical approval for the study, and to ensure the participants could focus on the phenomenon of cancer-related fatigue, only breast cancer survivors who were a year or more beyond their cancer treatment were interviewed. Five women between 41 to 55 years of age and ranging from 18 months to eight and one-half years post treatment participated in two face-to-face interviews.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Initially we began the interpretation by developing themes, which are commonly used in reporting qualitative nursing research. We identified four themes arising from the 154 pages of interview transcripts from the 10 interviews. The four themes were: "longing for pre-cancer life, acknowledging fatigue has changed my life, silencing comes from within and living with fatigue". While these themes were evocative of various aspects of the experience, we recognized that they did not adequately communicate the sense of the whole experience. To move beyond research themes we next followed van Manen's (1997a) suggestion to further refine the interpretation using what he refers to as a sententious phrase. In developing this phrase we asked ourselves, "what sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole?" (van Manen, 1997a, p.93). Therefore, we reviewed the four themes and developed the following sententious phrase "cancer-related fatigue and cancer are initially so entangled in breast cancer survivors' minds that only when they can begin to disentangle the two can they learn to live with fatigue without the ever present spectre of cancer". While this single phrase was more revelatory of the whole experience than the four themes, we believed a more pithy statement could help us better portray the essence of the experience. We further refined our initial phrase to "Moving out of the shadow of cancer while living with cancer-related fatigue".

Nonetheless, we recognized that we had not yet completely lifted the shroud of empirical secrecy surrounding cancer-related fatigue nor had we fully conveyed the raw intensity we heard in breast cancer survivor's voices. This understanding that essence or meaning of an experience is multi-dimensional and multi-layered (van Manen, 1997a) prompted us to recognize that the essence of the experience of cancer-related fatigue could not be encapsulated in the words we had used in our single phrase. Van Manen (1997b) asserted that bringing together the thematic and the expressive dimensions of inquiry is a challenge both offered and answered by the use of phenomenology. Van Manen identified both of these forms of inquiry as critically important in researching lived experience. "The thematic aspect of the text is primarily concerned with *what* the text says, its semantic, linguistic meaning and significance" (emphasis in original, 1997b, p. 346). Contrary to this, the mantic aspect of the text focuses on "*how* the text speaks, how the text divines and inspirits our understanding" (emphasis in original, van Manen, 1997b, p. 346). We wanted to find a way to convey the research findings so that health professionals who had not had the privilege of witnessing each woman's transformation would nonetheless recognize it. We also were interested in finding a way to illustrate the commonality of the transformation despite the very individual personalities and the length of time since completion of treatment. All women who participated in the study were given our preliminary themes and the sententious phrase. The women all agreed with us that while the interpretation resonated with their experience we had not yet fully conveyed the intensity of the experience. One participant spontaneously recommended we consult a professional artist to help us to overcome our struggle with language.

The artist to whom we were referred to was a four and a half year cancer survivor who had experienced cancer-related fatigue. We provided her with a series of quotes from the participants and our nascent interpretation. Her intrigue at learning that other women had experiences that reverberated with hers led her to agree to create an acrylic painting to convey the meaning of the experience by bringing together her own experience of cancer-related fatigue, the women's words and our commentary.

As with any artwork, the painting metaphorically speaks for itself, however, prior to unveiling the painting the artist provided the following narrative of her interpretation of the experience of living with cancer-related fatigue after the completion of cancer treatments.

The experience of living with cancer-related fatigue begins pre-cancer when a person is feeling "normal", energetic and on top of the world. The person is depicted in red to show the level of vibrancy and energy pre-cancer. Although breast cancer occurs predominately in women, breast cancer is not specific to only women and therefore some of the persons depicted are non-gender specific. Then the diagnosis of breast cancer and the person feels as though the weight

of the world has fallen on him or her. The person may feel that he or she has “slipped” into a world known as cancer and feels that he or she may never be able to cope with this cancer. Then the surgery and the person may feel as though the spot light is on him or her. He or she becomes a part of the health care system with no choice. Then there is the experience of being treated with chemotherapy and radiation, which are indicated by closed doors. These doors remain closed in an attempt to forget about the cancer experience. The level of cancer-related fatigue immediately post-treatment is demonstrated by the stature of each person and the level of vulnerability that a person feels is indicated by the nakedness of the individuals. Post-treatment the healing begins and as a person strives to return to his or her pre-cancer life he or she is faced with multiple challenges. The person may feel as though “reaching the top” is unachievable. The steps of healing seem too hard to climb as the level of cancer-related fatigue lingers post treatment. The person may feel like the steps get larger and larger as one looks ahead. The breast cancer survivor longs for his or her pre-cancer life, a life full of vibrancy and energy; but struggles with the lingering effects of cancer-related fatigue post treatment and the many challenges that appear ahead. As healing continues, the breast cancer survivor begins to acknowledge that cancer-related fatigue has changed his or her life but that he or she may never be back to the pre-cancer vibrant self. At the top of the stairs, each person is depicted partially red as breast cancer survivors may never be able to fully reach their pre-cancer vi-



Figure 1 Moving out of the Shadow of Cancer While Living with Cancer-Related Fatigue

brant self. All in all, because the cancer and the cancer-related fatigue are initially so entangled in the breast cancer survivors' minds that only when he or she can begin to disentangle the two and come to terms with the experience of cancer are they able to understand their cancer-related fatigue without the ever-present specter of cancer. It is only then that the breast cancer survivor can move out of the shadow of cancer while living with cancer-related fatigue.

The painting created a more nuanced interpretation of cancer-related fatigue than either the themes or sententious phrase. In addition, viewing the painting prompted us to re-engage with the imperfect tool of language in the format of the text we had used to convey our findings.

MOVING FROM TEXT TO PAINTING BACK TO TEXT

The words of the women in this study enabled a professional artist, a breast cancer survivor herself, to artistically express her hitherto unexpressed experience of cancer-related fatigue. The artist helped the women in the study and the researchers to move beyond epistemological silence, which Polyani (1969) described as the domain of knowledge beyond speaking and writing. Once the painting helped extinguish the deafening silence surrounding cancer-related fatigue, we then were able to use words in the form of a poem to illuminate the phenomenon. Poetry as a form of literary art uses the aesthetic qualities of language to evoke emotive responses. In developing our research approach moving toward an aesthetic interpretation of cancer-related fatigue, we relied on nursing and allied health literature. Only following that, did we learn that poetic inquiry is considered a research method in other disciplines using qualitative research. In creating the poem we used the interview transcripts, the feelings evoked by the painting and our interpretation of the women's words. Prendergast (2009) categorizes this form of poetic inquiry as *Vox Participare- Participant-voiced poems* [emphasis in original] The participant-voiced poems that were created through collaboration of the researchers with the artist and the women participants provided a nuanced and sensitive interpretation that was not possible through use of more traditional forms of interpretation within the health care disciplines.

As health care professionals we acknowledge the importance of evidence-based practice in caring for cancer survivors. However, we also believe it is essential that health care practitioners accept the necessity to combine their knowledge of empirical evidence with an understanding of the lifeworlds or experiential reality of human beings for whom we provide care. We used the painting and the women's words to create a poem to provide voice to women experiencing the lifeworld of cancer-related fatigue. We believe that this approach to conveying research findings may increase the potential for health care professionals to develop a person-centered versus a disease centered focus in caring for cancer survivors. Although

the poem arising out of our response to the painting is our interpretation of the women's experience, it is written in the first person to maintain the focus on the essence of the women's lifeworld.

Finding Solace

My world has changed
I once was defined by my energy and joie de vivre
Two little words "breast cancer" and I have metamorphed
All conversations take place under the blinding spotlight of my diagnosis
Fear, uncertainty, and a longing to be normal—my constant companions
Surgery, radiation and chemotherapy triple harbingers of fatigue
Fatigue so unrelenting and all encompassing
This evil specter of cancer haunts my every movement
I've never been so tired
I've never been so "not me"

The treatments have finished
The fatigue has not diminished
Intense,
Lingering,
Faltering,
Intangible.

Exposed, I yearn for solace
The fatigue does not define me
I dare not dwell
Yet,
Amidst my effort to conquer you, I conceal you
I conceal you with my metaphorical mask

I conceal you; I clothe you as my own
The silence from within
The fatigue now a part of me
I build a wall
I protect my young and my nest
I remain silent

My world has changed
I want it back
I'll move out of the shadows

Some day
I'll have energy again
Some day
I want to laugh out loud and mean it
I want to be me again
Some day cancer won't haunt me

In time, as spring blossoms
I too will transform into a new place
Though the mountains vault steeply
And climbing appears impossible.
It is here that I am redefined by a new normal
It is here that I begin to understand my fatigue
It is here that I understand my resolve to disentangle the cancer from the fatigue
In the face of fatigue, I am compelled to move forward
To release you
For
I am me
I see me

ENRICHING RESEARCH FINDINGS THROUGH ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF REPRESENTATION

The painting and the poem are not meant to substitute the research findings but rather to be additive and provide a way for others not intimately involved with the research to vicariously experience the expressive meaning. While using an aesthetic approach to inquiry is not new (Eggenberger et al., 2004; Enzman Hagedorn, 1996; Hodges, Keeley, & Grier, 2001; Hunter, 2002; Krumweide et al., 2004; Locsin, 2002; Mitchell & Halifax, 2005), a majority of health-related research findings are still presented in a traditional manner. Krumweide and Meiers (2004) stated that the “interpretative method of blending research findings and visual art is a valid and emerging method that could be emulated and expanded upon by others” (p. 31). Van Manen (1997a) argued that “because artists are involved in giving shape to their lived experience, the products of art are, in a sense, lived experiences identified that through art the lived experiences transformed into transcended configurations” (p. 74). A sensitive attending to the portrayal of cancer-related fatigue in the painting and poem yielded additional insights into the emotional experience of living with cancer-related fatigue. These additional insights helped us to use poetry to provide readers with a vicarious expression of cancer-related fatigue that is out of range of their personal everyday experience. This emotive understanding is intensified as compared to the understanding con-

veyed in traditional forms for reporting qualitative health research. It is through use of alternative forms such as poems and artwork that an enhanced expression of knowledge is portrayed, and in turn, the clear value of the merging art and science is demonstrated.

CONCLUSION

As we recognized that our initial linguistic competency was not sufficient to convey what we had learned about cancer-related fatigue, it became apparent that we would fail to do justice to our research participants if we restricted ourselves to traditional formats of reporting qualitative health research. By inviting an artist to partner with us to convey our research we were able to expand the domain of knowledge surrounding cancer-related fatigue beyond empirical studies in a way we had not originally envisioned when we embarked on this research. Viewing the painting helped us to expand our linguistic competence and develop a poem that helped us to express a more evocative and moving interpretation of the women's statements than we could do by use of themes or a sententious phrase. Health professionals must begin to question the propensity of limiting reporting of research outcomes to traditional formats. If the preponderance of our knowledge about a lived experience such as cancer-related fatigue, is limited to traditional formats we will continue to, however inadvertent it may seem, overlook a vitally important domain of knowledge.

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