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Writing Poetry   **Nigel McLoughlin**

What follows will explore and analyse the types of knowledge inherent in and generated through the writing process as it applies to poetry. I will attempt to elucidate how the process of making poetry may be seen as a research methodology and will map the process onto a familiar research paradigm for comparison. The aim is to demonstrate that poetry and by extension other experimental artistic practices may usefully be seen as methodologies for research which generate new knowledges within their domains. Others will take various different views on what aspects of writing to privilege and my approach is not intended to denigrate artistic practice, but in an era where much practice in the art takes place in the academy, and where the practice and production of poetry is an integral part of academic programmes in creative writing, there is an imperative to articulate the research process in verbal arts and make explicit the artistic and reflective processes within them in terms that the rest of the academic community may recognise.

Definitions

It is difficult to start a chapter called writing poetry without first defining what those terms actually mean. Here one would normally expect a working definition of poetry but poetry is a particularly slippery beast to define. My particular favourite definition is that of Housman (in Barron, Montuori & Baron, 1997: 50):

> "I received from America a request that I would define poetry. I replied that I could no more define poetry than a terrier can define a rat, but that I thought we both recognized the object by the symptoms which it provokes in us."

He goes on to say that "the seat of this sensation is the pit of the stomach" (ibid, 51). The impossibility of defining poetry, stems from the fact that it means so many different things to many different people. To some, it must have rhythmic beat; to others it must have musicality; some would argue for both; and others for none.

What I like about the Housman quote is its visceral nature. Recognition depends not on linguistic criteria or on conscious thought, but on what is physically felt. It does not demand structure or form. It is beyond that. I would argue that the closing passage of *The Dead* (Joyce, 1914) and large chunks of the central part of *To The Lighthouse* (Woolf, 1927) are poetry too. Poetry doesn't exist in its shape or the line length, but in what it does with language, and what it makes you feel when you hear and read it. Since no matter what definition one settles on, there will be at least one poet somewhere who will object, rightly, that the definition does not apply to what they do, I'll settle on something as broad and inclusive as I can make it: Poetry is experiments in language using all of the features of language, that produces responses in the reader that are not confined to language or conscious cognition. In many respects, that poets argue with definitions of poetry is to be expected and to be welcomed. The definition of poetry mutates every time someone does something new, and as long as poets keep doing something new, there will always be poetry.

So what do we mean by writing? In many textbooks a chapter with this title would offer tips for getting poetry written, in others it might put across the author's view of what *real* poetry might be. In still other books the author would draw on examples of really good poems and explicate for the reader why these are particularly good examples of poetry, or speculate as to the influences and confluences, both

autobiographical and cultural, which led to the production of the piece. I will do none of those things. I will instead assume that those who will read this chapter will neither need nor want my hints or tips on how to write poems, nor would many of them agree with any argument I might make for what poetry should be. This does not mean that a reader who approaches this chapter primarily seeking such insights will gain nothing from the argument, but rather I hope will come away with a new way of seeing what poetry can do. I will assume that the reader is capable of analysing poems and is knowledgeable enough to research their influences for themselves. Rather, I will problematise and investigate the process of how poems are made. I will look at the process in a way that I hope will spark debate about the process and about what writing means, so as a working definition of writing I will offer: the process of getting poems made.

This chapter will address the process of making experiments *in* language *with* language that produce responses in readers that are not confined to the linguistic or consciously cognitive. I hope that in choosing such a broad definition, the investigation of the process will be generalisable to the making of all verbal art, and perhaps all art, simply because so many of the strategies are identical, though the end product may be classified by the maker or the consumer under a different heading than poetry.

Poetry as Knowledge

There are three main elements that enable the generation of new knowledge in poetry. Amabile (1996) describes these as domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills, and motivational factors. Motivational factors include knowledge related to the nature

of creative motivation and self-motivational skills. Domain-relevant skills may be further subdivided into practical and theoretical domain-specific knowledge and domain habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). I will deal with each of these in turn before moving on to creativity-relevant skills and motivational factors. Domain-specific knowledge with regard to poetry applies to the skills and knowledge that the poet needs in order to structure a poem. The poet needs to know about various varieties of rhyme, various metrics, tropes such as metaphor and irony, a wide variety of formal structures and various theories of poetics such as imagism and projective verse. These are all base elements from which the poet may build a poem and the knowledge relates not just to their identification, but also to their adept usage. This knowledge takes time to acquire, and Kramp & Ericsson (1996) have shown that in order to gain expertise in music 10,000 hours of solitary practice is required. This has been shown to extend to many other domains within the arts and sciences and is often described as the ten-year rule (Ericsson et al., 1993). It is as true of poetry as it is of any other discipline (Hayes, 1989).

In order for the poet to come to an intimate relationship with the knowledge of their craft, significant time must be spent reading and reflecting on other poets and practicing with the tropes and forms of poetry so that the poet can understand the subtleties and nuances of which poetry is capable, and become adept at combining all of the various aspects of the poem into a coherent and original whole. Reading other poets is a significant part of this process; it is difficult to be original when one does not know what has been done, and what is currently being done. These types of knowledge may be further adapted and reacted to by the new poet for whom they form part of the prevailing habitus of the domain. To expand on our two exemplar

theories from earlier, those two theories are based on the privileging of different aspects of the poem: projective verse privileges breath and its use as a rhythmic measure: "verse will only do in which a poet manages to register the acquisitions of his (sic) ear *and* the pressure of his (sic) breath" (italics in the original) (Olson, 1966: 273). Imagism on the other hand, privileges the image as the building block of poetic expression:

> "An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time…It is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art" (Pound, 1913: 200-201).

These two theoretical perspectives could be combined to create a poetry that is rich in both and deals in an original manner with structure. Such combinations of ideas resonate with Koestler's (1964) theory of bisociation of two matrices of thought as a fertile creative strategy.

Poets can use many strategies with regard to existing poetic theories in order to generate original work. This may involve deviation from the theory, reaction against the theory, completion of the theory where it is viewed to be deficient, reinterpretation of the theory as it stands; or as in our example above, through recombination with other theories. Bloom (1973) deals with many of these strategies in detail in *The Anxiety of Influence* so I won't belabour them here. However, it is important to note that these are creative strategies for engaging and developing poetics and craft as the poet encounters and re-evaluates them. They can often result in changes in the body of craft knowledge through the addition of new theories of poetics and the addition of new ways of using trope or image for example, which change the prevailing habitus for the next generation of poets.

Bourdieu (1977) defined habitus as "a product of history" which "produces individual and collective practices" and "schemes of perspective, thought and action which tend to generate the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms" (Bourdieu, 1977: 54). Contemporary poetry is one such set of practices and perspectives. The new poet must be socialised into the pre-existing habitus by learning the doxa that relate the habitus to the field. Doxa is defined as "the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between the habitus and the field to which it is attuned" (ibid, 68) and the term relates to the "commitment to the presuppositions... of the game" (ibid, 66). Poets must learn these presuppositions and practices before they can attempt to change them. This socialisation process takes time and creates two opposing forces within the poet, a knowledge of the current habitus, a knowledge of what the field (in Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) terms) will accept. This often tends to conservatism. The poet will also endeavour to move the art forward and therefore change the habitus of the domain (either greatly or slightly).

This motivation may be related to Sternberg, Kaufman and Pretz's (2002) classification of creative propulsions within a conceptual space. They argue that creativity can tend towards replication, redefinition, forward incrementation, advance forward incrementation, rediretion, reconstruction, reinitiation and synthesis. All except the first of these require some change in the habitus of the domain. Forward incrementation is the most common strategy. The poet views the domain as moving in the right direction and attempts to add to that direction without moving too far outside expected norms. Advance forward incrementation attempts to challenge the norms,

while still keeping the overall direction. Many of the others require large changes to the habitus (such as redirection, reconstruction and reinitiation) and these may well be resisted by the field (who are gatekeepers of the domain) because they threaten the current power relation within the domain and the privileged position of the gatekeepers.

Acts of imagination draw together authorial intention; learned and innate strategies which enhance or enable the creative process; and theories and knowledge related to craft and poetics that may influence how the author might imagine the poem. Creativity-relevant skills are those skills the individual possesses either innately or has come to learn through the practice of creativity. Most common among these creativity-relevant skills are divergent thinking, the ability to fluently produce a variety of original different ideas; tolerance of ambiguity, the ability to hold in mind several conflicting possibilities; remote association, the ability to link two or more disparate ideas by seeing the connection between them; and the ability to reconceptualise a problem in other terms (Guildford, 1968). Several creativity tests are designed to test these faculties, for example the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (Torrance, 1966) and the Remote Associates Test (Mednick, 1962).

Artistic and poetic problems are usually ill defined. A significant part of the creative skill of the poet consists of conceptualising the problem in a form in which it may be expressed and addressed. Remote association can be linked to poetry through metaphor and simile, which are basically ways of seeing anew and making connections between disparate things in order to better understand an experience and its relationship with the world, and communicate that understanding so that others

may see the experience anew too. Strategies have emerged to help promote remote association. It is thought that states of defocused attention promote remote association through allowing the brain to idle and make associations that would normally be filtered out by the brain's supervisory attentional systems. Evidence for this type of creative strategy has recently been provided by neuropsychological studies (Martindale, 1999), but creative individuals have been advocating similar approaches throughout history (Coleridge, 1816/2010; Yeats, 1900/1961; Poincare, 1913).

These strategies tend to promote favourable conditions to allow insight to emerge from intuition. Policastro (1999: 90) distinguished the two as follows: "intuition entails vague and tacit knowledge whereas insight involves sudden and usually clear awareness". Learned skills may consist of much more algorithmic and analytic strategies for thinking through problems (Weisberg, 2004; Finke, Ward & Smith, 1992) that have been found to work in the past while working on similar poems. New algorithms may emerge from new combinations of existing algorithms found in the work of other poets that provided those poets with structure and ways to conceptualise the artistic problem. An example might be the evolution of one form into another, where the pre-existing formal constraint is 'hurt' or modified in an interesting way to accommodate the new poem. In this way forms and tropes can be re-envisioned and evolved and new knowledge regarding these can be discovered, thereby increasing the available store of creativity-relevant skills available both to the poet in their future practice and other poets who may read the work and recognise the development. These algorithms often involve much more convergent and logical thinking approaches to elaborating and developing the ideas generated through more divergent processes. These processes also tend to be more goal-directed or split the problem up

into manageable stages. Such strategies will be more prevalent in the later more analytic stages of the creative process.

For instance, according to the Geneplore model (Finke, Ward & Smith, 1992), greater creativity tends to be achieved through generating an initial base structure that can then be explored and modified for utility afterwards. The poetic equivalent may be thought of in terms of generating interesting images and then trying to find metaphoric uses for them. This means starting with the vehicle of the metaphor and attempting to find a tenor and ground. Many poets will keep interesting images in notebooks, which may eventually find their way into poems as metaphors. Conversely, one may start with the tenor of the metaphor and try and find an appropriate vehicle and ground to make the reader see it anew. This may require strategies that involve remote association and divergent thinking. The practice of these strategies generates variations that lead to new knowledge within the creativity-relevant skills possessed by the poet and these may be disseminated through teaching. These new strategies become part of the knowledge within the domain if they prove widely successful or adaptable for others. For examples of this type of knowledge see the plethora of 'how-to' manuals that exist offering creative exercises which have worked for others in the past in the generation and structuring of new work.

Writing practices that generate absorption in the task help the creative process. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) describes flow as a merging of action and awareness, a distorted sense of time, a lack of self-consciousness, total absorption in a task that is balanced for ability and challenge, and enjoyment of the task for the task's sake. This state is not passive, but an active striving where a problem requires total focus and

application and integration of domain-relevant skills with creativity-relevant skills by a highly motivated individual. It manifests the fact that intrinsic concerns have replaced extrinsic concerns to the extent that they are blocked from attentional focus. Some, like Yeats, seem to go into a trance-like state:

> "Had my pen not fallen on the ground and made me turn from the images that I was weaving into verse, I would never have known that meditation had become a trance" (Yeats, [1900] 1961: 157)

Amabile (1996) suggests that intrinsic motivation may be the most important enabling factor in generating creative output. This relates to the internal satisfaction gained through the performance of the task and is not related to external pressure or reward. She has shown that anticipation of reward, deadlines, as well as anticipation of assessment are often de-motivating factors which lead to less creative outputs because of the tendency towards satisficing, that is, producing an acceptable output quickly rather than a truly creative one. Understanding how motivation is affected by these factors allows the poet to increase their self-motivational skills by concentrating on the pure enjoyment of the task and minimising the drive towards satisficing when faced with deadlines and the thought of critical appraisal.

Poetry and the Generation of Knowledge

Figure 1 represents the basic stages involved is the process of writing poetry. These are:

- Imagination: this may include the initial intuitive processes which lead to the creative urge to write, and the various associative processes and insights which follow at various stages of the cycle and which emerge from imaginative and reimaginative processes which lead to the framing of the poem within an imaginative space.

- Structuration: where what is imagined is codified in language and image and formed into an initial draft. Formed here may mean loosely formed in terms of structure and idea – especially in the early iterations of the cycle.

- Analysis of the draft, which involves reading and interpreting what has been written. This may make use of a number of strategies including readerly as well as writerly interpretive strategies.

- Validation, which involves making a judgement on the text informed by the analytic process and which may lead to several outcomes, among which is the perceived need for refinement of the text which leads in turn to re-imagination of that text in such a way as to restructure it in a more aesthetically or artistically satisfactory manner.

This cycle then repeats with each new draft, moving the text forward to completion or rejection. The outcome of any stage may constitute abandonment *for now*.

Figure 1

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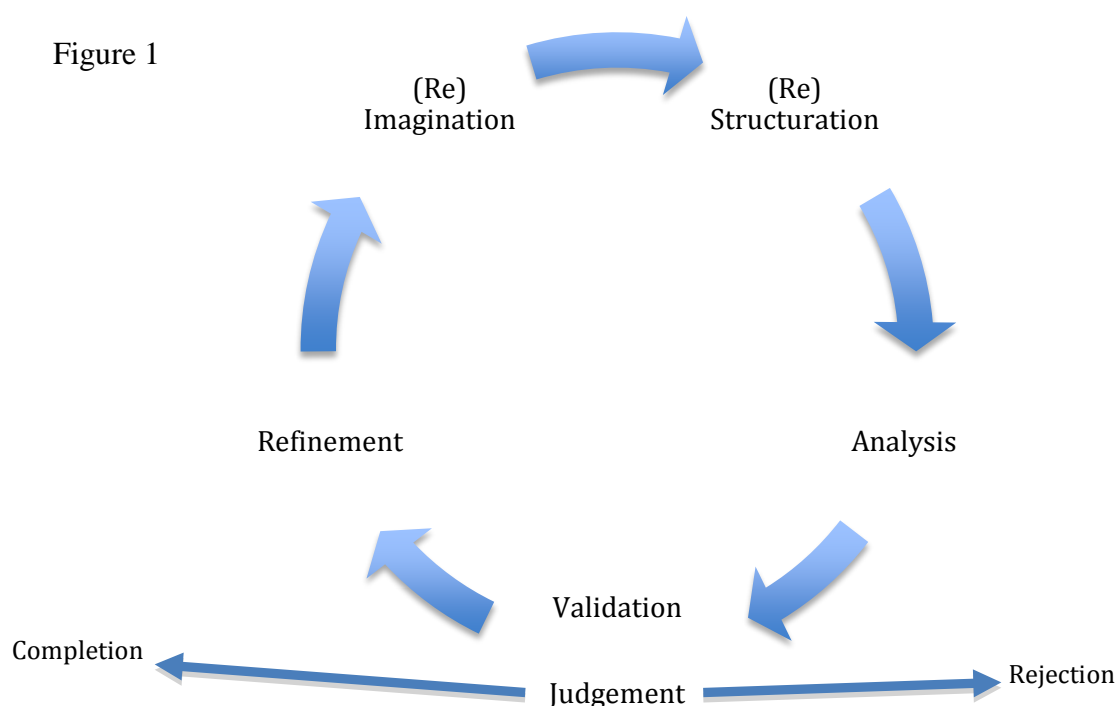
I have chosen to express the model as a hermeneutic spiral because closure may never be reached. The artist never fully understands their artwork, just as critics who seek to analyse it can never fully understand it. Just as the reader may return to the poem again and again, see something new, and reach another level of insight, so the poet can return to the poem and re-imagine it, reinterpret it and rewrite it as many times as they feel necessary, or, perhaps more accurately, until they can do nothing further with it at that time.

The poet is, after all, the first reader of the poem, and no poet can know the entirety of their own meaning because of the plethora of subconscious influences and processes that go into the making of the text. They may be intuitively aware of some influences and processes that they are consciously unable to articulate. The poet may proceed by the same interpretive mechanism as the reader in order to tease out the various possible meanings in the text. The difference, of course, is that the poet reads for a different purpose than the reader; the poet reads and interprets with a view to improving the text. They read with a view to understanding the potential meanings of the text that a critical reader may find, but the poet may wish to alter the text so that it better reflects, closes off, or otherwise modifies those meanings.

The contingent nature of completion, abandonment and rejection is important, often drafts that are set aside as incomplete or unsatisfactory may be revisited and improved; poems which have been published will be rewritten or redrafted sometimes years later. Excised lines or images that are rejected in the drafting of one poem may find their way into another later poem and gain acceptance in the new poem. The process is fluid and mutable and the phases blur into each other. All of the skills

discussed in the last section are integrally involved at all phases. The process is highly recursive, iterative and flexible. Any separation is arbitrary. How the process appears depends very much upon what one privileges. I have chosen to privilege process over artefact and artist.

The reason I have chosen to approach the process of poetic composition and editing in this way stems from theoretical and epistemological concerns. Poetry and poetics are, for me, a set of tools by which I understand the world, and through which I hope to make others understand how the world appears to me. All theoretical perspectives are underpinned by epistemology. In fact Crotty (2003: 3) goes so far as to define epistemology explicitly in those terms: he calls it "the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology". Constructionist epistemology holds all knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality is contingent on human practices. Poetry is one such human practice. Knowledge is constructed in and out of social interactions between human beings and the world they encounter. Such knowledge is developed and transmitted in an essentially social context.

Constructionism demands that the world and the objects in the world become partners with the intending subject in the construction of meaning. Intending here is used in its root form of 'reaching out into'. The intending subject reaches out into the world to make meaning through interaction with the objects that the intending subject encounters. I define the intending author as such a subject, reaching out to make meaning from experiences using the methods of their art in order to create knowledge about those experiences and about the art form in which they work and by which they understand. Intentionality offers interaction between subject and object. It is an

intimate and active relationship between the intending subject and the object of intention. It also serves to summarise the relation between the poet as intending subject; the object, ideas and experiences in the world as the material with which the intending author interacts; the art form as means of intention and understanding; and the artefact generated as the vehicle, which communicates this intention, meaning and understanding.

Any methodology we claim, and poetry I would argue is an artistic methodology, needs to be underpinned by a theoretical perspective, which Crotty (2003: 3) defined as "the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria". Constructionism underpins interpretivist theoretical perspectives. We all construct the world as we perceive it through the sets of beliefs we hold about the world. These perspectives are based on the assumption that there is no 'objective' reality waiting to be discovered but that human beings construct their reality through interpretive processes, which are mediated by language and preconceptions. Symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and phenomenology are sub-divisions of this type of theoretical perspective. The process of writing poetry can and does make use of these.

Symbolic interactionism is founded on three assumptions. Firstly that human beings act towards things they encounter on the basis of the meaning those things have for them. Secondly, that the meanings those things have are constructed through social processes and thirdly, that such meanings are handled in and modified through interpretive processes (Blumer, 1969: 3). The process of writing poetry then, is an interpretive process whereby the poet may engage with their experiences and make

meaning from them in order to transform them into material for verbal art. Such meanings can be constructed and modified through the process of writing. Writing poetry (and other forms of creative writing) may be viewed as an investigative process that is capable of generating new knowledge not only in relation to poetics and aesthetics but also in relation to human experience through the process of 'reaching out into' those experiences in order to understand them.

The recursive and iterative nature of the hermeneutic cycle produces new knowledge and understanding in both domain-relevant and creativity-relevant skills. It also produces knowledge related to motivational factors. The various processes that produce these knowledges can be in part unconscious, associative and tacit. The knowledges produced may often be tacit and implicit rather than explicit. However, such implicit and tacit knowledges and many of the processes that produce them can be made available for analysis and question through the critical reflective process, and it is to this critical reflective process I turn in the next section.

Poetry as Discovery in Action

Hermeneutics can be understood as a process whereby the interpreter of the text uncovers layers of meanings and intentions of which the author remains oblivious. I would argue that since the poet acts as the first reader (and first critic) of any text that they generate, and since they act as reader and critic iteratively and recursively, then the process of writing is in part a hermeneutic one. In many creative writing research projects part of that research is to tease out hidden meanings and intentions through the poet analyzing their own text, with regard to inspirations, influences and writing processes. These may find their way unconsciously into the text in the act of writing,

but the PhD student, and the creative writing researcher, through the act of writerly analysis of their own text is obliged to make them explicit, reflect on them, analyse and examine them. It will be argued that this is always an incomplete hermeneutic process. There will always be meanings and intentions that elude the poet. That may well be true, but it does not invalidate the effort of the poet in better understanding the text they have produced and the processes that produced it. In any case, any hermeneutic analysis, no matter who conducts it, will only generate a partial reading since readers and critics other than the author are fallible too.

As shown in the previous section, the cycle involved in the poet's attempts at making meaning is an iterative and recursive cycle of writing and analysis designed to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct meaning and intentions in order to improve the work. This too is subject to interpretivist strategies, which are underpinned by the preconceived ideas the poet holds relating to theoretical poetics and aesthetics that dictate how the poet interprets the quality of their own work and even what is worth writing at all. Understanding that, I would argue, is also a form of hermeneutic inquiry.

Poets reflect critically on their poetics and on their processes. These may be further subdivided into reflection on elements of craft and how these elements may be experimented with, and reflection on elements of theoretical poetics and what the author believes makes a good text. The author reflects critically on the imaginative processes of making text; their influences and how those have been assimilated; and on their critical processes and the theories that underpin them. All of these critical reflective processes may generate new knowledge of the phenomena to which they

relate as well as to the nature of 'being in the world' (Heidegger, 1962) in relation to the poet; the phenomenon that poet seeks to understand; and the interpretive relation between them. One could therefore make the connection with phenomenological and phenomenographical approaches to research in that Larrabee (1990: 201) asserted that phenomenological research is "a reflective enterprise, and in its reflection it is critical" and phenomenological approaches have been defined by Marton (1981:180) as being concerned with "description, analysis, and understanding of ... experiences."

Assuming that the process of making poetry generates various forms of knowledge, there must be research methods by which we generate such knowledge. Research methods are defined by Crotty (2003: 3) as "the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis". Such a definition immediately presents poets (and other creative artists) with a problem: what constitutes 'data' and 'analysis' in such disciplines? How may such data be validated? Data can be defined as pieces of information in a raw or unorganized form. Analysis is defined as the examination and evaluation of information. Therefore, one could define the process of making poetry as a research method because the information and experiences one gathers together to form the text may be construed as data. The making of the poetic text then becomes the method whereby the raw data of experience are validated, ordered, examined and evaluated. To qualify as 'research' the resulting poem should generate demonstrably new perspectives on either the experiences themselves or on the process of ordering, examining and evaluating experiences through poetry. These 'results' can then be discussed either by the researcher in an exegesis or by a critic in the public domain.

Pinnegar and Daynes (2006) suggest that narrative can be both the method and the phenomenon of study. If we apply this to the generation of creative narratives, then the potential exists for the new knowledge that is generated, to be new knowledge about the method of writing as the phenomenon of study. For example a poem may generate new knowledge through what it tells us thematically; about how the narrative elements are developed; how metaphor and imagery work; and it may generate a new or revised method of making poems that may be used or further adapted in the future. Creswell (2007) offers a variety of narrative research techniques including oral histories, biography, autobiography and 'restorying' or retelling a story in a new form, attending to chronology, disruptions or silences. All of these strategies are used in the making of poems and other forms of verbal art.

Methodology is defined as "the strategy, plan of action, process, or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcome" (Crotty, 2003: 3). I define Creative Writing in all its forms as a research methodology because it consists in the strategic selection and deployment of an integrated set creative methods towards the creation of an original textual artefact which manifests something new in terms of the way the world is represented, or in terms of the medium through which we have chosen to make that representation manifest as verbal art. If the process of making poetry can be thought of as a research methodology as defined above, then so can the process of making any other verbal art form, and of course, we may employ more than one type of verbal art in the making of text and employ techniques and elements from the making of one verbal art and apply them to another. As a discipline we also produce other types of texts and these require other methods. One of the main types of text we produce, are

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the various forms of exegesis. To give one example, an exegesis may engage in an autoethnographic analysis of the creative process of making the creative text, but autoethnography offers a creative application also.

According to Ellis (2004: xix), autoethnography is

> "Research, writing, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social. This form usually features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection…. [and] claims the conventions of literary writing"

Holman Jones (2005: 765) refers to the processes of "weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation". That could also describe how poetry, and writing about poetry engages with the research process. The writing of poetry could be said under these terms to be, at base, an autoethnographic process. It implies that autoethnography could be used as an overarching methodology under which various methods of writing are deployed strategically to achieve the desired outcome.

The main problem with autoethnography is the danger that the 'research' descends into mere autobiography. This can be particularly true of the exegesis and the analytic quality of this methodology should be foregrounded. The distinction can be made quite easily: if we take the example of the autoethnographic exegesis on the creative process alluded to above, the writer's journal, and the various interim texts, such as drafts and notes, should form the raw data from which autoethnographic analysis should facilitate the development of new knowledge related to the process of writing, in relation to models and theories regarding the creative process. The knowledge so generated should be generalisable, genuinely analytic, synthetic and evaluative, and not merely an autobiographical account of what was done.

Another methodology that suggests itself as particularly relevant to creative disciplines is heuristic research. Douglass & Moustakas (1985: 40), define the methodology as "a search for the discovery of meaning and essence in significant human experience". They intimate that as a methodology it "is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behaviour" (Douglass & Moustakas, 42). Moustakas (1990) outlined the phases of heuristic research as follows: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, creative synthesis, and validation of the heuristic research. These may be directly compared to the stages in the creative process as outlined by Wallas (1926): preparation, incubation, intimation, illumination and verification. Wallas' model has been a strong influence for most models of the creative process.

The heuristic approach is related to, and adapted from, phenomenological inquiry, but concentrates on the lived experience of the researcher and the transformative effects of enquiry on the researcher as the main focus of the research. There are obvious parallels to the processes involved in the production of creative text and the transformation of lived experience through poetry into art, as well as the exegetical exploration of that process. All of the above that suggests that writing poetry could be considered as a research methodology that contains elements of autoethnographic, heuristic and hermeneutic research methods.

Poetry as a Cycle of Making Knowledge

There is another type of cycle that overlies the cycle of production, of which poet-academics need to be aware, and which may be used to outline how creative pieces (in our case poems) can function in terms of the cycle of knowledge generation through research. This is shown in figure two, where the normal research process in social science is outlined in blue and in red the analogous phases in the process of writing poems have been mapped onto it. Common to both processes are a background literature that must be explored and understood both at a technical and thematic level, and a lacuna found in order to avoid the practitioner (poet or researcher) either experimentally or poetically reinventing the wheel.

This gap leads to research questions. In the case of the poet, the research questions are often ill defined and intuitive, as they are in many creative endeavours, and are often only articulated through much reflection on inspiration, motivation and influence. Often these questions relate to how certain subjects may be approached through poetry in original ways, what new knowledge can be generated with regard to form or trope by using certain approaches to poetry. These are demonstrated in the writing of the poems and articulated and further explored in the commentary. Often the poet is concerned with how the process of transforming experience into art proceeds in relation to the proposed poetic project. These are all interesting questions that have the potential to generate new sets of knowledge in the art of poetry; and as such are research questions.

Through poetry the data of experience are collected in the imagination, validated and analysed through the creative process of making poems. The poet validates the data of particular experience through their knowledge of craft and the current literature as

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being useful raw material, which is capable of offering new knowledge in the exploration, through poetry, of similar experiences more generally. The poet may also develop new knowledge in the method of poetry by offering new means of analysing and shaping experience in the poetic medium. This will be subject to external scrutiny by peer review when the result of the process of poetry (the poem or collection of poems) is published.
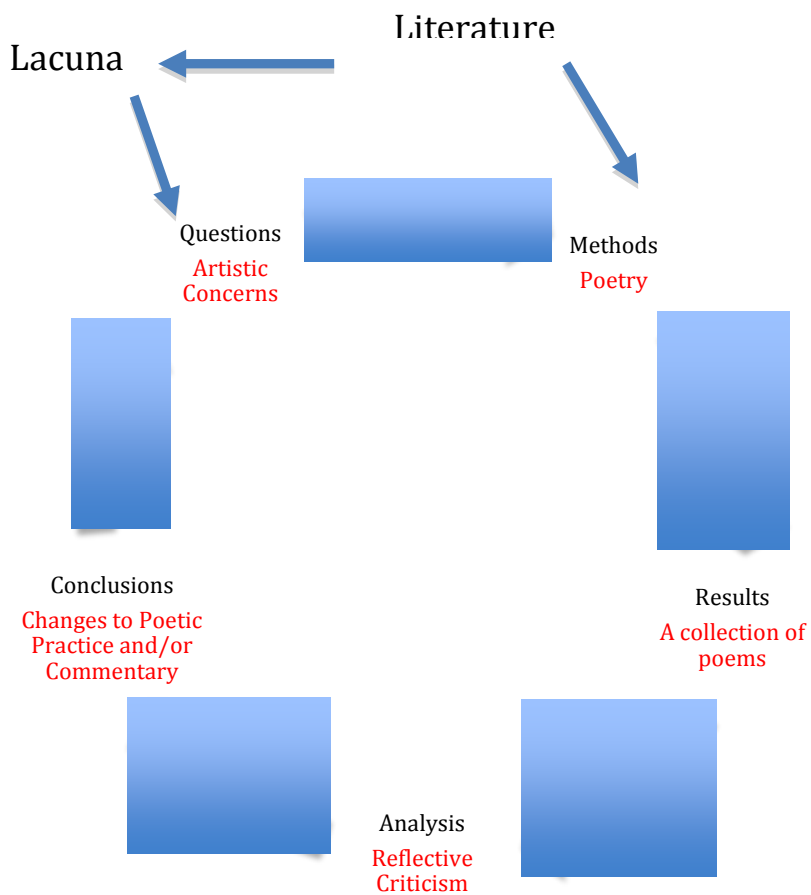
The process of analysis takes the results of the methodology and subjects them to reflective criticism, this may be reflection by the poet for the purpose of improvement of the poems, but it may also be reflective criticism for the purposes of writing a preface or other account of the poems – academic poets are often asked for a justification of how their work qualifies as research in the research assessment exercise for example. Or it may be that the collection of poems, like a significant number of collections at the present time is being written for a higher degree in creative writing and the analytical process is required to produce a commentary where conclusions are drawn regarding the collection's context within contemporary writing; what it adds to the contemporary poetic knowledge base; and reflection on those areas which have not been so successful. The conclusions drawn from this analysis may be made explicitly manifest in a thesis commentary, or more usually and more generally, they may be used to inform future projects by that poet.

In academia the quality of research is validated by those who undertake assessments of research quality and through the system of expert external examiners. Outside of the academy the process of peer review provides another type of validation for the research undertaken, through experts in the field judging the artefact in terms of the

new knowledge that it adds to the domain of poetry and/or poetics. Both of these validation procedures can be seen in terms of Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) tripartite model of domain, field and individual artist, whereby the field judges what is sufficiently novel and appropriate (creative) and allows the artefact so adjudged to be added to the domain. The fact that something is judged fit to be added to the domain implies that new knowledge related to the domain inheres in the artefact. This new knowledge can be explicitly articulated through the review process or it may remain implicitly present for a time and be articulated later through demonstrable influence among successor poets. Such knowledge will form part of the succeeding literature precisely because it has addressed a previous lacuna. However, it should be remembered that this is not a neutral process due to the conservative pressures exerted by the field.

In this chapter I have attempted to offer ways of thinking about the process of writing poetry as knowledge generation and attempted to question and explore some of the ways in which it generates knowledges and what those knowledges are. I have attempted to demonstrate that the artistic process of making poems is a research process; that it is involved in the rigorous pursuit of new knowledge within the domain of poetry and poetics; and that the process may be mapped onto more traditional research processes. I hope that I have provided a useful framework for looking at the composition of poetry and one that may spark further work, ideas and discussion.

Figure 2

Literature

Lacuna

Questions
Artistic
Concerns

Methods
Poetry

Conclusions
Changes to Poetic
Practice and/or
Commentary

Results
A collection of
poems

Analysis
Reflective
Criticism

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