

Exploring poetic inquiry and the art of crafting poetic stories

## Poetic Inquiry – what is it and why is it useful?

Poetic inquiry is approached differently depending on the researcher. I see it as the strategic and intuitive use of poetry to explore, reflect on, and represent lived experience. This approach allows poetry to serve as both a means of analysis and a way of presenting findings. It gives weight and legitimacy to emotional and subjective forms of knowledge—essential to understanding human experience, but often undervalued, especially in health-related fields.



Poetic inquiry takes many forms depending on the context. Some researchers use **poetic transcription** – they transform interview data into poems using participants’ own words, tone, and rhythm. Others use **found poetry** – they extract key phrases from qualitative data to shape a new poetic form.

### Autoethnographic poems in *Placing Unheard Voices*

In *Placing Unheard Voices*, I used autoethnography alongside phenomenology to position myself within the research and reflect on how my presence influenced the findings. This involved answering structured questions, free-writing, writing poems and working in

collaboration with illustrators. The image above is the result – its is an illustrated autoethnographic poem about my own experiences as a researcher living with Parkinson’s. The use of different textures in both the image and the words, and the blurred yet precise imagery, communicate the complexity of illness and the power in using artistry to turn vulnerability to strength.

## Poetic inquiry as a transformative methodology

Poetic inquiry challenges traditional academic writing while enhancing emotional resonance and championing subjective knowledge. It has been especially powerful in health research, education, disability studies, and social justice work—making research outputs more accessible, reflective, and emotionally honest.

### *Recent Publications to Explore (2023–2024)*

- Jaeger, E. L. (2024). \*The Research Poet / The Poet Researcher: Choices and Obligations for Poetic Inquiry\*.

Explores the balance between artistic quality and research integrity in poetic inquiry, emphasizing the care involved in crafting research poems.

- Byrne, D. (2024). *\*Intimate Selves: A Poetic Inquiry into Self-Knowledge\**.

Uses poetic inquiry to reflect on personal experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the method's potential for introspection and self-discovery.

- Görlich, A. (2023). *\*Practicing Poetic Inquiry: Bringing Affective Perspectives into Qualitative Research\**.

Offers a step-by-step guide for incorporating affective dimensions into research through poetry.

- Collins, K., & Ng, S.-L. (2024). *\*If Parallel Lines Could Meet: What Exactly Can a Poet Say About the Fano Plane?\**

Merges poetry and mathematics in a creative exploration of projective geometry, showing the surprising breadth of poetic inquiry.