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### Sedative Power of Poetry: Study of Julia Darling's "The Poetry Cure"

*Poder sedativo de la poesía: estudio de "The Poetry Cure" de Julia Darling*

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#### ABSTRACT

Expressing feelings creatively helps most of the patients cope with the vicissitudes of life and can be a lifeline for patients. This study aims to analyze the healing aspects of poetry in Julia Darling's "The Poetry Cure". A qualitative method has been utilized, and discourse analysis has been carried out. The result shows that poetry can be clinically use as a therapeutic medium. Poet portrayed one of the main distributions of therapeutic poetry, which is to encourage and inspire the readers' positive emotion. Analyzed poems emphasized hope and its accompanying emotions. Recommendation for future research is provided by the end of the study.

**Keywords:** Poetry therapy, sedative power, life-save poems, Julia Darling.

#### RESUMEN

Expresar los sentimientos de forma creativa ayuda a la mayoría de los pacientes a afrontar las vicisitudes de la vida y puede ser un salvavidas para los pacientes. Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar los aspectos curativos de la poesía en "The Poetry Cure" de Julia Darling. Se ha utilizado un método cualitativo y se ha realizado un análisis del discurso. El resultado muestra que la poesía puede ser utilizada clínicamente como un medio terapéutico. Poet retrató una de las principales distribuciones de la poesía terapéutica que es alentar e inspirar la emoción positiva de los lectores. Los poemas analizados enfatizaron la esperanza y las emociones que la acompañan.

**Palabras clave:** Terapia de poesía, poder sedativo, poemas que salvan vidas, Julia Darling.

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing as a method for handling one's beneficial experience is anything but an ongoing practice. History is full of different people that have a variety of talents in the art that turned to expressive writing for comfort. James Joyce and others are abstract instances of modern poets who utilized the craft of writing to mirror life. Louise DeSalvo (DeSalvo: 2001, pp. 48-50) dedicated a whole section to 'Composing as a therapeutic procedure - How authors see it' in her book writing as a method of recuperating. While recognizing that expounding on unpleasant life occasions isn't new, she expressed that artists and authors have customarily drawn on horrible beneficial encounters for motivation and have utilized writing as a method for change and mending for a considerable length of time (Mazza: 2018, pp. 203-208). The predominance of inventive non-fiction and self-portraying writings has fuelled the design of diary writing, utilizing expressive writing for helpful purposes. Dan Wakefield (Wakefield: 1990) insinuated this in his book "The story of your life, composing an otherworldly autobiography."

Although the therapeutic impacts of communicative writings have been reported for a substantial length of time, however, the study on medication and brain analysis recently started. Ira Progoff (Progoff: 1975) was one of the first instigators and perhaps one of the most well-liked pioneers of the benefits of expressive writings, and in recent years Julia Darling's (Darling: 2005) has taken the baton to pursue therapeutic writing. Julia Darling and Cynthia Fuller compiled a list of amazing poems that was distributed by Bloodaxe, *The Poetry Cure*, wrote: "This book of poems is for all of us who go through illness, deal with doctors, hospitals, and experiences such as bereavement and aging, and who struggle to find language to describe the suffering we have to go through." Julia Darling energetically accepted that "poetry should be part of every modern hospital." She felt that the language of poetry could counterfeit pain for writers as well as everybody. Julia noted in the anthology of "The Poetry Cure":

"It's a powerful force, which can help us through the darkest times. I would like to see more poets in residence in the health system, more poetry books in waiting rooms, more poems on the walls, more training in creative writing for doctors, and more poems printed on primary care leaflets."

As an expert on poetry, Julia felt that poetry could increase vocabularies knowledge to convey despair and pain, empowering us to convey better how we feel just as engaging us through utilizing our own words (Heimes: 2011, pp. 1-8). Julia Darling (Darling: 2005), an expert of poetry, felt that poetry increases lexical knowledge to convey despair and pain, empowering people to deliver their emotions by using the engagement of words and communication. The expert conveys that finding the correct analogy for pain may assist one by taking charge of the situation. This was a two-path process, as she accepted that medical experts could profit extensive research with their patients. The beguiling and estranging language utilized by specialists could be supplanted by pictures and representations we are generally capable of comprehending. Jackie Kay, one of the most established poets, observed that Julia had utilized poems as a medium to help face ailment and demise, and deprivation. Changing the way medical clinic and personage treat their patient which inadvertently proves that Julia always thinks outside the box.

Her work was persuasive in separating hindrances among specialists and patients, and she ran elevating workshops for students, scholars, journalists, and clinical staff. In these meetings, everybody included was urged to take a gander at the human body as a motivation for writing and to utilize clinical jargon in bizarre manners. Throughout ten years of treatment for her cancer disease, Julia investigated her body and her experience of the medical administration in her poem, radio, stage plays, and blogs. Julia trusted the poem collection she edited with Cynthia Fuller, "The Poetry Cure," would be a manual for assuming liability, notwithstanding giving 'solace and motivation.' She figured the book ought to be found on the bedside tables of other patients as well as at the hospital magazine stand.

## Past Studies

Individuals with experience as a patient, psychological wellness attendants, scholars, and different experts have utilized writing to profit mental health administration clients in different manners. These

incorporate expressive writing, just as applications in psychotherapy and advising and to manage explicit issues and emotions. What's more, poetry therapy and bibliotherapy have been utilized. Different advantages have been depicted, yet a few records do exclude proof of clinical adequacy (Mohammadian et al.: 2011, pp. 59-63). Be that as it may, effective ministrations results have been accounted for in research papers and other writing, with specific proof of clinical viability in certain investigations of bibliotherapy, therapeutic writing, and poetry therapy. Further work is expected to explain and quantify the adequacy of different expressive and remedial employments of writing. The creators additionally suggest joint effort among professionals and the requirement for supporting proof for recommendations for expanded assets in this field.

**METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative undertaking employs discourse analysis to scrutinize the poems and uncover the source of their curative influence. According to the editors, this compilation of "healing poems" is fashioned specifically "to find readers who might not usually read poetry. It is recommended that these poems be read "by those sitting in waiting rooms in surgeries and outpatient clinics." While it is a tall order to expect total relief from the reading of these poems, in a situation where people are convinced of the healing effect offered by a poetry reading, these poems may stand a good chance of claiming a regular place in the waiting rooms of hospitals and clinics.

This well-organized book of poems comes in eight sections, with each section portraying a specific topic, circumstance, or treatment approach. Namely, these sections are labeled admissions, poems to make you feel better, what it feels like, for those we love, the language of pain, healing rhythms, body parts, and talking to the dead. The significant degree of overlapping among these sections can be put down to the fact that high-quality poems project their messages in a variety of languages and defy restriction to a single facet. The classification of these poems can be exploited to attract a reader by offering him/her a selection that is of most current interest. Once captivated by the selected poem's quality, the reader is free to explore the other sections of the book unrestricted.

The emphasis of discourse analysis is on the communal facets of interaction and how individuals harness language to realize certain objectives. Some examples of such objectives are the development of trust, the creation of doubt, the instigation of emotions, and the management of disagreements. Rather than concentrating on fractions of language (including sounds, words, or phrases), discourse analysis emphasizes investigating greater masses of language (including complete dialogues, whole texts, or compilations of texts). The examination of the sources under consideration can be conducted on a variety of levels. The poems are scrutinized by the table displayed below:

**Table 1. Methodology of Analysis**

Communication level	Target of analysis
Words	Words and phrases are scrutinized for ideological connections and form, as well as for euphemistic and metaphorical compositions.
Configuration	The configuration of the texts is examined to determine how it generates emphasis or how it develops a storyline.

Rather than concentrating on smaller units of language, for example, sounds, words, or expressions, discourse analysis is utilized to contemplate bigger pieces of language, whole discussions, writings, or assortments of writings magnitude. The poems will be analyzed based on the table above.

## RESULTS

### Therapeutic Literature in Psychotherapy, Counselling and Cognitive Therapy

Medical officers, as well as other experts, have utilized therapeutic writing and perusing in other alternative ways as an agreement for conventional mental therapy and consultations, comprising of psychological approach. Writing has been utilized to empower readers to explore issues and express difficult emotions such as sadness, despair, and depression (Floyd: 2019, pp. 1-10). Freud (Freud: 1985) portrayed the purifying impacts of writing: 'Our genuine happiness regarding an innovative work continues from freedom of pressures, empowering us to make the most of our fantasies without regret or disgrace' (Allen et al.: 2019, pp. 14-19).

According to L'Abate (L'Abate: 1991, pp. 87-98) and Torem (Torem: 1993, pp. 267-276), as an alternative to the traditional physical examination, therapeutic reading and writing can be used instead. Jones (Jones: 1997, pp. 238-244) has applied these two patterns, who gives a moving record of manners by which, as a medical attendant psychotherapist, he empowered 'Kate,' a lady with inoperable carcinoma, to utilize poems related to psychotherapy. This caused Kate to comprehend and communicate her emotions about her despair and her approaching demise. Kate remarked that 'conversing with you and my poem brings me comfort' (Jones: 1997, pp. 238-244). Jones (Jones: 1997, pp. 238-244) presumed that poems gave Kate and individuals near her a sign language through which it got conceivable to imagine what, under normal conditions, couldn't be considered, and submitting such comprehension to words.

Different creators likewise portray manners by which writing has been utilized in psychotherapy and directing worried about melancholy and deprivation. Stearns (Stearns: 1989) sketched out one lady's writing of poem to convey and address issues related to her stillborn youngster. This incorporated an incredibly moving sonnet, 'For Collin', written in his memory (Shelton: 1989, pp. 121-122). Outside proper psychotherapy and directing, medical attendants and different experts have utilized therapeutic writings, both organized and open-ended, to accomplish an assortment of objectives. In open-ended writing, the customer composes whatever strikes a chord. Longo (Longo: 2017) contends that most psychological wellness medical caretakers have the imperative abilities to encourage account, guided, and centered writing, and this can be of a specific incentive to customers who discover oral correspondence troublesome.

### The Therapeutic Effects of Poetry

In the opinion of Hynes (Hynes: 1988, pp. 55-62), bibliotherapy and poetry therapy is 'practically synonymous.' Poetry therapy is deemed as purposeful utilization of poetry to encourage to alleviate painful emotions and personal growth. According to Lerner, a well-renowned pioneer in the field of writing therapy, poetry has the potential to reconnect with oneself and brings our inner humanity to Mazza (Mazza: 2017).

Generally, the progression of poetry therapy in the USA went the way of two separate routes. Leedy set up the Poetry Therapy Centre on the east coast. This establishment focuses on the education of 'interns' in the context of poetry therapy values and techniques (Harrower: 1978). Meanwhile, Lerner's Poetry Therapy Institute, on the west coast, emphasized that poetry therapy 'is a tool and not a school.' In other words, it is a component of the therapeutic process and not a distinct discipline (Dubrasky et al.: 2019, pp. 1-10). The year 1981 witnessed the incorporation and affiliation, of the National Association for Poetry Therapy, to the National Coalition of Arts Therapies Associations.

The application of available poems that can correspond to the client's frame of mind, or bring about the expression of feelings, are among the four kinds of poetry therapy described by Harrower (Harrower: 1978). This is in agreement with the definition of poetry therapy by Mazza, as the practice of trying to bring about consciousness with regards to contributing anxieties, which can consequently serve to provide liberation from distressing emotions (Mazza: 2016). Mazza (Mazza: 2018, pp. 203-208) quoted that expressive poetry explores intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergenerational emotions in which offers an exciting challenge for further research. There is certainly an exciting spot for the "Artist-Practitioner" to merge art and science through poetry therapy (Furman: 2020, pp. 1-9).

Chavis believes that the therapeutic benefits of poetry stem from its condensed structure, cadence, acoustic effect, and imagery, as well as its connection to human temperament and awareness. The application of poetry therapy involves not only the works of acclaimed poets but also the compositions of the clients themselves. Poetry therapy represents an opportunity for specialists to widen their scope of expertise in their chosen field (Chavis: 1986, pp. 121-128).

As opined by Mazza (Mazza: 2018, pp. 203-208) which states that poetry therapy is the utilization of art in language on a therapeutic magnitude. His poetry therapy model comes in three sections:

- The receptive/prescriptive section, concerning the engagement of literature during a scientific or community undertaking
- The expressive/creative section, concerning the exploitation of client compositions in a scientific or community undertaking
- The symbolic/ceremonial section, which has to do with the engagement of images, rites, and narratives during a scientific or community undertaking.

Literature related to the expressive and curative features of reading and writing often comes with perplexing, and at times conflicting descriptions (Johnson, 2017). This state of affairs is generally prevalent in other areas of mental healthcare and treatment. To further complicate matters, no single form of intervention is applicable for every client (Yücesan & Şendurur: 2018, pp. 26-39).

Through-out Julia's experience with cancer, she has explored her anatomy and shared her experiences of the medical services in her poetry, radio, stage plays, and blogs. According to Julia of her thoughts regarding The Poetry Cure: 'I think one of the hardest things about being ill is feeling impaired and crazy. Writing poetry helps by having a sense of control because most of the time, you feel miserable and powerless. In order not to feel that way while in the waiting room, poetry helps ease the experience. In this analysis, three excerpts from "The Poetry Cure" will be analyzed based on the vocabulary and structure utilization.

### **How to Behave with Ill**

**Julia Darling** (Darling: 2005)

Approach us assertively, try not to  
Cringe or sidle, it makes us fearful.  
Rather walk straight up and smile.  
Do not touch us unless invited,  
particularly don't squeeze upper arms,  
Or try to hold our hands. Keep your head erect.  
Don't bend down or lower your voice.  
Speak evenly. Don't say  
'How are you?' in an underlined voice.  
Don't say, and I heard that you were very ill.  
This makes the poorly paranoid.  
Be direct, say 'How's your cancer?'  
Try not to say how well we look.  
Compared to when you met in Safeway's.  
Please don't cry or get emotional,  
And say how dreadful it all is.  
Also (and this is hard, I know)  
try not to ignore the ill or to scurry  
Past, muttering about a bus, the bank.  
Remember that this day might be your last  
and that it is a miracle that any of us  
Stands up, breathes, and behaves at all.

In her poem, "How to Behave with the Ill," Julia Darling (Darling: 2005) emphasizes how we may meet our patients, with our voice being focal. Human voices pass through every one of us. The significance of the meaning of the word "advice" is being introduced in each line of the poem. The jargon that strikes a chord when perusing this sonnet affirms the diverse inclination one would feel as well as reverberating the voices of the patients. One individual's voice gave on to another, holding the same number of convictions, fears, and expectations, as it does realities.

In the first verse of the poem, the focal voice is of the patient. You can see a whole other world through poetry as each of the verse switches from one person to another in a flurry of emotions. Julia describes the act of "kindness" to others may be perceived as pity for the receiver, which would make them feel worse than they already are.

If we were to analyze the second, third, and fourth verse, it is apparent that it is wholly regarding the dos and don'ts' when dealing with a patient. The start of the sentence strictly demands that one should not touch a patient without their consent and to speak confidently to an ill patient. When one is to think, healthy people tend to skirt around patients as not to "offend" them, but humans, regardless if they're ill or healthy, are not fragile.

It's interesting to find that we find solace in the form of poetry writing, which was indicated by Mazza (Mazza: 2018, pp. 203-208), patients find it therapeutic when they read or write poetry. Poetry therapy gives them a sense of calmness and makes them feel they could strive better in the world. However, not everyone could find the benefit of Poetry Therapy to their advantage (Mazza: 2017).

### **Everything is going to be All Right**

**Derek Mohan**

How should I not be glad to contemplate  
the clouds clearing beyond the dormer window  
and a high tide reflected on the ceiling?  
There will be dying, there will be dying,  
but there is no need to go into that.  
The poems flow from the hand unbidden  
and the hidden source is the watchful heart.  
The sun rises despite everything  
and the far cities are beautiful and bright.  
I lie here in a riot of sunlight  
watching the daybreak and the clouds flying.  
Everything is going to be all right.

'Everything Is Going to Be All Right' is a poem that admits that hardship and mortality are a part of life but that the beauty of the world has a power of its own. The message behind the poem did not try to dodge reality or sugar-coat existence, but just remind us all that there is beauty all around us and to reassure the readers that everything wrong will eventually be okay but patience is a virtue and life is fair to everyone. This startling declaration is tempered by the reassurance that right now, we do not need to talk about death or sad memories, which humans with emotion usually feels like daily. We tend to focus on the bad moments instead of moving forward and taking them as a lesson. When faced with death, words may come with ease when the heart is paying attention to what matters.

According to Mazza (Mazza: 2016) and Hedges (Hedges: 2017, pp. 105-114), poetry provides a sense of security in which brings mindfulness and allows readers to dispose of or control their negative feelings. This poem symbolizes not only hope but peacefulness as the reader will feel assured and secure that hard times will pass and eventually it will get better.

Furthermore, this poem has portrayed one of the main distributions of therapeutic poetry which is to encourage and inspire the readers' positive emotion. Daboui et al (2018). States that a poem needs to have

a positive distribution that boosts readers' "happy thoughts" and identifies the feelings within so readers may take a step forward to resolve those arrays of negative or positive emotions. No matter what tragedies or despair we encounter, the sun comes up every morning whether we want it to or not, whether we see its beauty or not.

### Sometimes

By Sheenagh Pugh

Sometimes things don't go, after all,  
from bad to worse. Some years, muscadel  
faces down frost; green thrives; the crops don't fail.  
Sometimes a man aims high, and all goes well.  
A people sometimes will step back from war,  
elect an honest man, decide they care  
enough, that they can't leave some stranger poor.  
Some men become what they were born for.  
Sometimes our best intentions do not go  
amiss; sometimes we do as we meant to.  
The sun will sometimes melt a field of sorrow  
that seemed hard frozen; may it happen for you.

The first verse of the poem begins by citing the often-heard quote that things tend to go "from bad to worse". Relatively, the poem focuses on positivity, mainly readers' perception towards bad moments. The poem uses the metaphor of muscatel, a kind of grape, and points out that every once in a while, the crops overcome the frost, and instead of failing from winter, thrives instead, and becomes stronger than ever. The final line of the poem is more direct, suggesting that every once in a while, things will go well but it comes with determination and patience.

In this piece, the rhyme set up is somewhat slack. In the first and third verses (both quatrains), rhyming occurs in the second and fourth lines. As for the second verse, rhyming occurs in the first and final lines. Although the syllable count is similarly slack, generally, the poem portrays a structure that facilitates a smooth flow while demonstrating good meaning.

This poem emphasizes hope and its accompanying emotions. It has to do with remaining positive, and believing that there will always be light at the end of the tunnel. Armed with this conviction, one should dispel the inclination to give in, and fall victim to feelings of despair. The poet uses pleasing figures of speech (such as 'the image of frost-covered grapes', and 'the sun that melts a field of sorrow') to convey the message that though winter can be pleasing to the eye, the cold it brings can at times be distressing. Put differently, life can sometimes be fantastic, and at other times dreadful. It can never be permanently one or the other. At the end of the day, it is more practical to hope, than to fall prey to hopelessness. The poet conveys this message through the line "that for you, the most bitterly frozen fields will melt under the glow of the sun that never went away".

## DISCUSSION

First and foremost, poetry instructs us to resist complexity and embrace simplicity. Poets are the original system thinkers as they could determine and comprehend the complexity of emotions and environments. Reading and writing poems can practice that limitation, improving one's capacity to all the more likely conceptualize the world and impart it to other people. Poems can likewise assist readers with building up a progressively intense feeling of compassion. In the poem "How to Behave with Ill", Julia explored her own body and her experience of the medical administration in her poetry which helps the reader, whether ill or healthy to comprehend that patients' needs to be treated with compassion and understanding as opposed to

sympathy. The therapeutic advantages of expressive writing such as poems or sonnets offer another way for people to engage in defeating life challenges by reframing the significance of occasions and incorporating the past with the present. A developing assortment of proof-based research exhibits that this methodology can be successful with different populaces (Fallahi Khoshknab et al.: 2016, pp. 919-927).

Likewise, with any therapy procedure, there is some standard of procedure that one needs to abide such as a controlled and safe environment to conduct the therapy. This is to ensure that patients could safely and privately express their concerns without any judgments. However, Furman (Furman: 2020, pp. 1-9) has advised that although there are benefits to letting ones' creativity speak for a person, there are still disadvantages with regards to expressive writing. In an example, an individual could be overwhelmed with their feelings and take unnecessary actions that would hurt others. Great clinical practice and savvy instinct ought to be used in figuring out who will profit the most from this sort of treatment. Similarly, as with any clinical procedure, expressive writing ought to be connected to the clinical reason (Furman: 2020, pp. 1-9). As I would like to think, poems should be written in a calm environment and when ones' emotions could flawlessly flow without any hindrances. In any case, as Hegel estimated, poetry therapy is associated with the creator's emotions about an occasion or experience.

Based on the poems analyzed, it had been positively regarded by a medical practitioner that poetry therapy does help in healing the readers. Past research including recent reports, results in positive feedback for the treatment, especially in expressive writing, bibliotherapy, and poetry therapy. However, according to Harrower (Harrower: 1978) critical investigation in specific areas is limited because of the immense variable involved which is finding writing and reading enjoyable and rewarding. Cohen (Cohen: 1994, pp. 40-44) found that therapeutic utilization of literature and its clinical effectiveness can be determined by its benefits towards the client that have specific goals and achievements. Further studies on the recuperating parts of composing are justified. The particular of specialist rules likewise encourage supplementary examination. Expressive writing within the inner setting of a medical hypothesis and a prototype investigation can simultaneously advance psychological and physiological wellbeing. This has suggestions for clinical practice, yet additionally for self-improvement and network advancement.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is developing enthusiasm for estimating the effect of art in improving mental and physical health. The main objective of the project is to make the patient (the person who waits) to be pleasant and subsequently pique the interest in poetry. Poetry isn't, in itself, restorative; it could, in reality, be risky. Therapeutic poetry depends vigorously upon the activities of an individual specialist, with a verse a device in the systematic procedure to connect with the patient. Characterizing and explaining the significant sorts of expressive and helpful employments of writing, and the terms utilized, is a fundamental forerunner to additionally inquire about in this specific discipline. Further research is expected to assess the worth and medical viability of explicit techniques and mediations. There is a requirement for joint effort among medical attendants and different experts who encourage expressive and restorative perusing and composing. This is probably going to empower the sharing of thoughts, the advancement of good practice, and legitimate and dependable strategies for evaluating clinical adequacy.

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