



Developing a thera-poetic practice: Writing rescued speech poetry as a literary therapy

by Sarah Penwarden



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Abstract

In narrative therapy, documents written by counsellors as part of therapy can assist with the re-authoring of clients' lives in tune with their preferred narratives. Rescued speech poems are an addition to documentation such as letters and certificates. In this thera-poetic practice, a therapist writes poems directly from the client's talk, offering these poems back as a retelling. Drawing on my doctoral study, I explore the writing of rescued speech poems through five practices: listening for the poetic in the ordinary, listening multiply, capturing a client's words, depicting their speaking on the page and offering the poems back. I also discuss elements of power in this approach, and how dialogue between client and therapist facilitates the client's evaluation of the effects of the poetry. This kind of poetic writing can assist with the re-authoring of client's identities through the therapist's tuning of their ears to hear the tones of the poetic in ordinary talk.

Key words: *rescued speech poetry; found poetry; thera-poetic; bibliotherapy; narrative practice*

A therapy of literary merit

Narrative therapy is a 'therapy of literary merit' (White, 1988) that 'transparently and deliberately uses writing and the production of therapeutic documents and books' (Speedy, 2004, p. 25). Documents such as letters and certificates are used to re-author people's lives in accordance with their preferred narratives (White & Epston, 1989), to create a scaffold between the problem story and alternative stories and to thicken this second story. Drawing on Bruner's text analogy (White & Epston, 1989), lives are seen as texts that can be subtly re woven through the generation of co-created alternative stories. In this therapeutic reweaving, threads of alternative stories are made thicker and more prominent through a process of questioning and enquiry by the therapist. This work has been called 'story expansion', through which people can 'renegotiate previous meanings and understandings' in ways that 'may then serve as the foundation for future actions' (Young & Cooper, 2008, p. 70).

Documents can assist in this re-authoring work through the concretising effect of writing itself – the ways writing makes tangible what is fleeting, leaving 'footprints' on the page in a way that speaking or thinking does not (Bolton, 1999, p. 120). Narrative documents produce a retelling, 'a new telling' that 'encapsulates, and expands upon, the previous telling' (White & Epston, 1989, p. 21). For example, narrative therapy letters are not descriptions of conversations; rather they are tools designed to provoke change and to scaffold movement from one place to another, from the known and familiar to the not-yet known (Carey, Walther, & Russell, 2009). Letters do not describe therapy; they *are* therapy. Letters provide a scaffolding that may provoke and thicken a client's resistance to problem stories and amplify thinly described alternative stories.

Another example of narrative therapy documentation is Denborough's (2011) collective narrative practice in a workshop in Srebrenica, Bosnia, in which he and others documented survival stories of local people. In reading these stories aloud, resonance was created among people in the community, strengthening their bonds and sense of communal life. This is an example of both the documentation of nourishing stories and the thickening of them. Some narrative practitioners also write songs from the words spoken at community gatherings (Denborough, 2002), and as part of therapeutic conversations as a form of retelling (Hegarty, 2009; Wever, 2009). A songwriter may 'record in the written word and with song the sparkling moments, valued stories and the skills and knowledges of the community' (Denborough, 2002, p. 17).

Rescued speech poetry is another form of narrative therapy documentation. It aims to scaffold and co-construct new client knowledges that support a person's becoming¹ (Behan, 2003; Speedy, 2005). These poems have been part of my therapeutic practice since 2008. I had written poems since childhood, and although I had had some poems published in literary journals, I considered this to be a niche hobby. However, in 2008, while working as a high-school counsellor, I saw a young woman who spoke about grieving her father. We had a re-remembering conversation in which we considered together how her deceased love one might still be present and contributing to her life in the here and now (White, 1997, 2007).

Afterwards, the imagery of her re-remembering her father stayed with me. I went home and wrote a poem – a combination of her words and mine. I gave it back to her. She loved the poem and shared it with her family (Penwarden, 2009). I was aware then of the ripples that could be produced through narrative documentation. I was also aware of the satisfaction it gave me for therapy and poetry to be woven together. This fledgling step into writing poems from a client's stories became a doctoral project (Penwarden, 2018) that involved writing rescued speech poetry within re-remembering conversations with people who had lost a loved partner to death.

In this article, I explore aspects of the philosophy and practices of writing rescued speech poetry, showing an example of how to compose poetry from speech. I explore how these poems fit within the literary genre of found poems, and within therapeutic applications of poetry. I also explore the ethical intent of these poems and describe five practices through which these poems can be composed.

Finding poetry in ordinary life

Some artists find beauty in the everyday world around them: in an oil slick, a plastic bag blowing past, the pattern of an arc of birds. As a literary genre, found poetry involves recycling words from newspapers, graffiti, emails or even overheard snatches of conversation. In writing found poetry, the writer listens for moments that are full of possibility; that contain evocative expressions. Padgett (1987) describes how writing a found poem requires that 'you stay alert to those exceptional uses of language or sharply presented, telegraphic stories that create a poetic effect

or an emotional response as strong as that made by a poem' (1987, p. 82). On finding a poem in the ordinary world, the finder then 'rehouses' what they have found on to the page (Green & Ricketts, 2010, p. 113).

I suggest that poetry can be found not only in heightened romantic language, but in ordinary speech. The anthropologist Tedlock (1977) has argued that oral speech can be heard and written as poetry. The sociologist Laurel Richardson (2002) has also suggested that when people speak 'their speech is closer to poetry than it is to prose' because of the lyricism and imagery that can be present in speech, as well its flow and rhythm (2002, p. 879). One can hear the potential for a poem in ordinary speech and then compose it through the ordering of form and line. Depicting speech as a poem – with its line breaks for breath points and white spaces for silence – can carry forward the singing of speech on to the page.

Rescued speech poetry

Rescued speech poetry is a literary practice in narrative therapy that seeks to capture a person's becoming in the moment by arranging fragments of live talk into a poem, either during or immediately after a session (Behan, 2003; Penwarden, 2018; Speedy, 2005). In this way, talk is 'de-composed' and then 'recomposed' into poetry (Crocket, 2010, p. 8). This writing practice seeks to capture a person's preferred identity descriptions through the therapist's arranging of key expressions from the client's talk into a poem. The resulting poem is offered back to the client, often at the next session. The poem is created *only* from the client's words, initially captured as notes during a live session, with the therapist contributing selection, arrangement and title.

The work of rescued speech poems is to disrupt problem stories and amplify alternative stories. These poems might generate creative resources for identity descriptions by capturing thin traces of ambiguous moments, moments of becoming, and offering these back to the person for further reflection. Through rescued speech poetry, a person could act as a witness to their own life. As a form of re-authoring, rescued speech poems can also be used to publish new stories to a wider audience, inviting the circulation of these alternative stories among friends and family members. These documents may thus also serve to engage appreciative others to join with these new movements in a person's life.

The practices of rescued speech poetry

Writing rescued speech poetry requires an intentional listening for moments when the client is speaking themselves into becoming. The therapist catches these moments, 'rescuing' the expression from the moment of speaking, and saving it 'from its perishing occasions ... to fix it in perusable terms' (Geertz, 1973, p. 19). Rescued speech poetry *fixes* the speaking, enabling the image to last longer and not vanish after being told. The writing of these poems involves five distinct practices that I will now explore: listening for the poetic in the ordinary, listening for multiple threads, capturing client's words, depicting their speaking on the page and offering the poem to the client to reflect on further.

Listening for the poetic in the ordinary

The ethical stance of rescued speech poetry is that ordinary talk itself contains the poetic. The work of rescued speech poetry is to *find* the aesthetic already present in ordinary speech and to make this visible (Pentecost, 2006; Speedy, 2005). The aesthetic may be found in metaphors, imagery and in evocative phrases. In this way, a rescued speech poet can 'rehabilitate the poetry in and of the everyday by engaging the powers of art to search out and honour the marginalised arts of living of those who come to therapy' (Linnell, 2010, p. 25).

A narrative therapist might listen to a person's conversation as if at a 'poetry recital' or performance (Speedy, 2005, p. 296). They may listen to hear 'talk that sings' (Bird, 2004). Such singing may be heard when richness appears through images that are strange or surprising, 'unforeseen, evocative and resonant' (Speedy, 2005, p. 286); when a person might take up the picturesque to tell their stories in a way that enables hope and agency. Rich talk might also appear in moments when a person wrestles with language to find words to describe their experience (Behan, 2003). The work of the poet-therapist is to listen for and be alert for such 'occasions' for poetry (Sullivan, 2009, p. 112).

Listening multiply

Writing rescued speech poetry also involves the therapist listening with 'a tuned ear', which is a 'musician-like skill' (Hibel & polanco, 2010, p. 65). This is not only a listening for the aesthetic and evocative, but for the potential for re-authoring (White & Epston, 1989), or for re-membering (White, 1997). It is a listening for a client's expression that carries potential to resonate in their life beyond the moment. This may

be an expression that tells of the composition of their preferred identity, their values and projects in the world; an expression that encapsulates something of a loved one whom they re-member. Thus, writing rescued speech poetry involves an attuned, selective, aesthetic listening on the part of the therapist. It is a listening for both problem-saturated accounts and also the movements in these stories where turns occur towards alternative stories.

Speedy's (2005) work demonstrates such listening for multiple notes. In a poem, co-authored from her client Gregory's speaking, Speedy re-presents notes of darkness, protest, and alternative stories:

even asleep I dream of
rivers full of dying fish
and awake fatigue
stalks me like a hungry dog...

but I need to stay
awake to keep those dogs
away

it is a lonely task, so
a team would be good
but not a team of dogs

I imagine a team of
quiet young men

unassuming geeks
taking their time
to get going
in this world. (Speedy, 2005, p. 291)

In her thera-poetic writing, Speedy (2005) focuses on stories of adversity, as well as scaffolding towards alternative stories through her re-presentation of thin but resolute traces of hope. In her work with Gregory, she expressed a desire both to capture 'some of the spirit of the conversation' and to 'more firmly embrace the traces of some alternative stories' (2005, p. 290). She writes from 'all sorts of places' in the talk: 'places of struggle, and difficulty and humour, as well as sparkling and more joyful or more hopeful moments' (2005, p. 295).

Thus, rescued-speech therapists do not simply passively reflect back the client's words. Rather, they listen intentionally for gaps in the story, moments where the person is wrestling with language to be able to speak themselves into becoming. Through therapist attention, thin traces of identity descriptions, which were ambiguous a moment ago, are thickened and layers are built up.

Capturing clients' words

A key ethic of rescued speech poetry is the privileging of the client's words over the therapist's (Speedy, 2005). Speedy (2005) distinguished between poetry co-authored from talk in therapy, namely poetic accounts, and poetry written solely by the therapist, namely poetic re-memberings (2005, p. 295). I argue that making this distinction is a definitive ethical stance of rescued speech poetry. This ethic reflects narrative therapy's rigorous attention to power relations in therapy and to collaborative practices (Besley, 2002; Gaddis, 2004). This stance also joins with narrative therapy's appreciation of the power of language to describe and produce identities: how through language 'we are spoken and speak ourselves into existence' (Davies, 2000, p. 55).

While the client's story is at the centre of the therapeutic focus, the therapist remains active and influential in how they catch moments of speaking, in their 'rescuing the said from the saying of it' (White, 2000, p. 6). There may be a moment when a client speaks themselves into being with clarity, in a moment of light, as with the poem of Gregory's words: 'I need to stay/ awake to keep those dogs/ away' (Speedy, 2005, p. 291). In this catching of speaking, rescued speech poetry is reminiscent of impressionists who painted outdoors. As Renoir sketching *en plein air* caught a gust of wind in the middle of a field, a therapist writing rescued speech poetry might capture the spontaneity of a person speaking themselves into being.

Depicting a client's speaking on the page

The therapist is also active and influential in creatively re-presenting the client's exact words on the page. The therapist makes choices in relation to the appearance of the poem on the page. In what might be termed its 'classic' mode, rescued speech poetry looks like shards of glass on the page, with jagged line endings and spaces (Behan, 2003). Behan composed poems from client's speaking which were 'shards of our conversation ... pieces of continuous thought, impressions, mixed with contradiction – with lots of space in between' (2003, p. 1). In contrast, Speedy (2005, p. 290) chose to arrange a person's expressions into stanzas, making use of space on the page. In my writing of rescued speech poetry, I use the poetic tools of lines and white spaces to compose a poem from a person's speech, choosing where to end a line, where to add a stanza break, and on what line to end the poem.

Another consideration is how the speaking itself is retold on the page. Scott & Kotze (2014) makes cuts around pairings of verbs, nouns and adjectives to pare back the person's speaking to key phrases:

Acceptance with Joy

Being carefree

The waves

Inviting me

Seeing me

Unbiased

Saying

Come in

Have fun

Acceptance with Joy. (Scott & Kotze, 2014, p. 32)

In contrast, Speedy (2005) displays the flow of a person's speech on the page in partial or complete sentences:

even asleep I dream of

rivers of dying fish

and awake fatigue

stalks me like a hungry dog.

(Speedy, 2005, p. 291)

I show below how I found a poem from the speaking of Lee², one of the participants in my doctoral study (Penwarden, 2018), and how I composed this on the page in partial or complete sentences.

My doctoral study was a form of narrative therapy practitioner research in which I explored how rescued speech poetry could be used to enhance re-membering conversations with people who had lost a loved partner to death. Lee was one of eight participants in my study. She is Māori/European and in her late forties. Her husband Bob died 11 years ago in a road traffic accident. She had a new partner and together they were raising her children. I show below an excerpt from our first conversation in which Lee talks about how people down her street honoured Bob as the hearse drove away.

Lee: So many people turned up at my house, because we had him at my house, and I didn't even know they were there. And when we left the house to take him up to far north and I just saw everyone down the street around the corner ... and people were just lined up all the way around when we were leaving and I was just like wow, blown away. Look at all the people who knew you, look at all the people that came to see you, look at all the people's lives you touched. That's what he did. Everyone knew him as a good man.

Sarah: What would that have been like for him to know how much people ...

Lee: Oh wow. It would be humbling. Yeah, it would be very humbling for him. He wasn't an attention seeker. He was quiet in some ways, but goofy in others. He knew when to joke around. He knew when to be serious. He knew who would appreciate it. He had critics as well, as we do. It would be very humbling to know the people who turned up to wish him farewell. I can't express enough; my words can't say enough.

Eulogy

So many people
turned up at my house
because we had him there.

When we left the house to take him up north
I just saw everyone
down the street
around the corner
people were lined up
and I was blown away.

Look at all the people who knew you
look at all the people that came to see you
look at all the people's lives you touched.

Everyone knew him as a good man.

I can't express my words;
I can't say
enough.

I found this poem in Lee's talk by paying attention to the image that resonated with me as a reader: the time when the neighbours in her cul-de-sac lined the street

as they drove Bob away to the *urupa* (burial ground). These actions spoke to her about Bob: who he is and was to others. I heard the potential for a poem and arranged her words into lines, paring words back to the essence of the story. I added stanza breaks for emphasis, particularly for the shift in speaking position when Lee spoke directly to Bob: 'Look at all the people who knew you/ look at all the people who came to see you/ look at all the people's lives you touched.' I also created space around the words in the last three lines for the reader to linger as Lee tells about the process of telling, how her words are not sufficient. I gave the poem a title to reflect the position she takes up in this segment of talk – as people do at the end of a eulogy – to say a few words directly to the deceased person as a tribute to them.

Offering the poems back

After I sent each doctoral participant a folio of rescued speech poems, I met with each of them. We had had an initial re-remembering conversation about their lost loved one, and I had written and sent them poems from their speaking. Then, in the second conversation, I discussed with each participant the meaning and effects of the poems for the re-remembering of the loved one. I found that this conversation offered a key space in which to catch together some of the resonances of the poems: how the poems rippled out to the lives not only of the participants themselves but to extended family and friends who knew the lost loved one. This second conversation acted like an echo chamber to catch the sound waves of the poems and for the participants to make meaning of these vibrations as I asked questions.

A number of effects were noticed by participants in the receiving, reading and sharing of the poems with others. For Lee, as she read the poems, she held more firmly to her identity: 'Because it just represents me without boasting', she said. 'They uplifted me. They made me feel prouder' (Penwarden, 2018, p. 201). For Jan, the poem 'gave her back' her loved one, Ed, as he was cherished in her memory: 'alive and with a laugh, warm and cuddly, instead of cold and dead' (2018, p. 177). For her, the poems 'anchored' her knowing of Ed of sitting in a place in the sun; a place of wellbeing in the afterlife. For Jan the poems made her knowing about the wellbeing of her loved one 'describable, settling' (2018, p. 180). For some participants, the rescued speech poetry thickened their knowings of their loved one; for others, the poetry produced surprise and subtle therapeutic shifts. For some participants, the sharing of the poems with

family members created fresh waves of re-remembering of the loved one, as family members were introduced again to the loved one via the poetry. In this way, the rescued speech poetry multiplied the effects of the re-remembering conversations through the publishing of stories to a wider audience and the circulation among family and friends.

In my private practice, I have taken up this approach of offering rescued speech poems back for further reflection by the client. If I have written a poem from a person's words in a session, I let the client know this during the next session, and ask if they would like to read it. Once they have read the poem, we might spend time discussing the impact of the poem and making further meaning of the expressions of life it presents. This collaborative offering back of the poem and the space it creates for further meaning-making is a vital component of the re-authoring or re-remembering work of rescued speech poetry.

Poetry and power

Narrative therapy is a therapy highly attuned to the operations of power through language (Winslade, 2005). It is a therapy that values therapist practices of decentring and transparency (White, 1997, 2005); practices through which power flows towards the client. An ethical challenge with rescued speech poetry is the positioning of the therapist as poet. This is a positioning around which power can pool.

Practices of writing are practices of power because 'writing is never innocent. Writing always inscribes' (Richardson, 2002, p. 879). The poet-therapist may be positioned (or position themselves) as a 'special sort of person' who is prized

for his/her capacity to craft words that are unsettling, imaginative, or beautiful. It is the therapist whose depth, passions, or sensitivities give wing to the poetic. The client, in contrast, is reduced to the role of bland, and passive audience. (Gergen, 2000, p. 2)

The notion of the therapist as a 'special sort of person' could accentuate the hierarchy within a therapeutic relationship. To address this possibility, the approach to poetic writing that I am proposing includes reflexive safeguards to address power relations. One act of collaborative positioning is the space created for client evaluation of the poetry as joining with their preferred identity or jarring with it. In this way the therapist can

become accountable for the accounts they make of clients' stories by retelling them via poetry. Thus, while looking through one lens, this form of thera-poetic writing may position the therapist in a 'prized' position, looking through another lens, this form of writing enacts a dialogue in which the ultimate value of the poetry is determined by the client.

Locating rescued speech poetry within the field of poetry therapy

The dialogical nature of the interaction between client and therapist in this poetic writing, in the retelling from talk to text to talk, is a distinctive note of rescued speech poetry. This kind of poetic writing is a less well-known and practiced form of poetry therapy, but one that, I argue, has much to offer narrative practitioners. I will now briefly locate this form of poetic writing within the broader field of poetry therapy in order to explore its particular contribution.

Poetry therapy involves 'the use of the language arts in therapeutic capacities' (Mazza, 2003, p. 71). Poetry therapy developed as a form of therapy in the United States in the 1970s through the work of psychotherapists such as Lerner, who founded the Poetry Therapy Institute (McCulliss, 2011). Poetry therapy, also known as bibliotherapy, has evolved into two distinct approaches: the therapeutic use of poems written by established poets, and poetry written by the client as a form of self-expression (Mazza, 2003). Rescued speech poetry, part of a third, less well-known genre of poetry therapy, offers a form of poetic writing that is a collaboration between therapist and client (Speedy, 2005). Mazza (2003, p. 17) has termed the three modes of poetry therapy receptive/prescriptive, expressive/creative, and symbolic/ceremonial.

In the receptive mode, a therapist offers a client poems written by established poets in order to facilitate a client's connection with their own experience. A goal of poetry therapy in this mode is to 'facilitate the evocation of feelings' (McArdle & Byrt, 2001, p. 521). In producing a poem, a poet has wrestled language and embodiment into shape on a page. In receiving this poem, a client may know an echoing moment of illumination between the poet's experience and their own, and be inspired to wrestle their own embodiment into language.

In the expressive mode, the clients take up language – by writing poetry between sessions, for example

– to express their experience and perhaps subtly transform it (McCulliss, 2011). A key focus in traditional poetry therapy is that the action of poetic writing releases/relieves the client of painful and difficult emotions (Silverman, 1986). In the expressive mode, poetry therapy works because writing poetry is itself inherently therapeutic. Writing poetry is self-reflection: it is 'an exploration of the deepest and most intimate experiences, thoughts, and feelings, ideas: distilled, pared to succinctness, and made music to the ear by lyricism' (Bolton, 1999, p. 118). Through their own creative writing, people may transmute painful and challenging experiences into stories that are tellable, and may bring a sense of order and crafting to these experiences.

Mazza's third mode of poetry therapy is a symbolic/ceremonial mode whereby 'metaphors, rituals and storytelling' are used in therapy to foment change (Mazza, 2003, p. 17). In this mode, it is the individual, or family, who generates and performs rituals. Crocket (2010) has suggested that rescued speech poetry fits within the ceremonial aspects of this mode in that there are aspects of the ceremonial in the ritual of the 're-performance' of a client's story through these poems (Crocket, 2010, pp. 77–78). However, rescued speech poems also are crafted from the dialogical space between therapist and client, rather than from the client or family themselves. Thus, this poetry can be described as *ceremonial/dialogical*, as knowledge is generated between client and therapist via multiple layered tellings from talk to text to talk again.

There are significant differences between the poetry therapies offered in these three modes. In each, the engine of therapeutic change is positioned differently. In the receptive mode, the engine of change is located in the space between the client and the poems written by established poets. In the expressive mode, the focus of change is positioned between the client and the white page on which they tell their stories. In rescued speech poetry with its ceremonial/dialogical mode, the focus of therapeutic change lies in the interactive space between therapist and client, and then between the client and others in their life. This location of change, I argue, clearly reflects narrative therapy's view of change as occurring *between* people, such as via definitional ceremonies (White, 1995).

By way of example of these three modes, in the work of narrative bibliotherapist Simchon (2013), one can see receptive and expressive modes of poetry therapy in play, with an aspect of the ceremonial mode included as well. Simchon has employed poetry therapy in

her work facilitating support groups for people facing cancer journeys. She has used poetry written by established poets to 'spark' group members' own writing about their experiences which were initially difficult to express (2013, p. 5). Simchon deliberately chose poems that contained 'gaps' to 'enable clients to be stimulated to write their personal stories' (2013, p. 4). In this way, the work of established poems became intertwined in the participants' writings. The texts that were produced were tellings of their own stories, sometimes through the words of others, which were then read aloud to the group in a process of retelling. The selected poems were a bridge, a scaffold, through which a person facing cancer could tell their story and be witnessed by others. Thus, in receptive/expressive modes, the client could make their journey through the poems of others to be able to express their own stories.

In selecting the work of established poets, Simchon sought to move beyond 'ordinary' words that were not 'sufficient' to help people in these extraordinary times (2013, p. 2). Simchon sought out 'poetic words' – words that were 'alive, dynamic, multi-faceted, [and] creative' – to assist people in the telling of their own stories (2013, p. 3). Although I value the poetry of established writers, I suggest that it might also be possible for people to find, within their own repertoire of ordinary words, resources through which to tell their own stories richly and evocatively. They may find their own poetry in situations where there is bleakness and painful struggle (Hedtke & Winslade, 2016), crafting their own sustaining stories through the intensifying processes of poetry, the arrangement of lines and white spaces, in the poetry of ordinary words.

While in receptive and expressive modes, it is the client who finds and expresses the poetry of their life. In rescued speech poetry, it is the therapist who hears poetry within the client's conversation and crafts this on to the page. While this positioning appears to centre the therapist, I argue that, conversely, this poetic writing is one move in the dialogical exchanges of therapy towards making meaning together. In this

sense, it reflects the practice of therapy as mutual enquiry (Anderson, 2007). Rescued speech poetry thus echoes narrative therapy's view of identity as being formed between persons in language (Burr, 2003) and as a social achievement (White, 2000). In this sense, this poetry, through its collaborative, interactive and dialogical functions, reflects narrative therapy's aim of fomenting shifts of identity (Combs & Freedman, 2016) and becoming through retelling and re-authoring.

The art of narrative therapy

As part of the re-authoring work of narrative therapy, therapists can listen therapeutically and aesthetically as a client speaks, tuning their ear to hear the poetry in the ordinary. A rescued speech poet finds poetry and polishes it like a coin, offering it back to the client. Yet rescued speech poetry is not fixed and unchanging like a coin; it is porous, flowing with the client and shaping their understanding of their lives recursively through the retelling it offers. This work is collaborative and (re)creative. It is part of the art of narrative therapy to 'find moments of beauty' in the midst of moments of challenge and struggle (Hedtke & Winslade, 2016, p. ix), and to co-create 'sustainable and heartening stories' (polanco, 2010, p. 2). In this way, the therapeutic practice of rescued speech poetry honours the rich, evocative and meaningful experiences that can be found in everyday life.

Notes

1. In the narrative therapy literature, the earliest writings on rescued speech poetry were those by Behan (2003) and Speedy (2005). However, in 2000, Jill Freedman and Gene Combs presented a workshop at the *International Narrative Therapy and Community Work* conference, entitled 'Poetics and narrative work', which described a therapeutic approach to hearing and writing poetry from people's words.
2. In the study, participants chose pseudonyms for themselves and for their lost loved partners.

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