

FHS REVIEW 2021 1 and 1a

Comments to Editor:

I was very surprised that I liked this poem. Poetry about research seems an oxymoron. But I found something quite beautiful in this work. It was simply written, but quite lyrical - again something you would not expect in connection with research, but that captures well the creative, uncertain, and often times serendipitous process of discovery.

My main problem is that, minus the abstract, it is really hard to understand that the poem is about research and this is a shortcoming - poetry should not need abstracts). However, if you are willing to publish an author's note, I think the abstract could be considerably condensed to merely provide context. As you'll see in my suggested edits, I'd just cut the second paragraph about funding, prestige vs. contributions to knowledge. Good points, but they belong in an essay! Even the first paragraph could be considerably shortened.

I'd also recommend in some way clarifying (maybe in a footnote, although poetry should really not require footnotes) two phrases, One is "a child of the lion." I liked this Nietzschean reference, but there are not even subtle hints as to what it might mean. Even noting the reference to Nietzsche in the abstract, it took me a while to figure it out. If the abstract will remain, you could at least reference the idea of transformation. The links are good ones (the freedom of the lion, the creativity of the child), but need to be developed somehow, either through a footnote mentioning the Three Metamorphoses or some clue in the text. The second phrase is the reference to the jadestone. I liked the explanation the author provides, although when I googled the stone other symbolism comes up (good luck, balance, harmony, which also work with the poem's theme). That's fine, but the author needs to somehow at least hint where they're going with this reference.

Research is an original creative act. Although it has protocols and methods, the actual process can be labyrinthine, with unexpected turns, dark passages, and many surprises. The poem conveys this sense of adventure in the title itself as well as in the body of the poem. The "you" referred to is ambiguous, but intriguingly so. Does it refer to the research and its outcomes? Does it refer to a mentor or team member? I liked the uncertainty. I also liked the idea that aspects of research require falling into a trance-like state, letting the mind wander and dream. The culmination of this process is the jadestone, also an interesting choice since the author selects a semi-precious gem rather than a diamond. To me this suggests that, while not all research gains a Nobel prize, the results are always beautiful and valuable.

Comments to Author:

To be honest, I didn't think a poem about research was going to work (unless it was a very funny poem!). But you've managed to capture a side of research that is inadequately emphasized - the intuitive, creative, uncertain part that depends on inspiration and reimagining what is. I found something quite beautiful in this poem. It was simply written, but quite lyrical - again something you would not expect in connection with research, and the title itself conveys the unexpected joy of not knowing exactly where you are but trusting that your path will lead somewhere good.

My main suggestions stem from the fact that, minus the abstract, it is really hard to understand that the poem is about research and this is a shortcoming - poetry should not need abstracts). I don't know if abstracts are allowed, but if so, the one you've provided could be considerably condensed to merely provide the barest hint of context. As you'll see in my suggested edits, I'd just cut entirely the second paragraph about funding, prestige vs. contributions to knowledge. Good points, but they belong in an essay! Even the first paragraph could be considerably shortened. The poem is elegant in its minimalism - don't clutter up your work with a wordy, ponderous abstract. Better yet would be to find a way to suggest that the poem is talking about the process of research, maybe referencing this in the title (maybe add "in the labyrinth of research"?) or somewhere in the body of the poem.

Similarly, I'd also recommend in some way clarifying (maybe in a footnote, although poetry should really not require footnotes) two phrases. One is "a child of the lion." I like this Nietzschean reference, but there are not even subtle hints as to what it might mean. Even noting the reference to Nietzsche in the abstract, it took me a while to figure it out. If the abstract will remain, you could at least reference the idea of transformation. The links are good ones (the freedom of the lion, the creativity of the child), but need to be developed somehow, either through a footnote mentioning the Three Metamorphoses or some clue in the text.

The second phrase is the reference to the jadestone. I like the explanation you provide in the abstract, although when I googled the stone other symbolism comes up (good luck, balance, harmony, which also fit with your poem's theme). That's fine, but I think it would deepen the emotional impact of the poem to somehow at least suggest in the text itself what this gem means to you in the context of research.

Research is an original creative act. Although it has protocols and methods, the actual process can be labyrinthine, with unexpected turns, dark passages, and many surprises. Your poem conveys this sense of adventure in the title itself as well as in the body of the poem. The "you" referred to is ambiguous, but intriguingly so. Does it refer to the research and its outcomes? Does it refer to a mentor or team member? I like the uncertainty. I also like the idea that aspects of research require falling into a trance-like state, letting the mind wander and

dream. The culmination of this process is the jadestone, also an interesting choice since you select a semi-precious gem rather than say a diamond. To me this suggests that, while not all research gains a Nobel prize, the results are always beautiful and valuable.

I enjoyed this piece!

Comments to Editor:

This poem has been revised and significantly improved. It is sparer and simpler and this is all to the good. I would not recommend further changes (one small change might be to break up the line about the lion and the child just for emphasis). The poem reminds us of the sometimes serendipitous and mysterious aspects of discovery, and suggests that while research is a meticulous and disciplined process, it should also be creative and at times even playful.

In terms of the Abstract and picture, these are my thoughts. An "Abstract" sounds very academic and thus at odds with a poem, but if we think of it as a few prose lines to provide context and interpretive hints, it seems more palatable, even beneficial. The author has done a good job of making this abstract less wordy, paring it down to its essence, and I'd actually recommend keeping it. I can see that the author really likes the little picture. For sure it is sweet; honestly for me, it doesn't add a great deal, although it does provide a complementary visual to the idea of a childlike spirit making a precious discovery. I don't think it is essential to retain, but it's a nice artistic "summary" of the point of the poem.

Bottom-line, I like the idea of writing a poem about research and hope it can be published.

Comments to Author:

This revision is significantly improved, and I really appreciate the obvious effort and consultation you've put into this work. The poem is sparer and simpler than the original version and this is all to the good. The one small change I'd suggest might be to break up the line about the lion and the child so as to emphasize the reversion - or rebirth - into childlike wonder. The poem reminds us of the sometimes serendipitous and mysterious aspects of discovery involved in research, that research is a meticulous and disciplined process, but should also be creative and at times even playful. Although an Abstract does not usually accompany a poem, especially for a journal that is not primarily a literary one, to me it makes sense. You did an excellent job of distilling this Abstract to its essence, while using it to provide useful "hints" about the references in the poem to Babel and Nietzsche.

I like your poem and I like the idea of writing a poem about research. It brings together the cultures of art and science with a few well-chosen images that show us the ways in which the "two" are really "one."