

Interactive comment on “This bookmark gauges the depths of the human: how poetry can help to personalise climate change” by Sam Illingworth

Sam Illingworth

s.illingworth@mmu.ac.uk

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Thank you for taking the time to read this manuscript, and for providing helpful and specific feedback for how to improve this work. Below I have responded to all your comments (which for ease of use I have **written in bold**), and indicated how I have changed the manuscript to account for these changes. Any line references refer to those provided in the *Geoscience Communication Discussions* preprint.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to review this manuscript. I found the work to be particularly well written, and the topic especially timely. I also appreciated the author taking the time to set-out and give detail to the methodology that informed and framed this research - this is often a over-looked element of

C1

qualitative research that I believe is important with regards to interpreting the dependability of the study and allowing reviewers like me to follow, audit, and critique the study. I also found it particularly valuable to have lines from different poems represented within the text and in relation to the different codes identified through the study.

Thank you for such a generous and kind comment. It is very heartening to hear that this research is appreciated, and it encourages me to continue to pursue this line of work in my future research.

Starting on Line 79. I know the focus of the paper is on the nonexpert communicating about climate change, but as you also note in your methodology and evaluation of the authors of the poems in your study, sometimes scientists are poets, poets are scientists. I wonder if you could highlight, even if just briefly in this paragraph of the introduction, the potential value, indeed examples of, scientists who do communicate about climate change through poetry? This has been highlighted in a related paper as one way that they [scientists], and others, can communicate and generate dialogue about complex topics (see Januchowski-Hartley et al. 2018 and the text about scientists who write poems in relation to their research and even their interpretations of climate reports). Perhaps this only warrants a brief mention in the introduction, and potentially then also revisited in your conclusion section, as noted below. I believe it is important that we not make an unnecessary dichotomy between scientists and poets, and as you found in your study, these people do exist, and it is possible that even others who were not explicit about their professional life in their author bio are also scientists (here in the broadest sense).

Thank you for raising this important issue. It is of course very important to highlight that several scientists also write poetry and that these two identities are not mutually exclusive. In order to better address this point, I have inserted the following lines of text in the manuscript after Line 90 (in the Introduction):

C2

The purpose of this research is not to introduce a mutual exclusivity between scientists and poets, as there are many examples of scientists for whom poetry is an integral part of their practice (Illingworth, 2019), and who do a commendable job of communicating their research (and the research of others) through poetry (see e.g. McCarty, 2014; Januchowski-Hartley et al., 2018 and references therein). Rather, this research seeks to investigate how poetry (as opposed to science) has been used to interpret climate change, and how this might then be used to re-consider the ways in which science also engenders dialogue around this topic.

Starting on Line 779. Here I think you could potentially highlight how poetry can be used as a venue/method/or conduit for diverse people, including scientists, to establish a dialogue amongst each other. The paper referenced above by Januchowski-Hartley et al. 2018 also highlighted the value for scientists, and indeed those learning science, to include poetry in their practice and lives to engage with the topics they work on (or learn about) and to communicate about those topics in broader dialogues. I noted above that it would be a shame to segregate out scientists, not all scientists are climate scientists either, from consideration of non-specialists. I do appreciate that you retained those people in the study who did self-identify as scientists.

This is a very important point, as poetry is indeed a very powerful conduit for establishing dialogue between diverse people, including between scientists and non-scientists. This has been explored in several of my other research papers (see e.g. Illingworth and Jack, 2018; Illingworth et al., 2018), which I also reference in the Introduction to this manuscript. However, the purpose of this study was not to investigate the potential for poetry to act as an active conduit, but rather to investigate how poets (who were mainly non-scientists) have interpreted the, at times, esoteric principles of climate change. Therefore, whilst I absolutely agree with your statement (and indeed base much of my research ethos on this), I believe that in this instance including a further exploration of this would be extending beyond the research design of this particular study.

C3

Perhaps my above point also links into your closing paragraph. You could link to /cite related works where scientists, particularly climate scientists, are also using poetry (and visual artwork) to interpret climate change; that can be interpreted as being for non-specialist audiences and move toward broadening the dialogue. I leave it for you to consider; I thought it potentially strengthens or broadens your closing argument.

Again, I absolutely agree with this point and whilst it is not the main focus of this study it is certainly worth highlighting, as such the following text has been inserted into the manuscript at Line 790:

Such future studies might also consider poetry that is being written by scientists to help interpret climate change, for example the work of Rachel McCarthy (McCarthy, 2015). This approach would also be conducive in helping to dismiss the notion that poetry and science are mutually exclusive rather than complementary fields of research and practice.

Finally, I do see value in multiple colleagues undertaking the content analysis; even if conducting separate content analyses and then comparing the messages that emerge. Perhaps this is an additional direction that could be pursued in future works that you or others lead. This would be valuable in also recognizing different people's interpretations of poems, because after all, 'Do nothing to a poem that it never was written to have done to it' (Robert Frost), and whatever our interpretations are of a poem, are potentially not those of what the author intended. This could also suggest some potential value in a follow-up study that couples content analysis with interviews [of poets] (though I recognize some poets might not be comfortable with that).

I am in complete agreement that multiple colleagues undertaking the content analysis would be of benefit for future research direction. As such I have inserted the following text into the manuscript directly after Line 787:

C4

Future studies would also benefit from multiple colleagues undertaking the content analysis that has been described in this paper, as doing so would better recognise potential differences in any interpretations, thereby improving the triangulation of the coding and subsequent analysis.

References

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