



VISION AND POETRY

—NADINE CHAPMAN
WHITWORTH COLLEGE

The poet uses imagery arising from the concrete, from observation, and from responses to specific people. Through the power of metaphor and symbol, poetry can capture the unique ethical relationship between human beings and their relationship with the physical world. The face of a stranger, a dream, or a dirt road may gain unforeseen depth. Robert Frost's poetry affected Greenleaf's understanding of journey. Other poets, such as Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Whitman, inspired him. He freely acknowledged his debt to these writers for their creative language and vision.

Greenleaf (1997/2001) emphasized the need for prophetic voices and prophetic vision in servant-leadership (p. 8). He called for liberating visions in leaders (1998, p. 35). This is the task of poetic imagination. Ethical response to another person or persons in distress gains the capacity to project a new path through the poet's voice and language. Poetic practice draws on the words people speak to disclose often hidden meaning, to bring the mystery of human desires to light. It struggles against one-dimensional uses of language that limit the freedom of that voice.

Poetic imagination can illuminate suppressed powers of the human spirit and provide the language for ethical and spiritual growth. Rather than controlling expression, it seeks a changed vision of personal and political reality or historical understanding based on the fullness of language. New words, or words given new meaning, combined with creative courage, can weave from memory and experience alternative ways for humans to interact. This is an effort of hope.



Nadine Chapman is a poet whose work has appeared in literary journals and other venues throughout the United States. Described as a “gift of voice, story, and memory,” her recent chapbook of poems, *On Solitude*, is noted for both its subtlety and its evocative understanding of the human condition. She teaches at Whitworth College, Spokane, Washington, United States of America.