POETRY

Using it to See, Think, Learn, and Solve Problems

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POETRY - WHAT IS IT?

- AWP Perspectives - 2009
- Carl Sandburg (1878 - 1967)
- Amnesty International
- HRP, Jr. - a thing made or discovered consisting of ideas, words, movement, or other raw materials that offers to those who experience a glimpse of the ultimate.
POETRY - WHY WRITE IT?

- Tool in Identity Formation
- Reclaims Primary Model of Interaction with the World
- Changes consciousness
- Alters perception
- Helps in problem solving
- Puts Us in Touch with Our Bodies
- To the left are two artists that have utilized art in contemplative ways. Who are they? What do you think of their work?
POETRY - A TOOL IN DEFINING IDENTITY

- **Natural Process**
  - Everyone has the ability
  - Not everyone cultivates the skill

- **Response to normal cycle of life**
  - Birth
  - Cyclic Transitions
  - Death

- Can address challenges specific to a given life setting or set of circumstances
Raymond Gibbs

“The mind functions figuratively rather than literally—much of what we associate with poetic thinking and classify as a special skill is really a normative part of the human experience. Metaphor, metonymy, irony, and other devices are tools that we use to make sense of the world. Thus, we are all graced with the poetic impulse. Thus, poets simply do what all human beings are capable of doing” (1).

“People conceptualize their experiences in figurative terms via metaphor, metonymy, irony, oxymoron, and so on, and these principles underlie the way we think, reason, and imagine” (5).

“What poets primarily do, again, is not create new conceptualizations of experience but talk about the metaphorical entailments of ordinary conceptual mappings in new ways” (7).

*The Poetics of Mind* (Cambridge, 1994)
Owen Barfield (1898-1997)

“Poetry differs from all her sisters in this one important respect, that (excluding the sound values) consciousness is also the actual material in which she works. Consciousness is to her what their various mediums (marble, pigments, etc.) are to the other arts; for words themselves are but twn en th yuch paqhmawtwn sumbola - symbols of consciousness” (182).

“...meaning itself can never be conveyed from one person to another; words are not bottles; every individual must intuit meaning for himself, and the function of the poetic is to mediate such intuition by suitable suggestion” (133).

“Great poetry is the progressive incarnation of life in consciousness” (181).

Ralph Ellison (1914 - 1994)

“I’m invisible, not blind” (576).

“Life is to be lived, not controlled; and humanity is won by continuing to play in the face of certain defeat. Our fate is to become one, and yet many --This is not prophecy, but description” (577).

“So why do I write, torturing myself to put it down? Because in spite of myself I’ve learned some things. Without the possibility of action, all knowledge comes to one labeled ‘file and forget,’ and I can neither file nor forget” (579).

“...in spite of all I find that I love. In order to get some of it down I have to love. I sell you no phony forgiveness. I’m a desperate man - but too much of your life will be lost, its meaning lost, unless you approach it as much through love as through hate. So I approach it through division. So I denounce and I defend and I hate and I love (580).

“Being invisible and without substance, a disembodied voice, as it were, what else could I do? What else but try to tell you what was already happening when your eyes were looking through? And it is this which frightens me: Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you” (581)?

*The Invisible Man* (Vintage, 1995 - 2nd ed. of original 1947 work)
Sherwin Nuland in his book *The Wisdom of the Body* (Knopf, 1997) suggests that poetry is: (1) a reflection of the inner life of the human person; (2) emotional and physiological. The words, lineation, resonance, cadence, etc. of poems are reflections of:

...that profound awareness of our inner selves to which all humankind responds with the symmetry and order characteristic of our physiological processes. We live in rhythms, because rhythms live in us (367).

He also suggests that the human spirit and mind are products of the human body's physiological processes.

Nuland's might be called an "embodied" approach to poetry in which its inspiration and form are shaped by biological realities.
Maxim -- A general truth, fundamental principle, or rule of conduct; a saying of proverbial nature

Webster’s 9th New Collegiate Dictionary (1990): 734

Aphorism -- A concise statement of a principle; a terse formulation of a truth or sentiment

Webster’s 9th New Collegiate Dictionary (1990): 94

“Aphorisms deliver the short sharp shock of an old forgotten truth” (8) They “are deeply personal and idiosyncratic statements, as unique to an individual as a strand of his or her DNA” (15).

Characteristics: (1) brief; (2) definitive; (3) personal; (4) have a twist; (5) be philosophical.

Aphorists - A Short List

- Proverbs (5th Century BCE?)
- Qoheleth (3rd Century BCE)
- Hippocrates (5th - 4th Century BCE)
- Lao Tze (6th Century BCE?)
- Erasmus (14th-15th Century)
- Johann von Goethe (18th - 19th Century)
- Benjamin Franklin (18th Century)
- Benjamin Banneker (17th - 18th Century)

From http://www.anthroposophie.net/goetheanismus/goetheanismus_kapillardynamolyse.htm
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MAXIMS, ADAGES, APHORISMS - UTILITY

- Encourage careful observation and analysis
- Cut across disciplines
- Promote analytic / synthetic thinking
- Help with concise writing
- Facilitate domain sampling
- Encapsulate, in memorable form, important truths - general and personal
A *Haiku* Exercise

Write a poem consisting of three lines. The first must contain five syllables, the second seven syllables, and the third five. Some aspect of it must touch on nature and your relationship to it.

A *Sha’iri* Exercise

Write an twelve line summary of your life philosophy. The lines should be divided thematically into three sections consisting of four lines each. Each line must contain exactly eight syllables.

Problem solving with *Maxims*

Write a summary of your major expectations, goals, and dreams for this semester in seven sentences, none of which can exceed nine words and each of which must focus on a single expectation, goal, or dream.