

INNER SELF WORKSHOP: PART ONE Introductions and Let's Get Started!

Good morning all! Many of you may know each other from workshops earlier this week or from your long or short associations with RawSistaz groups, clubs, reviewing activities and et cetera, but I would like to create a small intimate group HERE, in THIS workshop, so that we are brave in what we create and share.

I will, of course, put myself on the line first. ☺

I'd like to see three introductions:

who are you

now tell us who you are without using your name

now tell us why you're here

why am i here? because i want to step out of the comfort of explaining others' words, my life as literature professor, into the dangerous world of getting others to make art of their secrets

now before i send you off to write your poems, i want to give you some **tools for your tool box:**

basic unit of poem = line vs. sentence

stanza vs. paragraph

poet aims for a) feeling (inspire feeling)

b) resonance (the poet makes you feel it as you read, the feeling awakens in your chest, unbidden, a warm shock)

c) recognition (makes u aware you've felt, experienced it too)

prose writer aims to a) instruct

b) explain

c) reason (touch your reason/intellect)

poet wants your gut, your emotions

metaphor, simile & poetic language

Poetic language: By poetic language I mean metaphor, simile and imagery as your nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs; as your building blocks with which to communicate. Poetic writing is about density (of image and metaphor) and compactness of language; you are communicating in symbols, but you are compacting those symbols so tightly that you express 5 pages in six or seven stanzas.

Your medium is the comparison, the putting of a thought or concept into its mirror, an image: the way in which a flower unfolds, the way in which a bee approaches and pollinates, the way in which a mirror smashes against a wall and proliferates into a million and one shards. Tell us by showing us through what you see, what you hear, what you taste, what you envision, what you hold every day in your hands.

Joshua Kadison: "here I am here I am here – I – am – an' why do I feel like the invisible man"

what makes you feel invisible?

my weight (Dr. Ni is over 350): men simply don't look, don't see me as a viable, interested female. they won't meet my eyes.

how can we talk about this feeling of invisibility or of over-visibility?

Pablo Neruda: "Toward An Impure Poetry"

read the essay and then consider: what is your favorite ordinary item, something much touched and much used, a possessor of deeply imbedded oil from your fingertips?

What is your favorite metaphor/simile/description of an image?

Mine: "smooth as buttered cream"

1st exercise: take your description of invisibility, your response to Neruda's essay, your favorite metaphor/simile and describe an action, an experience, a day that made you suddenly visible, keen, awake, alive; an experience that was a shock to the system

This will be your first poem, short piece. ☺ After midday, I will check in and post the evaluative questions so that we can discuss each others' posts.

THE NERUDA ESSAY: Pablo Neruda, Chilean poet and author, won the Nobel Prize for Literature during his lifetime.

TOWARD AN IMPURE POETRY

By Pablo Neruda

It is good, at certain hours of the day and night, to look closely at the world of objects at rest. Wheels that have crossed long, dusty distances with their mineral and vegetable burdens, sacks from the coal bins, barrels, and baskets, handles and hafts for the carpenter's tool chest. From them flow the contacts of man with the earth, like a text for all troubled lyricists. The used surfaces of things, the wear that the hands give to

things, the air, tragic at times, pathetic at others, of such things – all lend a curious attractiveness to the reality of the world that should not be underprized.

In them one sees the confused impurity of the human condition, the massing of things, the use and disuse of substances, footprints and fingerprints, the abiding presence of the human engulfing all artifacts, inside and out.

Let that be the poetry we search for: worn with the hand's obligations, as by acids, steeped in sweat and in smoke, smelling of lilies and urine, spattered diversely by the trades that we live by, inside the law or beyond it.

A poetry impure as the clothing we wear, or our bodies, soupstained, soiled with our shameful behavior, our wrinkles and vigils and dreams, observations and prophecies, declarations of loathing and love, idylls and beasts, the shocks of encounter, political loyalties, denials and doubts, affirmations and taxes.

The holy canons of madrigal, the mandates of touch, smell, taste, sight, hearing, the passion for justice, sexual desire, the sea sounding – willfully rejecting and accepting nothing: the deep penetration of things in the transports of love, a consummate poetry soiled by the pigeon's claw, ice-marked and tooth-marked, bitten delicately with our sweatdrops and usage, perhaps. Till the instrument so restlessly played yields us the comfort of its surfaces, and the woods show the knottiest suavities shaped by the pride of the tool. Blossom and water and wheat kernel share one precious consistency: the sumptuous appeal of the tactile.

Let no one forget them. Melancholy, old mawkishness impure and unflawed, fruits of a fabulous species lost to the memory, cast away in a frenzy's abandonment – moonlight, the swan in the gathering darkness, all hackneyed endearments: surely that is the poet's concern, essential and absolute.

Those who shun the "bad taste" of things will fall flat on the ice.